

MONTE SAN MARTINO TRUST

June 2014

Looking ahead

The 70th anniversary of the Italian Armistice and subsequent breakout of Allied PoWs from prison camps all over Italy, could, I feel, hardly have gone better as far as the Monte San Martino Trust is concerned.

As reported on pages 2 and 3, there were moving encounters at Servigliano and a wonderful walk in the Marche with our friends from the Escape Lines Memorial Society; some highly enjoyable and extremely emotional celebrations in Fontanellato; an honorary MBE for our Italian representative Antonio Millozzi; and a best ever annual lunch. All this was capped by the stunning success of our Appeal with £775,000 raised or pledged already (see page 9).

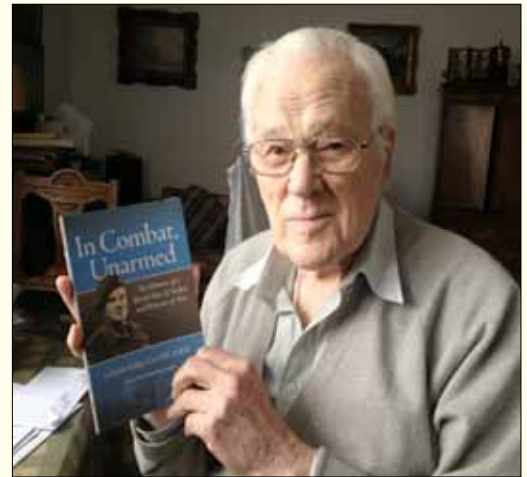
I am sure that our forefathers, who were involved in that little slice of history, and all those brave Italians who helped them, would have been delighted to see that we are keeping their brave deeds alive. As chairman of the Trust, I want to say a heartfelt thank-you to everyone, both organisers and participants, who helped to make this anniversary year so memorable.

Now, with the anniversary behind us, we can turn our attention both to important business as usual – students from Italy whose bursaries we pay – and also to the Trust. I am sure I speak for all of us in wanting it to grow and develop, and perhaps to fulfil its commemorative and celebratory role in new ways. Perhaps it is time for us to start talking together about what that future might look like, bearing in mind, always, the original objectives of Keith Killby and his co-founders.

I would like to hear ideas from our members. How can we link up with the families of more escapees? What more can we do to strengthen our links with the Italian communities who helped them? How do we keep enthusiasm high, as our remaining “originals” make their last home run? How do we engage future generations in the work?

Do write to me at info@msmtrust.org.uk. There's lots to think about!

Nicholas Young, Trust Chairman



Keith Killby, Trust founder, with his autobiography published last year. Copies may be obtained from MSMT

Congratulations to Vanni Treves, our Appeal chairman, on being awarded the honour of Cavaliere Ufficiale by the President of Italy.

The honour – the same as that bestowed previously on Keith Killby – comes in appreciation of his strenuous fundraising efforts on behalf of the Trust and its student bursaries.

It also reflects the high esteem in which the Trust's values and objectives are held in Italy.

A report on the Appeal, which has so far raised £775,000, can be read on page 9

PASQUALE TERRACCIANO, the Italian Ambassador to the UK, has his own family memories of the wartime Allied landings and the upheaval that resulted for civilian life.

Mr Terracciano told the following anecdote at a supper that he kindly hosted for the Monte San Martino Trust at the Italian embassy late last year. He recalled that, while the Allies were bombing Salerno, his grandparents and his father, then a teenager, were forced to take refuge in the hills above the town. During their escape, badly in need of food and shelter, they spotted camp fires and made their way over to them.

There was a problem, however: the men gathered around the camp were convicts who had managed to get out of the local jail – and Mr Terracciano's grandfather was a prominent judge. Quite possibly, he had jailed some of those men himself.

Understandably, in such lawless times and given the circumstances, the family was nervous. But everything passed off peacefully. “We all need to help each other at this time,” was the message coming from the convicts. They added: “When all this is over, you are a fair judge and the country will need people like you to build a new Italy.”

Concluding his anecdote, and wishing well to the work of the Monte San Martino Trust, Mr Terracciano said that the incident showed that tragedy could bring the best out of everyone.

A memorable year

The Monte San Martino Trust has had several key moments since it was founded by Keith Killby in 1989: the arrival of the first students stands out, as does the introduction of the Fontanellato annual luncheon. But in terms of a complete calendar year, it would be hard to beat 2013. This marked the 70th anniversary of the Armistice with Italy, which precipitated the mass breakout of prisoners of war – the men who were to experience countless acts of bravery and kindness at the hands of the contadini in the countryside. During 2013, as in previous years, young Italians came on **Trust bursaries** to study at the excellent language schools we use at Wheatley and in London – our thank you to the Italian people. Throughout the year, too, the **£1m Appeal** to fund the bursaries for the long term, which started in late 2011, rolled on under the chairmanship of the indefatigable (and persuasive) Vanni Treves (see page 9).

Meanwhile, we were planning for two events that were to take place in Italy in September. One was the first **Freedom Trail in the Marche**, based at Servigliano, site of the former PG59 camp. In truth, the bulk of the organisation was done by Roger Stanton and his colleagues in the WW2 Escape Lines Memorial Society. About 40 walkers, covering 15 miles a day through the rolling countryside, had a thoroughly enjoyable – and very emotional – time as they passed through villages that had hidden PoWs. Perhaps the most haunting moment came at the site of an iron cross near Montelparo. It marks the spot where a British escaper had been shot dead by the Germans and Fascists. The locals knew him as “Giorgio”. But who was this man? Since then, his identity has been established and, in May 2014 when the Freedom Trail again visited Montelparo, a memorial to Signalman Sidney Smith of Glasgow was unveiled (see page 5 for report of the ceremony and the 2014 Trail).

