YCCCART

Yatton Congresbury Claverham and Cleeve Archaeological Research Team

Newsletter August 2021

Chairman's chat

It has been nearly five months since the last newsletter and in that edition I was hoping we could resume surveying in late Spring. Fortunately we are now out in the field surveying albeit mainly in team 'bubbles'. Surveying is continuing at Woodspring Priory, on the Mendips near Tynings Farm tracking a Roman road and on Yatton Moor, just off Ham Lane near the Little River.

This edition concentrates on a local incident and a mystery both relating to WW1, interesting structures also relating to WW11, plus local detectorist finds and a WW1 monument. Vince's corner brings us back home to Kenn Moor.

By the time you read this I hope we have concuded an AGM and made some decisions about meeting up again for coffee, future surveys and resolving our financial situation.

Arthur

Bomber shot down over Congresbury

On the 7th May, 1941 a German Heinkel bomber, raiding Bristol, was attacked and shot down by night fighters. The bomber had a crew of five who baled out over Congresbury. It was a bright moonlit night and Connie Wookey in Mill Lane recalled watching the parachutists come down across the river "in the Kent Road - Wrington Lane area". Mr Wally Walter watched the descending airmen and said: "I saw the plane come down and it was like a firework display when it hit the ground off Stock Lane."

Herr Heinz Dietrich, came down in the garden of Spring Cottage, Kent Road. He tried to escape over a wall to join his comrades but was quickly taken prisoner by a detachment of the Home Guard who were on duty at their headquarters nearby, in a cottage (now demolished), on Wards's Hill. One of the captor's clearest recollections of the event was the sound of George Long's voice shouting from an upstairs window: "Get off my bloody onions."

The remainder of the crew were rounded up and interrogated at the Police Station in Glen Yeo Terrace by P.C. Hillier, before being driven to the cells in Weston-super-Mare.

Heinz Dietrich returned to the village in 1974 and met many of those involved in his capture as well as the new owners of Spring Cottage, Mr and Mrs Ernest Lush.

Above: Mr Jack Palmer with a fragment from the bomber and German medal. Circa 1941.

Left: Mr Ernie Lush (centre) and Herr Heinz Dietrich (2nd right) in 1974.

A WW11 Mystery

Sometime ago Glen Browne and Anthea Parfitt two Cleeve residents noticed a remembrance cross and poppy pinned to a fencepost in a field north of the playing fields indicating an aircraft crash in September 1939 (see photo.) When they looked it up on line the account said the record had been updated in October 2019 which is why it had not been included in a list of crashes and emergency landings published in 'All About Cleeve' published in January and February 1998 by Ross Floyd.

John Penny, a well- known local historian was able to throw some light on the incident.

"*Over the years I have compiled a comprehensive list of aircraft which came down in the old County of Avon area during World War Two, but as Blenheim P4853 fails to appear in it I've dug a bit deeper. I immediately found that the incident has caused confusion to various aviation historians, writers and enthusiasts, due to someone misreading a primary source, an error which over time has been perpetuated and re-interpreted by others. The crux of the matter seems to be that RAF Cleave in Cornwall has been confused with the village of Cleeve in North Somerset. This in part has been due to the entry for it in 'Royal Air Force Bomber Command Losses of the Second World War', Volume 1 - 1939 to 1940, 2nd edition, by W.R. Chorley who states that prior to crashing it "Took off Cleeve for Air Firing Practice*".

Aircraft Movement Cards (AM Form 78) were used to record the allocation of an aircraft to units, and the dates on which damage was sustained and repaired, or the aircraft written off. The surviving cards are held by the Ministry of Defence Air Historical Branch, the RAF Museum also holds copies on microfilm. The Form 78 for Bristol Blenheim IV, P4853, records it as being in charge of No.82 Squadron in September 1939, but only that it "*crashed on approach, Cleave, 10.9.39*". There is no further information on the card,so did that indicate that it was damaged beyond repair and never returned to service?

Following the outbreak of war in September 1939 a number of different operational RAF Squadrons arrived at RAF Netheravon in Wiltshire under the so called 'Scatter Scheme' designed to protect Britain's bomber force from surprise attack. In order to confuse the enemy, the squadrons would arrive one day and leave the next. One of those involved was No.82 (United Provinces) Squadron, a part of No.79 Wing within No.2 Group, which had started the war flying anti-shipping missions over the North Sea. Equipped with Bristol Blenheim IV light bombers, it was then based at Watton, near Thetford in Norfolk and, according to the Operation Record Book of No.82 Squadron, P4853 took off from there at 04.50 hrs on 10 September 1939.

