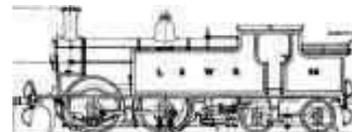


The Brookwood Express

The Newsletter of the Brookwood Cemetery Society



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❧ No. 103: FEBRUARY 2016 ❧

FORTHCOMING ACTIVITIES: WALKS & OTHER EVENTS

All walks now start from the Cemetery Office entrance, off Cemetery Pales. A donation would be most welcome. **We look forward to meeting you. Walks start at 2pm unless otherwise stated.**

Sunday March 6th 2016 : A New Introductory Walk Part I

led by members of the Society Committee. This new walk will visit graves not previously covered in the Society's Introduction Walks.

Sunday April 3rd 2016: Railway Walk led by Ian Devine. Learn the history and follow the route of the old Necropolis Railway line.

Sunday May 1st 2016: Geology Walk led by Di Smith. By popular request, Di Smith will return to explain the Geology of the Cemetery, and the various stones used in the many diverse memorials.

Sunday June 5th: To be confirmed

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL 2016-2017

The Society hope you have enjoyed your membership.

Membership renewal is due on the 1st February 2016, and a renewal form is enclosed with this issue.

Members now have the choice of making payment by internet banking. Those members interested should contact the Treasurer for more details. If a member joined after August 2015, their membership will be valid to the 1st February 2017.

IN THIS ISSUE

This issue will include the stories of :-
A WWII Czech Pilot by Geoff Simpson
The first installment of the life of the Lewis family by Jenny Mukeji
Cemetery & Society News
Edita Sedláková by Michael Hermann



SOCIETY CONTACTS & COMMITTEE

(1) Committee members

Kim Lowe (Chairperson) ☎

Gail Naughton (Secretary) ☎

Rose Falkner (Treasurer) ☎

Lynne Cowley (Publicity) ☎

ORDINARY MEMBERS

Barry Devonshire ☎

Margaret Hobbs ☎

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(2) Other Contacts

Jo Toogood (Membership Secretary)

Rose Falkner (Publications by Mail Order) ☎

Sarah Burt (Auditor) ☎

Margaret Hobbs Newsletter / Necropolis News Editor ☎

(The Newsletter exists to promote contact between all members about all things regarding the Society. Margaret welcomes short personal contributions and aims to keep the content of the Newsletter current, varied and informative.)



CZECH CONTRIBUTION TO THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN

Around 20 per cent of the aircrew who earned the 1939-1945 Star with Battle of Britain Clasp did not come from the United Kingdom. There were well over 100 men each from Poland, New Zealand and Canada. Czechoslovakia, as it then was, comes fourth on the list, with perhaps 87 participants. Other countries who contributed men who flew to prevent a German invasion in the summer and autumn of 1940 included Australia, Newfoundland, South Africa, the Rhodesias, France, Belgium, the United States and Ireland.

Most of the Czech pilots were serving in their country's air force or as civilian pilots on March 15 1939 when German troops entered the country. Almost immediately Czech Air Force personnel were demobilised and civilian carriers grounded.

Among the airmen there was widespread determination not to submit to the new regime. Perhaps typical were the adventures of Raimund Puda, who died in Henley-on-Thames in 2002 and was buried at Brookwood. He had been an aerobatic pilot in the Czech Air Force and then an airline pilot.

With three other airmen he reached Ostrava and, on the night of July 18 1939, hid on a coal train which was heading for Poland. He reported to the Czechoslovak Consulate, in Krakow and then travelled by train to Gdynia. Here the party boarded a ship and sailed for France.

Like other non-French military personnel, Puda was required to join the French Foreign Legion but was told that he would be posted to another military unit if war came. He went to the Legion barracks at Nanterre, near Paris, to await transfer to the training base at Sidi-bel-Abbes, Algeria, but, before he could travel, war was declared and he joined the French Air Force on September 11 1939.

The views expressed by contributors to this newsletter are not necessarily the views of the editor and the society.