The final day of the four-day Trail in 2013 was a very important one for the Trust. The British ambassador, Christopher Prentice, came to Monte San Martino from Rome to present the Trust’s representative in Italy, **Antonio Millozzi, with an honorary MBE** for services to charity. We congratulate him warmly.

That same weekend, a large number of MSMT supporters – 70, in fact – were travelling to **Fontanellato, near Parma**, to celebrate the 70th anniversary at the invitation of its deputy mayor, Francesco Trivelloni, himself a former MSMT student. This was an amazing experience. It was instructive – a seminar on 1943 took place. It was moving – such as when former PoWs Michael Lacey and Frank Unwin opened the gates of PG49 camp (now a rehabilitation centre) after a ceremony on the Sunday; and when Michael greeted Ardua Ferrari, who had been a brave little girl when her family sheltered him. And it was such fun. The lunch hosted by the Rivalazzo countryside inn, with about 100 diners, made for a perfect start. By the time a joyous performance of arias by a brass quintet and three tenors had concluded at Fontanellato’s theatre that night, the atmosphere had become euphoric. The Trust is extremely fortunate to have a fine photographic record of both the Freedom Trail and the Fontanellato celebrations. Ibrahim Malla, a professional photographer, generously gave up his time to take photos, aided by his wife, Silvia. Some of his work can be seen on the facing page.

Back in the UK, other noteworthy events took place in the autumn. One was the launch at the **Imperial War Museum** of the wartime memoirs of Mrs Lucy de Burgh, who was one of the few women serving with the Allied armies in Italy. Sir Max Hastings gave an address putting her book, *My Italian Adventures: An English Girl at War*, in its historical context. There was also a supper at the **Italian embassy** on behalf of the Trust, kindly hosted by the Italian Ambassador, Pasquale Terracciano. In addition, **BBC Radio 4** broadcast a two-part programme on the Armistice and the PoWs, presented by Edward Stourton.

On the back of all this momentum, it was not surprising that the annual **Fontanellato luncheon**, at the Royal Overseas League on 30th October, attracted more supporters than ever before (128). We were treated to a speech by Keith Killby himself. Peppering it with anecdotes, he related how, when serving as a medical orderly with the S.A.S., he had been captured four times. The final speech was given by Christopher Woodhead, introducing a gripping video of the **de Burgh family’s crossing of the Alps** while retracing Lt. Col. Hugo de Burgh’s escape to Zermatt in 1943. Christopher’s tone was jocular, but few of his listeners were deceived: we were happy to be sitting at table in London rather than actually scaling the 4,300 metre-high summit of the Breithorn in mid-September, even though Champagne was served on the summit.

Left: Nick Young, MSMT chairman, speaks at the annual Fontanellato luncheon

John Simkins (see www.msmtrust.org.uk for full reports)

SNAPSHOTS OF 2013

A PICTORIAL RECORD

Clockwise: PoWs Frank Unwin and Michael Lacey with Fontanellato’s deputy mayor Francesco Trivelloni; Ambassador Christopher Prentice presents MBE to Antonio Millozzi; Tenna Valley war veteran Guerrino Balacco; walkers at Servigliano; memorial stone at former PoW camp in Fontanellato; the de Burgh expedition over the Alps





Nick Gent stands down as treasurer

In 1997, Nick Gent (left) spotted an article in a newspaper that intrigued him: it was about the work of the Monte San Martino Trust. Although Nick, who has an Italian mother, did not himself have a family connection with the PoW camps in Italy and did not become an Italophile until later in life, he was keen to learn more. So he wrote to Keith Killby, the MSMT founder. “Keith responded with great alacrity and I had no option but to sign up,” says Nick.

He has had to do more than sign up. Earlier this year, Nick stepped down as treasurer after nine years in the post, having originally been invited to become a trustee by Brian Lett, the previous chairman. This coincides with retirement from his professional career, as a fund manager with Rathbones.

The Trust owes Nick a huge debt of gratitude for giving the Trust the benefit of his investment expertise during a period in which the work of the treasurer – and, happily, its funds – have increased considerably. The knowledge that the Trust’s portfolio was in such safe and expert hands has been of great reassurance to fellow trustees and members.

The Trust is not losing Nick’s services because, although he hands over as treasurer to Justin de Meo (see below), he is continuing as a trustee. He also intends to spend more time in Italy – including participation in the Freedom Trail in Liguria in July, led by Brian Lett.

Treasurer’s report, Page 9

The MSMT board of directors has been strengthened by the appointment of two new trustees – Justin de Meo and Omar Bucchioni. We welcome them both and are grateful for their valuable support and expertise.

Justin de Meo, who takes over as treasurer in succession to Nick Gent, was brought up in Italy and England and lives near Salisbury. His father was Italian and was interned on the Isle of Man during the second world war. His English father-in-law fought at Anzio.

He has recently retired after a career in business, specialising in the acquisition and development of residential buildings. An Italian speaker, he visits Italy regularly and is also a member of the British Italian Society. He is married, with three adult sons.

