

MONTE SAN MARTINO TRUST

September 2016



Welcome to the 2016 annual report from MSMT – and thank you for your continued support! I'm sure you will be pleased to read on page 4 about the new projects we are working on, and to see that our work of commemoration and celebration goes on as strongly as ever.

The most important thing for me to say this year is to congratulate our founder **Keith Killby** on reaching the wonderful age of 100. Keith (**pictured above, reading a congratulatory message from the Queen on June 15th**) has been, and still is, the greatest inspiration to all of us, an untiring role model and a very generous benefactor – as the tributes to him on pages 5 to 7 make clear. Keith, you are a legend – we salute you.

I must also express surprise and gratitude for the significant honour that I am to be presented with by His Excellency the Italian Ambassador at the Trust's annual lunch in London on 8th November. Pasquale Terracciano has been a wonderful friend to the Trust, and I know how much he appreciates its work in bringing to wider attention, both in the UK and Italy, the bravery and generosity of the Italian people who helped our fathers when they were "on the run". The fact that the Trust can now boast no fewer than four members with Italian honours must be some kind of record, at least in the UK, and is a measure of how well regarded our work is becoming.

The year brought a moving and very significant moment in my own commemorative journey: I finally found and was able to pay my respects at the grave of two young partisans, a brother and sister, who lost their lives helping my father and a New Zealander colleague escape. The story had a beguiling and touching coda, in that, with members of their family, we discovered that another young Italian, visiting his own mother's grave nearby, was so moved by the story of these two that, for four years, he has been laying a white flower on their grave every Friday.

*They went with songs to the battle, they were young,
Straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow.
They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted,
They fell with their faces to the foe.
They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old;
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.*

Nicholas Young, MSMT Chairman

One million thanks!

By Vanni Treves, Appeal Chairman

WE had no idea whether an Appeal for £1 million by a small charity with a “staff” of volunteers, begun soon after a horrible recession and commemorating events over 700 miles away 70 years ago, could succeed; but, four years later it did.

That it succeeded is, with hindsight, uncomplicated: great numbers of individuals and institutions – some whose forbears, friends or trustees had, one or two generations ago, been uncomplainingly helped or even saved by the sacrifice and bravery of the Italians; others who knew little or nothing about this capsule of wartime history but, on hearing of it, were stirred to have it remembered – all these chose to contribute.

Some twenty charities did so by making very substantial grants: £10,000, £25,000 and more in several cases; but it was the hundreds of donations from individuals, often accompanied by heart-warming messages, that took our Appeal over the line.

The momentum could not have been maintained without the encouragement of several remarkable events: a dinner given at Brown’s Hotel by Sir Rocco Forte and Mrs Olga Polizzi; another at the House of Lords supported by Field Marshal the Lord Guthrie; Miles Skinner’s huge effort in running 10 marathons in seven days, from Lucca to Rome, and so raising £20,000 in sponsorship; but most important and gratifying of all, several events at the Italian Embassy, where Ambassador and Signora Terracciano and the Embassy staff were unwavering in their hospitality. My fellow trustees and I are immensely grateful – there are no other words – for all those who supported the Appeal over the years. It is so very gratifying that a cause that is important to us should, thanks to those supporters, now be placed on such a sound financial footing that the flames lit in adversity in wartime Italy will be kept alight for as long as human memory endures.

THE Appeal launched in November 2011 to raise £1 million was successfully concluded in November 2015, donations having achieved, in total, £1,087,500, including gift aid. The funds raised will continue to place the Trust in a solid financial position.

TREASURER’S REPORT

By Justin de Meo

As of June 6th 2016, the total assets of the Trust were £1,573,000 with the investment portfolio valued at £1,489,000 together with £84,000 of cash. At the same time last year the total assets were £1,390,000.

The increase in the total assets arises from the income and capital returns on the investment portfolio together with further donations relating to the Appeal.

As a result of the continued work of Vanni Treves, our Appeal chairman, we again received significant donations. When the Appeal closed, a further £80,000 was added to the investment fund of the charity from the current account.

In 2015, we provided 23 bursaries for Italian students to come to the UK for a month. This costs the Trust approximately £2,000 per student, including lodgings and attendance at language schools in either Wheatley, near Oxford, or London. We hope that, with the larger fund now available, we shall be able to continue to meet the charitable aims of the Trust on a sustainable basis through the investment return from the Trust’s assets. The expenses of the charity are mostly compliance-related.