Raimund Puda

Puda flew into action after the Blitzkrieg began and was credited with sharing in the destruction of three German aircraft. However, his squadron had retreated to Algeria when news of the French capitulation was received. Puda was discharged from French service, found his way to Casablanca and was one of about 200 men who sailed in a fishing boat to Gibraltar. There they joined a ship in a convoy bound for Liverpool.

At the Czechoslovak airmen's depot at Cosford, Shropshire, Puda became a member of the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. In mid-August 1940 he joined No 310 Squadron at Duxford as a Sergeant Pilot. This was one of the two specially created Czech Hurricane squadrons to fly in the Battle of Britain. Apart from 10 days in October with No 605 Squadron, he would remain with 310 until January 1941 when he went to the Central Flying School, Upavon, Wiltshire, to train as an instructor. He was commissioned in June 1941.

During the Battle of Britain Puda shared in the destruction of two more enemy aircraft. He baled out of a burning Hurricane on November 5 1940 and landed at Lynsted near Faversham.

The rest of Raimund Puda's war service included a spell flying VIPs. He returned to

Czechoslovakia, served again in the air force and then as an airline pilot. In 1948, following the Communist takeover of his country, he attended a pilots' conference in London, remained in Britain and re-joined the RAF, eventually taking charge of Sabre and Vampire jets on delivery flights. Flight Lieutenant Puda retired from the RAF in 1954.

After the "Velvet Revolution" ended Communist rule in 1989, Puda was honoured by being given the Czech Air Force rank, first of Colonel and then Major General. Many of his comrades who had chosen to remain in the country after the war, or had failed to escape, endured years of humiliation, including being imprisoned, stripped of their military ranks and being forced to do menial work.



Puda's grave in the Czech Annex Plot Brookwood Cemetery

Major sources:-

Men of the Battle of Britain by Kenneth G Wynn, third edition, Frontline Books, with Battle of Britain Memorial Trust, 2015.

Tom Dolezal

fcafa.wordpress.com

Geoff Simpson

Cemetery and Society News

Cemetery News

The Surrey Wild Life Report

The findings of the survey carried out by the Surrey Wild Life Trust throughout last year, have been reported. The report encompasses all the flora and fauna within the Cemetery, and the management of the habitat.

The Refurbishment of the Liberator Monument Plot 32

This monument is to the Czech civilian victims of an air crash, on 5th October 1945 at Blackbushe Airport, Surrey.

The Liberator aircraft GR VI, PP-N, KG86 was being used to repatriated civilian Czechoslovak women and children to their recently liberated homeland. The refurbishment of the monument was largely due to Vladimar Andell, and with the help of Gerry Manolas and her supporters for the placing of a plaque to Edita Sedlaková, who was on board the fated plane and a serving officer in the WAAF.



The Liberator memorial and the new plaque to Edita Sedlaková

A family event was held on the 1st November 2015 when a wreath was laid in commemoration.

Thank you to Michael Hermann, nephew of Edita, for all his help.

New Memorial in the Brookwood Military Cemetery

On the 4th November 2015 a new memorial was unveiled and dedicated at Brookwood Military Cemetery by the Duke of Kent.

The dedication was attended by relatives of those commemorated; there was a guard of honour, a wreath laying and a two minutes silence.

The stone was designed by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Most of the service men and women commemorated, died in the care of their families and not commemorated at the time of their death.

This new memorial is a result of research by relatives, researchers and the "Out from the Cold" project. The research still goes on, and it is possible that in the future a burial site may be found of one of the personal commemorated, then their name will be removed from the memorial.



The new 1914-1918 Memorial at Brookwood Military Cemetery

As the research continues more personal may be discovered and inscribed on the panels.

Source : <http://www.964eagle.co.uk>

The Removal of the Russian Memorial Brookwood Military Cemetery

The Russian Memorial commemorated 260 military personnel, buried or commemorated in the former Soviet Union.

The memorial was completed in 1984 during the Cold War, because of the difficulties for relatives travelling to the Soviet Union, to pay their respects. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission allowed this duplication commemoration (the CWGC normally only allow one commemoration within the Commission's cemeteries).