Omar Bucchioni, nephew of Major General Dany Bucchioni, the partisan leader of the Val di Vara Brigade in Liguria/northern Tuscany (obituary, page 10), is himself a former student of the Monte San Martino Trust. Over the past eight years, he has been involved in the organisation of the Trust’s Freedom Trails in that same part of Italy.

A long-term friend of founder Keith Killby, Omar, as well as being the only Italian trustee, is the first student to have joined the board. A qualified barrister and solicitor in England and Wales, he trained as media lawyer at Osborne Clarke and currently works as legal adviser at Sky.

The full list of trustees is: Nick Young (chairman); Letitia Blake, (secretary); Justin de Meo (treasurer); Vanni Treves (Appeal chairman); Omar Bucchioni; Christine English; Caroline Gavin: Ian Laing; Tom Richardson.

The administrator is John Simkins. The representative in Italy is Antonio Millozzi and the UK student organiser is Edward Gretton.

A MEMORIAL STONE has been erected to Lt. Col Hugo de Burgh, whose brave actions in leading PoWs out of Fontanellato in September 1943 and in crossing the Alps to Switzerland make him one of the best known British escapers.

On 15th March, the stone was placed in the de Burgh graveyard at Maudlins, Naas, Co Kildare. Maudlins is a short walk from Oldtown, seat of the de Burghs since the late 17th century. The minister read Col. de Burgh’s favourite psalm, 121 – “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills whence cometh my help”.

Col. de Burgh, OBE, MC, who died in 1954, had a distinguished career as a soldier and horseman. He served in the first world war, in West Africa, India and Afghanistan, and again in the second world war, when he was captured in north Africa.

During the Allied occupation of Italy, he was Officer Commanding the Allied Screening Commission.

The day we honoured Sidney Smith

Anne Copley relates the story of PoW ‘Giorgio’ and the moving tribute to him

The ceremony that took place on 10th May 2014 in the hilltop town of Montelparo, in the Marche, east Italy, was extra special, even for those who have participated in many events to honour PoWs and their Italian helpers.

It took place during the Tenna Valley Freedom Trail and was prompted by the previous Trail in the valley last September, when we came across an iron cross said to mark the spot at which a certain “Giorgio” had been killed. As a member of both the MSMT and the WW11 Escape Lines Memorial Society, which jointly hosted the Trails, I decided to investigate further. With the assistance of Dennis Hill of Indiana University and British researcher Brian Sims, the whole story has been revealed. In parallel, Roger Stanton, director of ELMS, also organised research.

The outcome was the unveiling of a memorial stone and plaque on the opposite side of the lane from the iron cross, with an inscription honouring Sidney and all the brave Italians who sheltered PoWs. At least 100 people, including Lt Col. Peter Stoddart, of Sidney’s Royal Corps of Signals, who had arrived from Nato offices near Rome, Marino Screpanti, mayor of Montelparo, townspeople and Trail walkers, attended a very moving ceremony.

We now know that “Giorgio” was Signalman Sidney Seymour Smith, captured at the fall of Tobruk and imprisoned at Camp 53 Sforzacosta. How and when he escaped is unclear, but by November 1943 he was hiding at the house of the Mazzoni family, just outside Montelparo. The War Crimes file at the National Archives contains witness statements from the Mazzoni and Viozzi families (among others), from which the story of his murder on 21st March 1944 by the S.S. can be pieced together.

Sidney came from Old Kilpatrick, near Glasgow, and was a clever boy, having studied geography and philosophy at the University of Glasgow. His parents (his father was a plumber) were proud of his achievement, as evidenced in the recital on his war grave at Coriano Ridge Cemetery, which includes a reference to his Masters degree.

The ceremony was preceded by a marvellous lunch, in a beautifully cool crypt, laid on by Montelparo Comune. It was especially welcome to the walkers, including 16 students from a school in San Benedetto, who concluded a walk from Servigliano, where the Trail was based, with a stiff uphill climb to Montelparo. The guests included Raimondo Illuminati, who was a seven-year-old pupil at Montelparo Primary School in 1943, to whose class Sidney would read stories in Italian. Also present were Palmino Viozzi, 12 years old at the time, who witnessed some of the events leading up to Sidney’s murder. After lunch, Raimondo gave a very moving account of his memories of Sydney, who was about 6ft tall. “He was friendly and kind, always smiling. We were very fond of him and always behaved well when he read to us. He was different from some of the other prisoners of war because he was a graduate. He himself had chosen the name ‘Giorgio’ for when he was in hiding.”

Palmino (whose sister gave evidence to the subsequent War Crimes investigation and whose statement still lies in the National Archives), then told us of the events leading up to Sidney’s death.

It appears that two Germans appeared at the farm where Sidney was staying and took him away. One German left to go to another farm to collect another PoW. Sidney and his captor then stopped at the Viozzi farm nearby and Palmino witnessed Sidney asking for water. A jug was brought to him and, after taking a couple of gulps, he turned and hit his captor over the head with the jug. A struggle ensued but Sidney was overpowered. On the return of the other German (the other PoW having escaped out of a window) he was led up the road leading to Montelparo.