The investment objective of the trustees is capital growth with medium risk. Rathbones, our fund managers, maintain a good spread of investments, periodically reviewing asset classes and moving capital where they see opportunities. It is pleasing to record that the total return on the fund over the 12 months up to June 2016 was 6.7 per cent, of which capital appreciation was 4 per cent. Over the same period, the FTSE WMA Stock Market Balanced Index was down 2.2 per cent and the FTSE 100 down 8.7 per cent.

We greatly appreciate the kindness of our extremely generous supporters who provide the means to finance the bursaries to Italian students.

OUR STUDENTS:

TWENTY-SIX young Italians are coming to the UK in 2016 on one-month study bursaries. Ten are going to CES-Oxford House, at Wheatley, near Oxford, and the rest to Central School of English in London. Most of them are being met at airports by MSMT volunteers and taken to their host families. The kind Greeters include, for the first time, a former MSMT student: Nermina Delic, who had a bursary in 2007, is now working in London as a finance and ICT manager. **We are always in need of more volunteers: please contact us at info@msmtrust.org.uk if you can help.**

The number of bursaries is a slight increase on 2015, when we welcomed 23 students. On completing their month, they awarded high marks for tuition, homestays and liaison with Edward Gretton, our indefatigable UK student

organiser. Among several thank-you letters, came this one from Beatrice Capancioni, who studied at Wheatley. "I really enjoyed my time in England. I found fantastic people, my family was so friendly and I still keep in touch with them. I also met new people from all over the world and I discovered different traditions. I also tasted for my first time the typical English food: Sticky Toffe Puddy, Scone, Yorkshire Pudding and Eton Mess... delicious!"

Our thanks go to Peter Williams and David Mullany, Principals respectively of CES and Central School, and their staffs, for taking such good care of the students. Both schools note that the students are aware of the privilege of a bursary. "The increased focus, intensity and curiosity is very noticeable," says Peter Williams.

Jewels of prison life

ELEANOR Bua never knew Stuart Campbell, her mother's first husband, who did not survive the war. But she has his diary and paintings of the Monturano prisoner of war camp, and has visited it three times, most recently in May.

"The first time I went it was incredible," she says. "It was like walking through his diary."

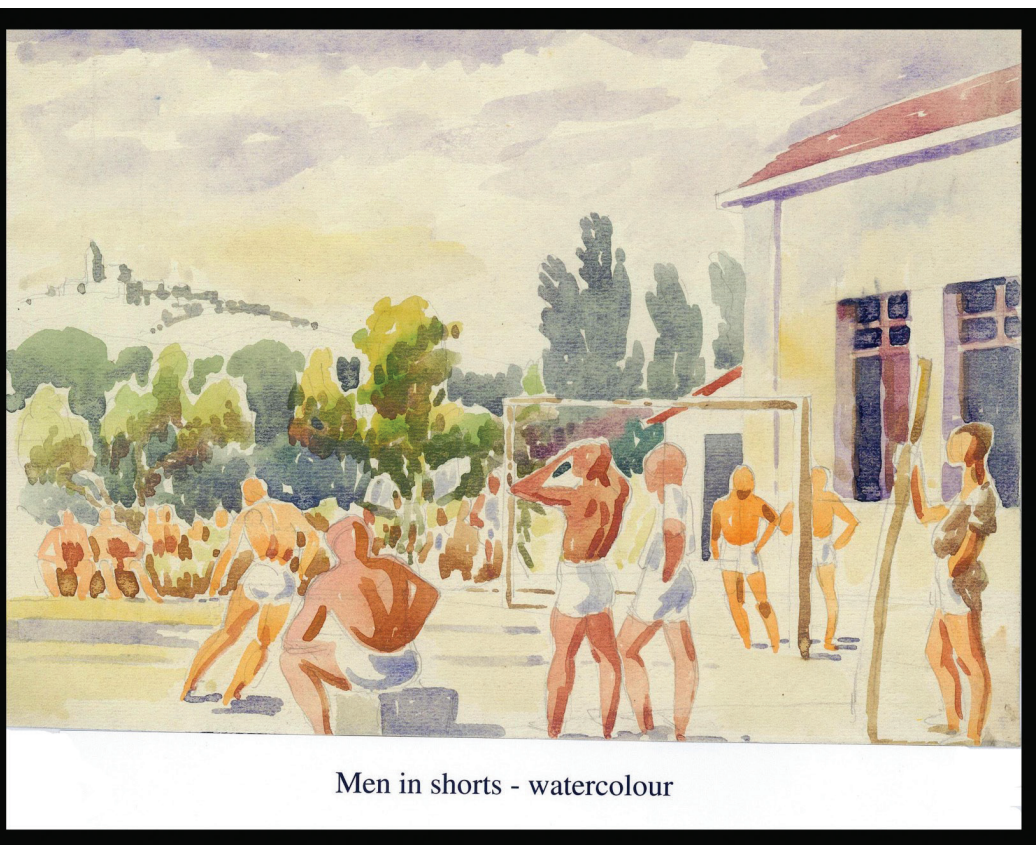
The story of William "Stuart" Campbell, **below right**, is as affecting as it is tragic. Stuart met Eleanor's mum, Maisie Brownfoot, when they were studying at Leeds Art College. Enlisted as a Private soldier, he was captured at Tobruk and taken to Monturano, in the Marche, north-east Italy.