After arriving at Netheravon it took off again for its final destination, RAF Cleave in Cornwall, from where it was to undertake a training flight involving air firing practice over one of the gun ranges that had been established in the Bristol Channel off the coast of North Devon and Cornwall. Located just west of Kilkhampton, and about 4¼ miles north of Bude in Cornwall, RAF Cleave, was the aerodrome that housed elements of No.1 Anti-Aircraft Co-Operation Unit, the formation responsible for providing the target and target support aircraft for the nearby firing ranges.

It appears that after the practice had been completed P4853 suffered an engine failure while on approach to the airfield and, while trying to force land, the Blenheim hit telegraph wires and cart-wheeled. The pilot, 516867 Sergeant James Pratt*, aged 25, who served as James McLaughlin, died from his injuries at 20.30 hrs that same evening, while 549796 AC1 George Henry Butler, the flight mechanic, who was aged 19, also succumbed to his wounds soon after the crash. Both received private funerals: Sgt Pratt at Church of the Annunciation, Woodchester, in Gloucestershire*, while AC1 Butler, son of Francis Henry Butler and of May Lilian Butler (Nee Carter), of Hounslow, was interred in Hounslow Cemetery in Greater London. The other two crewmen, AC1 J. Dorman, and AC1 Ronald Patrick Arthur Dougan, both survived injured.

* His grave stone reads J. Pratt, served as 516867 Sergeant J. McLaughlin, Pilot, Royal Air Force. Died 10th September 1939 Age 25. It was inscribed in memory of my dear son.

McLaughlin had qualified as a pilot by way of Hamble and No.2 Flying Training School at Brize Norton in Oxfordshire, gaining his flying badge on 3 January 1938. It's still a bit of a mystery regarding Pratt's alias as McLaughlin, but I have come across similar situations where some form of adoption had taken place within the family"

Aviation Safety Network updated 7/11/2019 says an aircraft of that number P4853 was lost in action on 17/5/40 on a mission to Belgium. So perhaps as well as the two injured survivors ACIs J Dorman and R Dougan maybe the plane was repaired.

John Penny later added -

"*Perhaps those who made the lovely gesture of putting crosses on the fence posts selected a locality which looked like it could have been the place where a crash took place. If they have any information which contradicts what I think happened, I would of course be delighted to alter my notes.* "

A search through any surviving local Civil Defence or Fire Brigade records might help to finally put the story to bed once and for all. Any local police records would be of particular interest as on the morning of 7 September 1939 the Air Ministry, through the Ministry of Information, issued instructions to members of the public regarding grounded aeroplanes as follows: "Any member of the public who sees an aeroplane land or crash open country near at hand, is requested to inform the nearest police officer or police station, if possible, by telephone. The police should be informed as

as accurately as possible of the position the aircraft and the numbers and condition of the crew."

I have already tried checking where the men's death certificates were issued, but of course Civil Registration did not apply to members of the armed forces. In addition no mention is made in local newspapers as strict censorship permitted only reports of enemy aircraft crashes to be published, as these were good for morale."

It would be interesting to know who is possibly a member of one of the four airmen's families and placed the cross on the post.