Palmino did not see what happened next but other witness statements on file show that they were met on the road by a band of about six Germans (probably from the S.S. Brandenburg Division). On hearing that Sidney had attacked one of his captors they started to beat him. When he fell to the ground he was shot several times and his



Lt Col Peter Stoddart lays a wreath, watched by Marino Screpanti, Montelparo’s mayor



body was left on the road. Palmino Viozzi (pictured left) and his father went up a few hours later and saw Sidney's body, which was given a post-mortem and then buried with due ceremony in the Montelparo cemetery. (The body was moved to Coriano Ridge war grave later.) Raimondo recalled that all the school children followed the procession. Both the Viozzi and the Mazzini families were lucky to escape the usual fate of those who assisted Allied PoWs, namely the burning down of their homes and outbuildings.

After lunch, very moved by the emotional recollections of Sidney, we walked for 15 minutes out of town to the site of the memorial. The mayor said the people of Montelparo had never forgotten Sidney. They had kept fresh flowers at the site and made the sign of the cross when passing it.

Geoff Cowling, chairman of ELMS, read out a message from Keith Brown, Minister for Transport and Veterans in the Scottish Government, in appreciation of the event. I then gave an account of Sidney's background. He only had one sister, who never married, and no living descendants have yet been found, despite an article in the Glasgow-based Herald newspaper. It is, therefore, all the more poignant that his memory has been kept alive by Italians with whom he shared only a few months.

The "Silenzio" (Italian version of the Last Post) was played. A wreath was laid by Cristina Franca on behalf of Montelparo. Cristina and her mother and grandmother have been responsible for the flowers at the site for many years, remembering, too, Cristina's great-uncle Giuseppe Biribei, who died a PoW in Germany on 5th April 1945 and is buried at the Italian war graves cemetery in Hamburg. Wreaths were also laid by Steve Sims for MSMT, Mike Davidson (ELMS), Lt Col Stoddart and by Roger Stanton for the Royal Signals Association. Roger read the Ode of Remembrance.

Nearby, the little church of Santa Maria, dating from the 16th century, had been opened especially and filled with fresh flowers. It offered a fitting opportunity for peaceful reflection after a very emotional day.

A video of the event is at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OfAZy2J-RPI>

The ceremony for Sidney Smith was not the only highlight of the Tenna Valley trail, which ran from May 7-12 2014. At least three families found out fresh information about their fathers' escapes, and in some cases even met descendants of families who had helped them. About 30 walkers came out from Britain and were joined by Italians and expatriates living in the area. The Trail, as in September 2013, took the form of three walks on successive days based at Servigliano, the site of Camp 59. MSMT is hugely grateful to Roger Stanton, director of the WW11 Escape Lines Memorial Society, which organised it, and to Steve Sims and Charles Perry, who drove the back-up vehicle. Invaluable help came from Tenna Valley residents Giuseppe Millozzi and Ian McCarthy. A blog of the walk can be found at www.msmtrust.org.uk.

The Trust also wishes "buon viaggio" to walkers on the Rossano Valley Freedom Trail, led by Brian Lett, which runs from July 1-5.

THE TRUST'S STUDENTS

MSMT is bringing 27 young Italians to England to study this year, in keeping with a programme that has provided about 500 one-month bursaries. They will go either to Central School, London, or CES-Oxford House, in Wheatley, near Oxford. Each bursary is worth about £2,000. The students come from regions where there were prisoner of war camps, including the Marche, Emilia-Romagna and Abruzzo. The first to arrive, in March, was Alessandra Terenziani, who won a drawing competition at Fontanellato for a logo to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Armistice. She reports that, at Oxford, she "had a wonderful experience with people, both with the teachers and with international students".

The Trust asks students to grade their tuition, accommodation, reception at the airport by Trust members, and contacts with our representatives in Italy and the UK. Sixteen of the students responded (13 went to London and three to Oxford). High marks were received in all categories. We are extremely grateful to Edward Gretton, the UK student organiser, for his hard work, and also to the Trust members who give up their time to meet students at airports and take them to their lodgings. We are always looking for more Greeters: please email info@msmtrust.org.uk if you can help.

Italian rambles

It was hardly a ramble for Tony Gregson (father and grandfather of the current "ramblers") who escaped from Bologna's PG19 under a rations lorry on 9th September 1943 and walked southeast, following the spine of the Apennines, to cross enemy lines and rejoin the Allies near Cassino on 6th November. Tony died, aged 92, in October 2012 and his family decided to take turns to follow his route, writing our own journal as we go.



Teddy Keen, Tony's grandson, was the first to take up the baton and set off from the camp in Bologna (now an army barracks) in May 2013 to walk to the top of Monte Falterona, the highest mountain in the area to the east of Florence. Tony's daughter Myfanwy (that's me) continued the journey from the top of Monte Falterona in September, finishing a little further south-east at Sansepolcro. Kind people donated £3,500 to the charities I was supporting – the Monte San Martino Trust and Afghan Connection.

Tony carried a home-made button compass, a water bottle and a small diary. He kept to high and remote paths as much as possible and slept under leaves in the woods when unable to find other shelter. Teddy and I each carried a tent, stove, provisions and extra clothes – and we weren't expecting to bump into the enemy around every corner. So, hardly comparable, but we both felt we experienced something of what Dad/Grandpa must have felt as he followed the same paths 70 years earlier.