The Russian Memorial at Brookwood Cemetery before removal

Now travel is easier to Russia, the memorial has become obsolete and was removed last year.

The Restoration of the Muslim Burial Ground at Horsell Woking

On Sunday 3rd January BBC1 broadcasted an excellent programme on the restoration and rededication of the ground; "**Britain's Muslim Soldiers**". This site was completed in 1917, for those Muslim soldiers who died fighting in the WWI and later in WWII.

The programme highlighted the funding raising and the restoration of the Muslim Ground, at Horsell, Woking. The rededication was carried out by the Count of Wessex, Prince Edward. The 27 soldiers originally buried in the ground, had previously been re-interred in the Brookwood Military Cemetery; this was for safety reasons, as the site had been much vandalised in the past.



The Muslim Ground today

For those interested, the programme is well documented and available on the BBC i - player.

www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b06vb8rv/britains-muslim-soldiers

Society News

The Society rounded off last year, with a Mausoleum Walk in December. This extra walk was included in the walks programme, because of the increased interest in the cemetery throughout 2015. The weather was not brilliant, but 15 visitors attended and were shown the various restoration work the Society has carried out since 1996.

This year the Society hopes to add new themed monthly walks to the programme, commencing with a "**New Introductory Walk**" in March.

During this year the new grills will be installed on the Montagu - Winch and Colquhoun

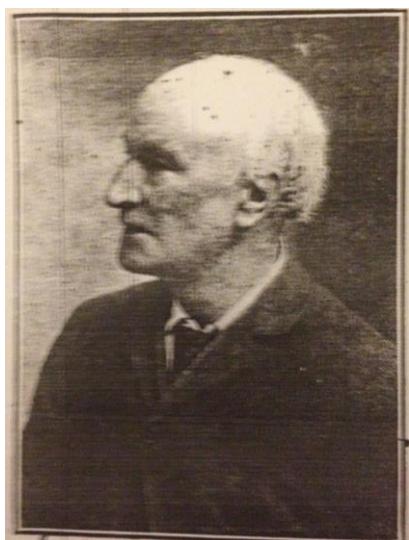
Mausoleums. It also hoped that the Lodge will be up and running in time for the new walk season. The Committee would like to wish all Members a Happy New Year.

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Joseph Lewis (1844-1923)

by Jenny Mukerji

In the Woking Burial Ground (Plots 43 and 44) on the Anglican Section of Brookwood Cemetery there are three generations of a family with theatrical connections.



Joseph Lewis

The patriarch is Joseph Lewis (1844-1923) who was born in Purton, Wiltshire and came to Woking as the manager of the, then new, Public Hall in 1896. His father, James Lewis had moved to London as a bricklayer and although Joseph had a brief spell of working in the building trade, he was a born comedic entertainer. This came to light during his time in the Royal Navy when he served in China during the 1856-60 Opium War and performed on ship for his fellow ratings. As well as performing in his own variety act combination, he toured the country as a member of a number of repertory companies, sometimes taking the leading role. He even dressed up as a

comic dame.

His early career days were spent at the Bijou Theatre, Bayswater where he struck up a friendship with W S Penley (of *Charley's Aunt* fame) which led to his appointment as caretaker of Woking's Public Hall as Penley, who lived in Woking at the time, was a director. Joseph had previously worked at other theatres as caretaker/manager, these included: the Victoria Hall, Kensington; Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith; and the Imperial Theatre, Ealing.

Joseph married Emma Jack Pawley near Plymouth in 1866. They had five daughters and two sons. For almost 20 years Joseph lived in the flat above the Public Hall which was near where the new Victoria Square will be in Woking. The building itself, which seated 700 people, opened with a matinee performance of *Charley's Aunt* followed a slap-up luncheon and ball for the dignitaries involved.

Joseph retired in 1915 and then occupied himself making oak furniture. His wife died in 1921 and is buried in Brookwood. Just before his death in 1923, Joseph had won the Carnival Queen's Car in a raffle to raise money for the Woking Victoria Hospital's extension. He died at his home in Goldsworth Road, Woking on 7 December and it was one of his very last wishes that the car should be driven to his funeral.