As a talented artist, he worked on the camp's monthly newsletter, PG 70 Times, producing watercolours and drawings of the prisoners and cartoons of the guards. And he wrote a diary.

After the Armistice, he was taken to a work camp at Brux in Czechoslovakia but was killed, aged 25, when the Allies bombed a nearby industrial site, possibly an arms factory. The diary, letters and paintings were returned to Maisie. Now, after Maisie's death, Eleanor, who lives part of the time in Ilkley, West Yorkshire, and part of the time in Sicily, treasures them. Although Eleanor grew up with Stuart's beautiful paintings of Monturano all around her, she never read his diary while her mum was alive because she found it too upsetting. This meant that she didn't ask Maisie questions about Stuart and the camp.

When Eleanor finally read the diary, after Maisie had died, she felt compelled to visit Monturano. She got in touch with Ian de Souza, whose father Ken also worked on PG 70 Times and who escaped from Monturano – as Ken recounted in his book *Escape from Ascoli*. In 2014, she made the first of her three visits there, all of them timed to coincide with the Freedom Trail based in Servigliano.

In May this year, Eleanor and walkers on the Trail went to Monturano to hear a talk about plans to revive the camp, a former linen factory, by attracting small business units and creating a museum. Stuart's paintings of prison life at the camp are both beautifully worked and an invaluable record. "I would love to see posters of them displayed there," says Eleanor.



Men in shorts - watercolour



FIVE-YEAR STRATEGY PLAN

Work groups make progress

AT THE end of 2015, on the back of our successful £1m fund-raising Appeal, the trustees considered the future direction of MSMT. It is now well over 70 years since the events that the Trust celebrates and commemorates: does that mean that the work of the Trust is no longer relevant?

The trustees, backed up by helpful comments from members, concluded emphatically that this was not the case. The principles of courage, generosity and kindness to strangers, exemplified by the refuge given to escaping prisoners of war by the Italian *contadini*, are eternal. The granting of approximately 25 one-month study bursaries to young Italians each year will remain a core activity, but trustees considered that MSMT could further its work of celebration and commemoration in other ways too. Accordingly, the following three work groups were set up to help implement a five-year strategy plan.

Communication and Promotion

We aim to make the Trust better known within Italy. As part of this, we are strengthening existing links with schools and “regional champions” in our target areas, and forming new ones.

In May, John Simkins and Letitia Blake visited four regions where prisoner of war camps were mainly concentrated, namely Emilia-Romagna, the Marche, Abruzzo and Molise. The trip was extremely successful. For example, in Modena, one of the principal towns of Emilia-Romagna, contact has been re-established with one school and a new relationship forged with another. Contacts with two schools in Sulmona (Abruzzo) were revived and new links made with schools in the Marche and Molise.

To spread the word about the Trust we rely heavily on “regional champions”, frequently teachers or former teachers. We are very grateful to Rossella Ruggeri (Modena), Gianpaolo Tronca and Mario Setta (Sulmona) and Alessandro Aucelli (Isernia, Molise) for acting in this capacity, and also to Laura Strappa (Fermo) for backing up Antonio Millozzi in the Marche. Rossella Ruggeri also arranged a productive meeting with the Modena branch of the highly respected Istituto Storico. MSMT and the Institute are now exploring the possibility of a joint project within Emilia-Romagna which would involve a study course on wartime Italy linked to the award of a few MSMT bursaries. A rapport with the Institute would raise the Trust’s profile in the region considerably.

MSMT is also building an Italian-language section onto www.msmtrust.org.uk. Information on student bursaries, and Escape Stories, have been translated into Italian by former students, who are seen as a valuable resource in making the Trust better known.