We had both hoped to connect with people and places along the way. For Teddy, the highlight was an unexpected encounter with a couple who live beside the ruin of a cottage where Tony was nursed back to health when suffering from pneumonia. Alessandro and Alessandra showed Teddy the same hospitality – albeit in his tent in their garden and not sharing a bed with two farmworkers like Tony – and they discussed the past over a delicious supper and a few glasses of vino, despite not speaking each others' languages. For me, it was my meeting with a priest who lived in an isolated church perched on a cliffside, just above a cottage where Dad had spent a night, which I reached 70 years to the day after he had been there. Communication was laborious; however, I got a bit choked thinking about my father gazing out over the same valley, and the priest just put his arms round me and words weren't needed.

'The priest just put his arms round me and words weren't needed'

You certainly appreciate friendly human contact when you're alone. Tony must have felt this even more strongly, especially since he depended on the people he met to help him and not betray him. People in the countryside don't seem to have changed in essence from those brave *contadini* who risked their homes and lives to shelter him. Both Teddy and I also spent time with the family in Bologna who lived in the farmhouse just outside the camp and who sheltered him immediately after his escape after finding him hiding in their manure heap. Dad had visited them several times on his motorbike and the friendship between our two families is hugely important to them and to us.

We both experienced moments of discomfort. Picture Teddy with his trousers down, having iodine liberally applied to his left buttock by an old lady after having had a chunk of it removed by her less-friendly dog. And me in my tent one night hearing an animal outside (there are wolves in the Apennines) and texting my son Jack to ask whether I should put my food inside or outside, only to receive a text back saying that it made no difference since it was only the starter!

It rained on both of us and we slipped and slid on steep, muddy paths. Teddy's stove failed and he had to manage with oats and polenta swelled with cold water. My sleeping mat developed a puncture and dumped me on the cold, hard ground. But it didn't matter: we weren't in fear for our lives, wearing the only clothes we had, or unsure of finding shelter for the night (even if it was a sodden tent!). Then the sun would come out and you would catch your breath at a sudden, sweeping view from a clearing on the ridge or at the beauty of shafts of sunlight piercing the swirling mists in the woods. And you might even feel a pang of envy of Tony's true adventure.

When we, as a family, eventually reach the place near Cassino where Dad crossed enemy lines, we plan to climb up to a high ledge where he spent several days watching troop movements before making his break for freedom. He tried signalling to the Allies with a home-made heliograph, which he hid there rather than risk being caught with it on him and shot as a spy. We'll carry a bottle or two of vino up with us to celebrate the end of our walk and raise a glass to him. Wouldn't it be amazing if, as a finale, we found the heliograph?

My eldest son Henry has recently set off to pick up the path where I left off. There's still an awful long way to go. But we have all the time in the world to get there and, after all, for us it's just a ramble.

Myfanwy Adams

It comes as no surprise that there has been an explosion of research into family history coinciding with the rise of the internet. Something that might have taken weeks and several trips to the archives to uncover can now be found in a matter of minutes. And perhaps more exciting is the ease with which individuals from different corners of the world can make contact, exchange photos and artefacts, and add enormously both to their own stories and to historical research in general. One example of this can be found at

Digging around in Servigliano



Dennis Hill at Servigliano

<http://camp59survivors.wordpress.com/>, a website maintained by Dennis Hill of Indiana University, USA. Dennis's father was a PoW at PG59 Servigliano and, having interviewed his father in the 1980s, he decided to honour his name and all others who went through the same experiences by starting a simple blog in January 2008. The first entry was a transcript of Dennis's interview with his father.

He may not have realised what he was starting, but over the past six years he has amassed a wealth of material, nearly all supplied by individuals who are searching for information about their own family members, be they fathers, grandfathers, uncles or others. Having initially concentrated on PG59, Dennis is slowly extending his reach as people come to him with information about other camps. And perhaps most gratifyingly, contacts made through his website have led to face-to-face meetings between children of both the Italian helpers and the Allied soldiers they kept safe.

What started as a personal project with limited aims has become a vital tool for research in this area and a recommended first stop for anyone starting out on their own search. Dennis is far too self-effacing about his efforts, so this is a good opportunity for us to thank him for his continuing commitment and hard work.

Dennis also made a significant contribution to the publication last year of Keith Killby's book, *In Combat, Unarmed*, a project led by Keith's nephew, Malcolm Angus. Dennis generously assisted in its design and production.

Anne Copley

Teresina's story

In the late 1970s, I was watching the News on television with my family one evening. It was covering the elections in, what was then, Rhodesia and showed a close-up of one of the candidates, Ian Smith. "I know him," my mother Teresina whispered. "Who, Mam-

ma?" I asked, in our dialect, thinking I had misheard. "Him, I met him a long time ago," she repeated convincingly, and went on to tell her story. . .

During the second world war, she was a teenager in Italy, living on a farm with her family outside the village of Bardi, in the Apennines. One morning, around 4.30 am., there was a knock on the door. Her father opened it to find four British servicemen asking for help. They were welcomed indoors and my mother and her sister prepared some warm milk and bread for them. They slept in the hay loft and stayed with the family for four days and three nights.

Every morning, the men climbed to the highest point they could find in the surrounding hills so they could look down the valley to see if the Germans were approaching. Then they were gone. They had said that they thought the Allies would land in Genoa so it was assumed they left to make their way there.

We know that Ian Smith was on the run in Italy, but whether he went past Bardi is uncertain. Perhaps my mother was mistaken. If so, then who was the tall, handsome soldier in British uniform she remembered so well?