Marianne Pitman

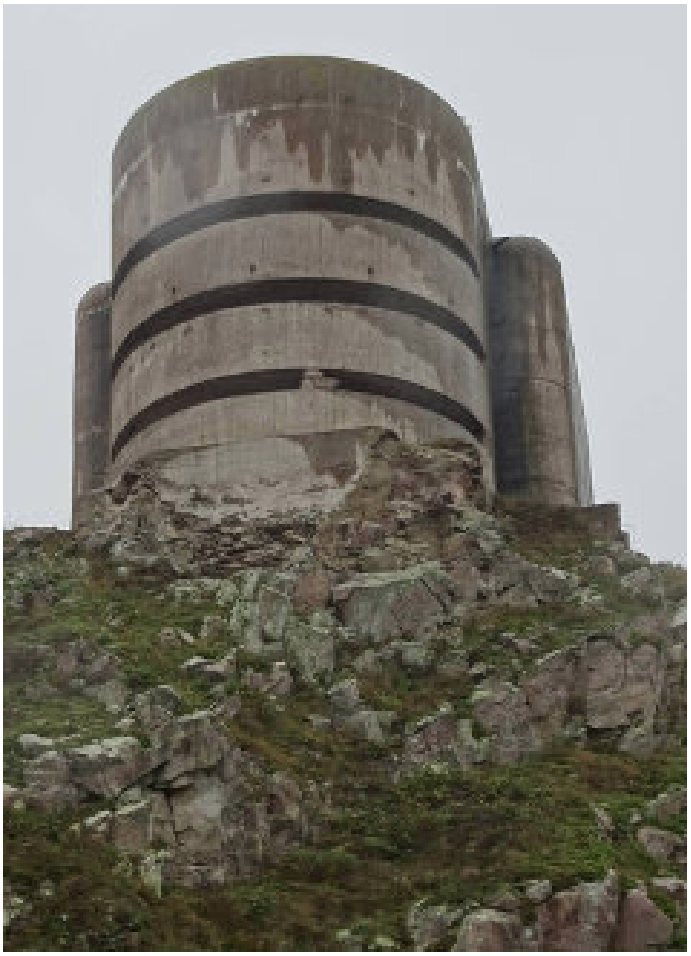
German fortifications on Alderney

Although the island of Alderney had been a significant feature nearly all my life, my Father and Grandparents were islanders, I had never visited the place as an adult.

In 2019 my family and I paid a short visit to reconnect with our family roots. We found many locations connected to my family and innumerable gravestones of past ancestors.

What I didn't expect to see were so many reminders of the German occupation. These are not treated as tourist attractions but are just there! All of the generation that was evacuated in 1940 are long gone but memories run deep on the island and there are still families who do not recognise other families because of what occurred after liberation. Maybe this mind set is the reason why these, often enormous constructions of concrete and rusting steel, have been left alone.

Along side the beach defences, still clearly visible and the Napoleonic and Palmerstone forts which were commandeered for use by German officers there are many other sites of bunkers and gun emplacements.



Illustrated are two of the most prominent constructions on the island.

The water-tower sits uncomfortably in a residential area of the small town of St Anne's, dominating the surrounding houses whilst the observation tower, nicknamed the Odeon, still defiantly challenges the French coastline.

Such was Hitler's determination to hold on to this tiny foothold in the English Channel that a garrison of 3,000 along side thousands of slave labourers were deployed to make this one of his most heavily defended territories.

Alderney is a reminder of just how close Hitler came.

Janet Dickson

Ramsgate tunnels

The Tunnels were first opened as part of a railway on 5th October 1863, the line was to serve Ramsgate Harbour station. By 1926, Ramsgate had two stations run by two different companies, the Town station was run by South Eastern Railway, and the Harbour or Sands station was run by London, Chatham and Dover Railway. The lines were rationalised in 1926, and became the Southern Railway. Town station was rebuilt and a new station was opened at Dumpton Park, the Sands station and its tunnels were abandoned.

In 1936, the tunnels found a new use, and became part of a narrow gauge electric railway, linking Dumpton with a new station at Hereson Road, this amusement attraction opened on 31st July 1936.

By 1938, Ramsgate's borough engineer, R D Brimmell, had started working on plans to construct an underground protection system. The town already had underground shelters dating from World War1, situated in the east and west cliffs. The new system proposed more entrances in public places, so that most of the population would be within 1/4 mile of an access point. After much discussion, by the council, the plan was deferred.

However, in 1939, when it became clear about Hitler's intentions towards Czechoslovakia, a third application, to build the air raid tunnel system, was made. Eventually on 20th March 1939, permission was granted, by the Home Office, to the town, to build the tunnels.
As a result of the determined efforts of the Borough Council and contrary to Government policy, Ramsgate got its tunnels, which became the most extensive underground public shelter system in the country. The system of tunnels provided shelter for 60,000 people, and was opened by the Duke of Kent on 1st June 1939. The Tunnels were 6 feet wide, 7 feet high and were 50-70 feet underground, this was to provide protection against random bombing from 500lb and 1000lb medium capacity bombs. On 24th august 1940, 500 bombs were dropped on the town, by a squadron of German aircraft approaching RAF Manston, the leading plane was shot down over Ramsgate harbour and in vengeance the planes dropped their bombs over the town, this was the first raid over an unprotected town.

When in use the tunnels were equipped with chemical toilets, bunk beds, seating, lighting and a public address system. Some people moved into the tunnels after being bombed out of their houses, on a permanent basis.

In 1945 the tunnels were sealed and abandoned, but in 1946, the tunnel was cleared and the Scenic Railway started up again, for a short while.