The group’s members are John Simkins, Edward Gretton, Rossella Ruggeri, Michele Ronchini and Jenifer Landor.

Archives

We wish to make best use of our extensive archive of memoirs recording the exploits of escaping Allied servicemen and the help given them by courageous Italians after the Armistice in September 1943. We are focusing our efforts on making the archive, which is an invaluable resource for both professional and family researchers, accessible through registration to a second MSMT website.

The original archive was superbly indexed by Luigi Pighetti. However, for the transfer to electronic storage, we require the assistance of a professional archivist to catalogue and index the documents. We are grateful to a kind donor who has provided funds enabling us to employ an archivist and we are in the process of appointing one. We are not able to confirm with the vast majority of the authors that they are happy to have their stories made more widely available, although as the memoirs were donated to the Trust there are unlikely to have been objections. If you have any questions regarding the archive please contact us at info@msmtrust.org.uk.

The group’s members are Christine English, Barry Knight and Jane Harris-Matthews.

Commemoration

We are in contact with Greg Bradsher, a Senior Archivist at the National Archives in Washington DC, who is working on a finding aid for the extensive and hitherto unexamined Allied Screening Commission files. These include precious information regarding Italian helpers and claims made to the Commission at the end of the war, some of which resulted in financial recompense and Alexander certificates of recognition. Brian Lett, the author and former MSMT chairman, has also investigated the files for his own research involving awards to Italian helpers and is helping us consider whether the Trust might have a role in digitalising them and bringing them to light.

We are also sounding out Italian colleagues and UK partners on the idea of setting up an award for Moral Courage in Italy. Currently, awards of this type concentrate on anti-Mafia activities. During the recent road trip, responses varied as to the feasibility of this. We need to have more discussion and gather more information.

The group’s members are Letitia Blake, Andrew Adams and Anne Copley.



Keith Killby – pictured about 90 years ago

*KEITH KILLBY, founder of the Monte San Martino Trust, reached the magnificent age of 100 on June 15th 2016. To celebrate this, we asked four people who have known him well at different stages in his life, to provide tributes. Keith's nephew, **Malcolm Angus**, leads off this three-page package with his recollections of a man who has been important to him in his own life.*

My 'Dutch Uncle'

A DUTCH uncle is an informal term for a person who issues frank, harsh, or severe comments and criticism to educate, encourage, or admonish someone. Uncle Keith became my Dutch Uncle when I was in my early teens. It was his terminology, not mine.

In the absence of a father due to my parents' divorce when I was thirteen, Keith tried to take up some of the parental slack. I was not a willing pupil when he tried to provide an unhappy youth with guided tours of the principal London museums and art galleries. He never gave up trying, though, and inevitably I learnt by a visual and verbal osmosis.

I sailed to Australia, where I still live, in 1964 at the age of eighteen. Keith's efforts finally bore fruit there in 1981, at a rural, down-at-heel, Sunday car-boot and trestle-table market. I was there with my friend Arthur who had quickly searched through and discarded a box of post-cards. I decided to check what he had looked at.

"There's nothing there," he said.

Ignoring him, I kept picking through the box. And became quietly triumphant.

"What have you found?" asked Arthur.

"Nothing," I replied, not wanting to put the price up on my discovery.

"How much is this?" I asked the old lady.

"Will fifty cents be OK?" she replied.

I handed over the fifty cents and walked away; Arthur following and extremely curious.

"What have you got?" "An Old Master drawing," I said.

And much later, a Sotheby's Flemish expert proved me correct: a beautiful pen and wash drawing by Adriaen van Ostade, a Dutch Golden Age painter of genre works.

My Dutch Uncle had proved his worth. As he has done to many others. To my sister Lesley, to the

Indian immigrant he befriended and financially helped to start a barber-shop. To a Russian prisoner of war, and to the Italian students who have been supported by the Monte San Martino Trust and been treated to a side of beef lunch at his flat.

My real relationship with Keith began when I was much older and began to learn about his war experiences and his work to establish the MSMT. I was with him on the first Freedom Trail walk and he showed me the evidence of the hole in the wall at Servigliano camp from which he had made his escape.

I realised that Keith was a singular man who had lived his life by his values and made a positive difference to many lives, not only mine. The bursaries given to hundreds of students have made a real difference in many cases.