Gianni Belli

Editor's note: Ian Smith, prime minister of Rhodesia from 1964-79, had joined the RAF in 1941 and become a pilot officer. In 1943, he suffered facial and other injuries when his Hurricane crashed in Egypt. After returning to his squadron, in Corsica, his aircraft was hit by flak and he was forced to bale out in Liguria behind enemy lines. He joined up with partisans and then, with three others, hiked across the maritime Alps before being picked up by the Americans.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Having resigned as Treasurer earlier this year, after nine years in the post, this is my last report and I am pleased to be handing over to the new Treasurer in the knowledge that the charity's financial position is in good shape. Total assets now amount to a little over £1,100,000. Of this, slightly less than £70,000 is held in cash, with the balance in the investment portfolio. This remains conservatively deployed and well diversified, and continues to generate attractive risk-adjusted returns. At about this time last year, the total assets were approximately £800,000.

The principal reason for the further improvement in finances is the inflows arising from the Appeal, launched at the end of 2011. The total amount raised, including sums pledged, is now £775,000. This is a very creditable achievement for a small, specialist charity and I applaud the efforts and energy of our Appeal chairman, Vanni Treves. **Please read his report, below.**

Given our commitment to provide around 20 bursaries each year to Italian students, which now cost the Trust the best part of £40,000 annually, we are aiming to increase assets to over £1.5m. If one allows for the expenses of running the charity as well, the total annual costs are typically about £50,000. At this level, we should be well placed to finance all outgoings from the investments.

We still, therefore, have some way to go – although we are, of course, extremely grateful to all our supporters, as it is only with your help that we have been able to get to our current position. We are mindful of the fact that our obligations are not only towards the Italian students who enjoy our bursaries but also to you, who continue to be so generous in your support. These obligations have a strong bearing on the way we run the finances of the charity.

Finally, I would like to take the opportunity of wishing my successor, Justin de Meo, every success in his new post. I have every confidence in him.

Nicholas Gent



Our Appeal... the target in sight

Vanni Treves writes

At this time last year, the Appeal had raised £475,000. That figure has now increased to £720,000, with firm promises in hand totalling £55,000 on top of that.

So, by the end of 2014 we will, barring accidents, be about 80 per cent of the way towards our target of £1m. When we reach it, we can be confident that, for generations to come, the Trust will continue to recognise, through its bursaries to young Italian people, the unforgettable bravery and generosity of the Italian *contadini* who sheltered Allied PoWs during the second world war. A great number of individuals have made substantial gifts and we are so very grateful to them all. We also record the generosity of many large and smaller charitable trusts. These include: the Swire Charitable Trust; the Garfield Weston Foundation; the J Paul Getty Jnr Charitable Trust; the Mercers' Company; the Band Trust; the Eranda Foundation; the 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust; the Peter Stebbings Memorial Trust; and the Pears Foundation.

We approach possible benefactors, and thank those who support us, in every possible way: by correspondence, in meetings and through our website. But two events of particular significance must be mentioned.

The first was a splendid supper given on our behalf last October by Ambassador and Signora Terracciano at the Italian embassy, subsidised by Smeg, the leading Italian domestic appliance manufacturer. Such was the occasion's success that the Ambassador has recently offered to host another such event this autumn, at which Frederick Forsyth, the hugely popular author, will tell us a story. Then, a few weeks ago, Field Marshal The Lord Guthrie gave a magnificent dinner in the Peers' Dining Room of The House of Lords, at which the Ambassador also spoke. That dinner was sponsored by Macfarlanes and Maisto & Associates, the distinguished English and Italian law firms, and was attended by some 70 of their friends. We greatly appreciate the support of Ambassador and Signora Terracciano, of Lord and Lady Guthrie, and of First Secretary Edoardo Napoli – as well, of course, as the munificence of our sponsors.

So we are nothing daunted. What greater encouragement can there be than the knowledge that the work of the Trust, our Appeal's objectives and the fundamental values that we seek to perpetuate resonate with so many people?

We greatly appreciate all donations. Cheques can be sent to: Justin de Meo, Treasurer, MSMT, Penruddocke House, Baverstock, Salisbury, Wilts, SP3 5EN, or through Justgiving at www.msmtrust.org.uk, with an accompanying note to us at info@msmtrust.org.uk. We are keen to expand our list of members' emails. If you would like to receive news this way, and we do not have your email address, please inform us at info@msmtrust.org.uk

OBITUARIES

The Trust is sad to record the deaths of the following supporters of MSMT and expresses deep sympathy for their families and friends



Major General Daniele “Dany” Buccchioni, OBE, King’s Medal, (left), who died on 24th June 2013 aged 95, was a partisan leader and a member of the Special Forces Club.

Dany, a young Italian lieutenant when the Armistice was signed with Italy in September 1943, from a Catholic and anti-Fascist family, grabbed the opportunity to fight against the dictatorship of Benito Mussolini and was soon leading a partisan brigade in the area of La Spezia/northern Tuscany, on the Gothic Line – the last major line of Nazi defence in Italy.

He cooperated closely with the SOE’s Major Gordon Lett, DSO, an escaped prisoner of war and the British Liaison Officer in charge of Mission Blundell Violet and the International Battalion of Rossano.