A Heritage group was formed in 2011, and was successful in gaining Heritage Lottery funding, the Tunnels are now a visitor attraction with guided tours.

Philippa Cormack

Slave labour on Alderney

The Hammond Memorial is a very poignant memorial to the many nationalities that ended up on this 3.5 x 1.5 mile island as forced labour and a sad reminder of the many prisoners who were forced to endure the most inhumane conditions as POWs or slave labourers.

Alderney had several camps housing men from many countries especially Russians and Spanish prisoners but it also had two concentration camps for political prisoners and Jews run by the SS. Just writing that makes me feel uncomfortable.

There are at least 400 known burials of these unfortunate men but as all traces of the slave labour camps were burnt to the ground in 1945 by the German Commandant at the time along with all of the records it's impossible to know just how many died. It used to be thought that it was numbered in the hundreds but it's now estimated to be in the thousands as many would have been thrown into the sea as so much detritus.

Whilst the fortifications remain all evidence of the camps has disappeared, their locations only marked on maps. Post WW2 the occupation of the Channel Islands and especially what happened on Alderney was extremely embarrassing to the British Government and this still remains an incredibly sensitive issue. It's sobering to think that men were starved, tortured and beaten to death on British soil.

Janet Dickson

A few detector finds

I first started detecting towards the end of the 1970's. I have never found anything of great value, just interesting bits and pieces. The most interesting find was the seal matrix found in Congresbury and now on display in the M Shed. The most valuable was a Victorian sovereign found in Clutton.

Here are six items of interest.

No. 1 is a brass blinker plate from a heavy horse harness found in the same field as the seal matrix, it has the initials T N who would have been the owner of the harness. Maybe a research project for the history group.

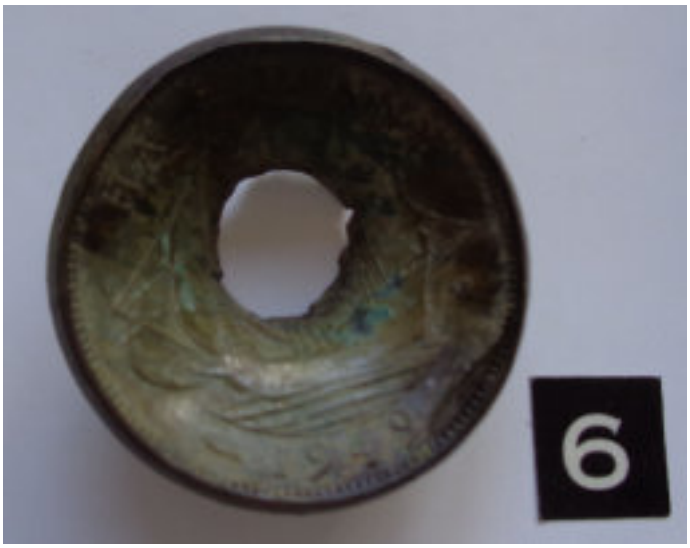
No. 2 a couple of silver thimbles, the larger one was found in a park at Clevedon and the smaller one was found in Devizes.

No 3 is a brass uniform button that would have been on a uniform of an employee of the Bear Hotel in Devizes. This was found on the same day as the small thimble.

No 4 the oldest coin I found was a Sesterses of Antoninus Pius 138-161 AD. It is a very thick coin 4.15mm. This was discovered in Latcham near Wedmore.

No. 5 A hammered silver Groat of Edward III. This design was in circulation 1351-2. Unearthed in a field on the edge of West Harptree.

No. 6 Is 1949 ha'penny with what appears to be a bullet hole in it, if this is so it wasn't a great shot as it is off centre. I can't remember where I found this.



I have found many hundreds of items of interest over the years and a lot of rubbish. It was fun will a was still able to detect.

David Long

The Vimy Memorial

In the summer of 2014 we travelled across Northern France to to Alsace and Germany. My wife had been to the Vimy Ridge Memorial several times on school trips and she was keen to show me the memorial. The Memorial is on a low escarpment in northern France, rising about 150 metres above the countryside that overlooks the Douai Plain, about ten kilometres northeast of Arras on the N17 towards Lens.

Whole area around the memorial is pock marked by shell holes

While Vimy ridge is an unremarkable height, it was a military strongpoint, dominating the surrounding lowlands. By 1917, the Germany army had turned the ridge into a fortress studded with concrete pillboxes, deep dugouts and bunkers, festooned with thickets of barbed wire and covered by hundreds of machine guns and artillery pieces. Earlier British and French attacks on the stronghold had failed to budge the defenders and cost about 190,000 casualties.