Both of Joseph's sons became actors, came to live in Woking and are buried in Brookwood near their parents. There will be more about them in a later issue of the Brookwood Express.

Member Andrew Jupp has moved to Torquay and is now running a B & B; Avron House. For any member interested the website is www.avronhouse.co.uk or phone 01803 4182

My Aunt, Edita Sedláková **by Michael Hermann**

The following notes reflect a small part of the life of my Aunt Edita 1926 - 1945. Her story is interesting, a little unique, but somewhat sad.



Edita

Edita was born in Plzeň on 3rd March 1926

Her father, Karl Hermann, had died when Edita was very young and, together with her older brother Kurt (known as Robert), they had lived with their mother Hede who was a partner in a family glass manufacturing exporting business in Plzeň, Czechoslovakia, now the Czech Republic.

The family appeared to have a comfortable living. Schooling was very important for both children and I do know that Edita, as a young girl, attended dance classes in Plzeň and played the piano.

The family was Jewish and my grandmother, wary of the threat of a German invasion of Czechoslovakia, managed to arrange for my father,

Robert, to leave the country in 1939 when he was 18.

Robert was meant to travel to Australia, but an incident on the train journey, at the German border with Holland, forced him make his way to England and to seek refugee status there. After a while he joined the Free Czech Army in England.



Hede and Edita

Edita, 5 years younger than Robert, came to the UK from Prague in 1939, but as a 'Winton Kindertransport' child.

She was schooled in England at Bunce Court School, Wem, Salop, which was owned and run by Anna Essinger, a German Jewish educator.

I believe Edita was at this school from 1939 until around 1943.

Edita had a collection of classical piano music books and I suspect she would have been taught as a child by her Uncle, Walter Freund, who was a professional concert pianist. Music was also taught at Bunce Court.

In an email sent to myself in December 2004, a former class friend of Edita wrote

"Editka was a charming girl, I remember her with much pleasure."

It seems, according to Edita's record of service with the RAF, that for a short period she was a utility dressmaker, but nothing further is known in this respect.

Subsequently, in 1943, Edita became part of the WAAF when she joined 311 squadron as a LACW first class wireless operator.

Edita married Flight Sergeant Zdeněk Sedlák in May 1945, when she was 19 years old.

During 1944, Edita's brother, Robert, had travelled through France with the Czech Army and was back 'home' for the liberation of Plzen. He was 'demobbed' in Czechoslovakia in December 1945.

As there were no close family survivors of the holocaust, Robert worked hard to legally recover the family business and properties which had been stolen by the Germans. This he achieved. The reclaimed family glass business was then to be run by Robert together with Edita when she was able to return to Plzeň after her discharge from the RAF.

Edita, though, together with her husband Zdeněk Sedlák, was killed in the Liberator air disaster at Blackbushe Airport, Surrey, on 5th October 1945.

According to online information in respect of this flight, Edita should not have been on it, which may explain why she was buried in the grave with the civilian casualties, rather than in the military section of Brookwood cemetery alongside her husband. The new memorial for Edita, close to the civilian grave has been the only way the family has been able to record Edita's WAAF status.

Edita was discharged from the RAF on 14th November 1945, 6 weeks after her

death. Her discharge statement describes Edita as a '*willing and efficient tradeswoman*' of '*very good general character*' and of '*satisfactory proficiency*'.

An examination of the memorial for Zdeněk Sedlák indicates that his date of death has been recorded incorrectly. It should read 5th October 1945. This matter has been taken up with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

Tragically Edita's mother Hede and a large number of her close family did not survive the holocaust.

Many were held in Terezín until they died there, or were transported to the camps in the East, notably Auschwitz, where they were murdered.

Robert returned permanently to the UK in 1948 when the Czech Communist regime nationalised the family assets.

Edita was the only WAAF member within the Free Czech Air Force to be killed whilst on active service.



The family are grateful to the Free Czechoslovak Air Force Association and the managers of Brookwood cemetery for their support in facilitating the memorial to Edita.

Zdeněk Sedlák

Source: Photographs of Michael Hermann

Michael Hermann 8th January 2016