In late 1943, Dany and his men secured the boundaries of the Rossano valley so successfully that 33 men of SAS Operation Galia, commanded by Captain Bob Walker Brown, landed by parachute to be greeted not by enemy fire but by a cup of tea. From 1943-45, Dany and his men ran an escape line known as “The Railway”, sending hundreds of escaping refugees and PoWs through highly patrolled enemy lines and the marble mountains above Carrara to Allied territory. This was done even in the bitterest of winter conditions, proudly with no casualties.

Despite the Nazis placing a considerable reward on his head, Dany and his brigade provided support to a number of SAS operations and fought a guerrilla-like war very successfully against the Nazis and Fascists. On two occasions, they defeated SS troops carrying out a *rastrellamento*, that is, raking through the mountains and valleys searching for partisans, escaped prisoners and their civilian helpers. In the final battle for the strategic town of Aulla, Dany and his partisans, in liaison with Captain Freddy Williams of the SOE, fought courageously and achieved a significant victory. Dany was awarded the King’s Medal for his valiant conduct in support of the cause of freedom.

He remained a good friend of the UK throughout his life and, with great pride, received an OBE in 2005.

Omar Buccchioni

Fred Crutchett, who died last autumn, joined up as a Territorial at the start of the war and served with the Royal Artillery in the Eighth Army in Egypt and North Africa before being transferred to the Far East.

Fred was awarded the DCM in 1944 for his actions at Runaway Hill in the battle of Imphal, one of the turning points in the Burma campaign. His citation reads: “His courage, calm and grasp of the situation were worthy of the very highest praise... By his actions he steadied the infantry and enabled very valuable covering fire to be brought down which undoubtedly prevented even heavier casualties.”

He served with at least two later prisoners of Fontanellato, Maurice Goddard and Jock Donagher. Fred was nearby when Donagher was captured in the Gazala area in June 1942.

Fred was a welcome participant in many annual MSMT luncheons and his presence will be greatly missed.

Peter Stericker, who died in December aged 96, was educated at Wellington College where he won an English Speaking Union Scholarship in 1935 to study at Philips Academy, Boston, USA. He became a stockbroker in London and then continued this career in Calcutta, aged only 20.

At the outbreak of war in 1939, the Calcutta Stock Exchange closed and Peter taught in St. Paul’s School, Darjeeling before joining his father’s regiment, The Duke of Cornwall’s Light Infantry, as a signals officer in Lahore. In 1941 the DCLI moved to Baghdad before being posted to Egypt where, along with many others from the DCLI, Peter was captured near Tobruk. He was taken to a PoW camp at Rezzanello and subsequently to Fontanellato in spring 1943, by then aged 23. In September 1943, upon the capitulation of Italy, he and his friend, Peter Watson, set off to join the Allied lines in the south. During the exceptionally harsh winter they sheltered in barns and caves, begged

for food and worried that the locals who helped them would be exposed. After several months on the move, mainly at night, they reached the coast a few miles from the Allied lines only to be betrayed by a priest. They were recaptured and shipped to Germany, not to be released until the end of the war.

Peter had been away from home for eight years – the last four with no communication. He returned to find that his sister’s wedding had taken place just the week before! He, himself, met and married Pamela Holtom in 1946 and settled in Newquay, Cornwall, having been made director of a laundry where he always described his occupation as “taking in other people’s dirty washing”. They had three children, Lizz, Louise and Charles. After Pam’s death in 1971, he married for a second time, to Paddy Conlon. Peter was an extremely keen supporter of the Monte San Martino Trust and the annual luncheon would not be the same without a strong showing of Sterickers. When Peter became too frail to attend himself he would buy tickets for other members of the family to represent him.

Peter was always the perfect gentleman, extremely humble and modest, charming, kind and interested in others. His courage and stoicism during the war years stood him in good stead throughout his varied and interesting life, not least following the tragic and unexpected death of his son, Charles, earlier in 2013.

Louise Bruce

Dennis Read, DSM, who died on 25th November aged 96, was the radio operator on HM Submarine Saracen, which was sunk by depth charges off Corsica in 1943. He and other survivors were taken to Manziana PoW camp, by Lago di Bracciano. After the Armistice, the crew fled the camp. Separated from his companions, Dennis met a goatherd called Eugenio Darrida, with whom he spent the next four months. In January 1944, he bade Eugenio farewell and walked to the Sabine hills. He found refuge with the Barreca family in Selci, before continuing on to reach the Allied lines in June 1944. He led an army truck back to Selci to liberate the family and stayed on there at the request of the Allied military government.

After the war, Dennis left the Navy and served in the Army, before retiring to live in Somerset. In recent years his son, David, has renewed contact with the Barreca family. Dennis never forgot their bravery, and that of Eugenio Darrida.

Coincidentally, Dennis was on board HMS Saracen when the submarine landed a party of SAS that included Keith Killby, MSMT founder, on Sardinia.

Major Walter James (Jim) Darville, who died in September aged 91, served with the 2nd Battalion The Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regiment and was captured at Hunts Gap, Tunisia, in April 1943. Taken to Italy, he escaped in September from Fontanellato PoW camp and endured several months on the run, being befriended by Italian families. Hampered by freezing temperatures, a shortage of food and lack of footwear, he was recaptured. He spent four months in Oflag V111F and was then incarcerated in Oflag 79 at Brunswick until liberated by the Americans.