The two pylons which tower above the ridge line and the 20 sculpted allegorical figures are made from almost 6,000 tonnes of limestone.

The Canadian Corps was made up of four divisions under the command of British Lt.-Gen. Sir Julian Byng, known to his colleagues as "Bungo." They were assigned to take Vimy Ridge as part of a broader offensive.

Byng abandoned the idea of a general rush against the enemy. Smaller groups of men were trained to move in short dashes, covered by light machine-guns and showers of grenades. They were taught to go around strongpoints to attack them from the rear or the sides. He also stressed artillery preparation and had engineers excavate tunnels through which soldiers could get close to the front line while being protected from artillery fire.

The shell holes are clearly visible in the grass. In one area, the trench outlines have been made more permanent by the addition of concrete "sandbags".

A week before the scheduled attack, hundreds of Canadian and British artillery pieces began firing on the ridge. They pounded it with a million shells, killing men, smashing guns, caving in trenches and bunkers and cutting off supplies in what the defenders called "the week of suffering." Early on Easter Monday, April 9, the Canadians emerged from their trenches and tunnels. With a stiff wind at their backs blowing snow and sleet into the faces of the Germans, they swept onto the crest and captured the whole ridge except for a rise at one end, known as The Pimple, which fell April 12.

The names of the 11,285 Canadian who lost their lives in France and who had no known grave are recorded on the monument's base

After the war, the highest point of the ridge was chosen as the site of the great memorial to all Canadians who served their country in battle during the First World War, and particularly to the 60,000 who gave their lives in France. It also bears the names of 11,000 Canadian servicemen who died in France - many of them in the fight for Vimy Ridge - who have no known grave. The memorial was designed by Canadian sculptor and architect Walter Seymour Allward. It was unveiled by King Edward VIII on 26 July 1936.

Representing Canada, a young nation mourning her dead, the Canada Bereft figure is the largest sculpture on the memorial. It was carved from a single, 30-tonne block of stone.

At Vimy, although now grass-covered and grazed by sheep, rather than bare earth with twisted metal and the torn remains of soldiers, you can still see the shell craters and trench line from 90 years ago. Probably fortunate that sheep cannot read.

Arthur Langley

Vince's Corner

Some remarks on Inclosure (with special reference to Kenn Moor)

The law locks up the man or woman
Who steals the goose from off the Common
But lets the greater felon loose
Who steals the Common from the goose

Commons, moors or Waste Lands, as they are often described by Inclosure Acts, were lands in open fields (not so common in North Somerset) or open lands that had never been enclosed in grounds (fenced fields in separate ownerships). Although owned by the Lord of the Manor, certain people who lived in tenements known as Old Austers had Common Rights, which went with the property and not the owner. But the Commons were frequently also used by 'landless men' and squatters.

These Common Rights could be to pasture, pannage (right to feed pigs in the autumn), estovers (rights to gather firewood from fallen branches) and so on. These were strictly defined, and enforced by manorial courts.

Many open fields and Commons were enclosed by 'agreement', where landowners got together informally and agreed. Where such could not be attained, Inclosure by Act of Parliament, a long, expensive, but reasonably fair process was followed.

Cheddar Moor and Hill about 1780. While paintings of pre-inclosure landscapes are very rare, this one is accurate, by comparison with maps

Kenn Moor before 1815 must have been a sort of landscape we would not recognise today (but see Fig 1), although it might have looked similar to the rewilded areas of former peatland in Somerset today (if not quite so wet!). It is clear from documents that there were clumps of trees, and multiple wide and shallow streams running across the Moor, and even a lily pool.

Cadbury Camp, Tickenham about 1798. The sheep kept the uplands completely treeless until Inclosure.

Resistance to Inclosure was sometimes direct: when Earl Poulett made a decoy pool on Kenn Moor in 1635, two men were hauled up at the Quarter Sessions, who said they had destroyed part of the works 'for the Good of the Country'.

When an Act was passed, Local JPs appointed a Commissioner, and it was his responsibility to check who had Common Rights, and survey the Commons and plan the allotments, the new roads, footpaths, bridges, gouts, drains, ditches and quarries. In the case of Kenn Moor, Joseph Wollen held nine public meetings (some lasting for days) at the Prince of Orange in Yatton, over a period of 3 years to see everything fairly done. Land was allocated to those who could prove Common Rights.

Those not allocated land had no choice but to seek work in the towns.

Vince Russett