After the war, he resumed his career in printing and continued a long association with the Army by serving as a Territorial. He passed away at his house in Moggerhagger, Bedfordshire, where he had lived for 50 years. His wife Barbara predeceased him and he is survived by his daughter Jackie and son Simon.

Alan Hurst-Brown, who died last September aged 92, was a young lieutenant in the 9th Battalion, Rifle Brigade, when he was injured, and captured, at the battle of Mersa Brega in March 1941.

Transported to south Italy, he was first a prisoner of war at Sulmona before being moved to a fortified monastery at Padula in May 1942. After escaping with two other officers through a tunnel in September that year, he was recaptured while trying to steal a boat at Bisceglie, near Bari. He was then taken to the so-called punishment camp at Gavi, north of Genoa.

At the Armistice in September 1943, he and about 100 companions were crowded into cattle trucks by the Germans for a dreadful rail journey to Germany, during which one of his friends was shot dead. Alan was eventually liberated from the PoW camp at Brunswick.

After the war he became a stockbroker, eventually becoming senior partner of Rowe & Pitman Hurst-Brown. A keen sportsman and passionate fisherman, he and his wife June, who survives him, latterly lived near Winchester.

Alan was always adamant that “he did not really owe anything to the Italians”. However, he supported MSMT because, he said, he approved of its objectives and out of affection for brother officers who were members of the Trust.

A marathon effort

Miles Skinner has come up with an idea that takes the breath away. He wishes to pay tribute to his grandparents, Stan and Jo Skinner, and do so in a way that will benefit the Monte San Martino Trust, of which they were strong supporters. To achieve this, he intends to run 10 marathons in 10 days and raise £10,000 in sponsorship.

Nice round numbers, but easier said than done. Miles is now searching for a route within Italy and working out the logistics, with the aim of running the marathons in 2015.

Stan, who died a few years ago, was captured in north Africa and imprisoned at Sulmona. After the Armistice he escaped and succeeded in rejoining the Allies. Sadly, his close friend, Peter Allcoat, was killed when they were together during bombing at L'Aquila station. Stan later met and married his sister – Jo, herself.

Jo, who died in February, was keen for Miles, who is aged 28 and working in Germany, to raise money for the Trust. His thoughts turned naturally to marathons: last year he undertook an ultra-marathon (100km) to raise money for a children's hospice; and he has a best time of 3 hours 6 minutes for a marathon. He plans to have companion runners on at least part of the route, which is intended to include tracks that prisoners took on their way to freedom. It is a very ambitious project but one that Miles is determined to see realised.



Registered Charity
No. 1113897

Keep up with MSMT
news at
www.msmtrust.org.uk.
Contributions and
enquiries to John
Simkins, newsletter
editor, at
info@msmtrust.org.uk

DATES FOR THE DIARY

Don't miss a fascinating exhibition of photographs at the **Museum of the Order of St John, in St John's Gate, Clerkenwell, from 21st July to 29 August 2014**. Stories of Friendship is presented by Accademia Apulia UK and will feature more than 100 photographs from the Imperial War Museum.

The photos were taken by war reporters of the 8th RAF Squadron in Apulia from 1943 to 1945 and focus on encounters between British soldiers and the local people, mostly farmers and artisans. They give the impression of seeing a meeting of men who, despite coming from different backgrounds and holding seemingly incompatible roles, show mutual respect. Some of the photos were taken by the journalist Alan Whicker, then a Captain in the Film and Photographic Unit of the British Army. There will also be a section dedicated to Jewish refugees who were taken from concentration camps to recover in Puglia before leaving for Palestine.

MSMT supporters are welcome to attend the private view on 24th July, if they email info@accademiapulia.org. Speakers will include: Mark Whitmore, Director of Collections and Research at the Imperial War Museum; David Perryman whose father (from the Sharpshooters Yeomanry) was killed by the Nazis in San Severo; and Giuseppe Clemente, who as a young boy from San Severo witnessed Nazi atrocities, but also the arrival of the 8th Army.

Monte San Martino Annual Luncheon will be held on Wednesday 19th November at Royal Overseas League, London. Invitations will be sent out in September. We look forward to seeing as many supporters as possible.

WW2 ESCAPE LINES MEMORIAL SOCIETY

7th December 2014: The Helper Memorial Service at St Clement Danes, London, honouring those who helped organise escape routes in Europe.

23rd–26th April 2015: Annual ELMS meeting at York and Eden Camp.

MSMT members are welcome to attend both events and should contact Roger Stanton, ELMS director, on 01423 508667 or at rogerstanton.elms@tpiz.co.uk

POSTSCRIPT: A supporter has supplied the following story, which he says is true in essence even if the years may have coloured it a bit. It concerns his father's great friend, a member of the Long Range Desert Group, whose style was to do nothing for four and a half days of their patrol and then stir up a Panzer division before retreating and directing the relieving group to the fighting.

The soldier was captured, however, and sent to a PoW camp in Italy. He escaped, made his way to the Alps and found a guide to take him over to Switzerland. The man said the fee was £100 but that, as a PoW, the soldier could pay after the war. The climb was completed successfully.

The soldier was determined to pay his debt but, after the war, Brits were only allowed to take £25 abroad per annum. So he went to Italy four times...

Registered address: Flat 7, 18 Lambolle Road, London NW3 4HP
MSMT Founder: Cavaliere Ufficiale J. Keith Killby, OBE