Keith - pictured nearly 100 years ago

A man of vision

Keith has enabled young Italians to understand other people's way of life, writes Antonio Millozzi, MBE, the Trust's representative in Italy since its foundation in 1989

I HAVE known Keith Killby since the 1960s. He used to come to Italy twice a year to visit Primo and Lea Barchetta in Contrada Barchetta "la mia Valle" at Monte San Martino. They had rescued him during the war. At the time, I was working for the local authority and, as we are a small community, I often used to come across Keith.

The *contadini*, although poorly educated and unable to speak foreign languages, received with open arms the Allied prisoners who had escaped from the Nazifascisti guarding Servigliano camp after September 8th 1943. They relieved their hunger and hid them in grottos, lofts and cowsheds; their children had the job of taking them provisions. These grandparents of ours, essentially *contadini*, risked their own lives in disobeying the law.

In 1989, Keith, a former Servigliano prisoner who had been in hiding at nearby Monte San Martino, asked me for help in setting up a charity in the UK in order to give



Antonio Millozzi, on the terrace of his home in Monte San Martino, with Letitia Blake, the Trust's Secretary

English-language study bursaries to young Italians aged 18 to 25. So far, we have granted more than 500 bursaries. These bursaries enable the young people to immerse themselves in the Anglo-Saxon world and understand other people's way of life – a necessary precondition for laying the foundations of a united Europe. Born out of the horrors of war, this cultural and humanitarian initiative encourages the young to learn their own history, so as not to forget. Keith has made such a big contribution, through transmitting messages of this nature and through his own actions. For example, working with him in 1988, and thanks to money raised locally, we made it possible for a young man from Monte San Martino to undergo a kidney transplant at a London hospital. Keith has always shown great consideration for young Italians and many have been guests at his house while studying or working in London.

Resolute and far-sighted, Keith's vision was formed as soon as the end of the war anticipated cultural exchanges between nations. This vision led to the foundation of the Trust. As the Trust's representative, I look after contacts with the schools and handle applications for bursaries. I am deeply grateful to Keith and the former prisoners and their families who support the Trust, for having made me – a war orphan and thus indirectly a civil victim of strife – understand that I should contribute to this excellent cause that testifies to the horrors of war. My very best wishes to Keith for having reached 100, after a lifetime characterised by honesty and generosity, which has been duly acknowledged by both the Italian and British states.

Size 12 footsteps are hard to follow

Letitia Blake, MSMT's Secretary, reports on a warm friendship and the inevitable "lists"

BY THE time I met Keith in 2004, he had reluctantly given up his twice yearly visits to Italy but was still very active in running the Trust, producing the newsletter, selecting students and finding volunteers to organise the annual lunch. By chance my office was two roads away from his flat so collaborating was very easy and we had regular meetings, over tea and coffee cake.

As I walked into his sitting-room I would be greeted with "Ah good – I've got a list for you", and the inevitable back of the envelope with illegible (to others anyway) spidery scrawl would be produced. I recall the concentration required in absorbing so much information about the Trust, its history and supporters, marvelling at Keith's encyclopedic knowledge of former PoWs and their escape stories.

I became familiar with his own remarkable story, not just being on the run in Italy but post-war: his work organising

conferences in various countries to promote European Federal Union (bossing Winston Churchill around at one point) and his 2.30 a.m. starts when running the successful family butchering business in Smithfield.

We worked well in partnership, though at times strength of will was required to resist his determined “volunteering” of me for various tasks.

Ten years ago, he asked me to go to Italy to do a tour of schools with Antonio Millozzi, our wonderful representative in Italy, telling students about the bursaries. For many years, he had done this trip himself and I could imagine the impression he made on the Italian teenagers, marching into classrooms, an imposing and commanding presence, addressing them in his excellent Italian. So, following in these (size 12) footsteps was a very daunting prospect.

Being in Italy and in particular at Monte San Martino, where Keith was very proud to have been made an Honorary Citizen, I encountered the huge appreciation, respect and affection in which he was held by all Italians who knew him and whom he had encountered over the decades. He remains in regular contact with many of them, who phone, write and visit.

I am very grateful for his warm and enduring friendship, which has enhanced my life in so many ways for the past 12 years.



Keith in uniform

Caroline Gavin, a trustee right from the start, tells how MSMT originated

KEITH is the most private and self-effacing man, but for a conscientious objector he had an extraordinarily interesting and exciting war! Typically, while in prison, he improved his Italian and exchanged language lessons with a Russian who turned up many years later in London. Starting with a stout *nonna* who waded barefoot with a *pentola* of food to him in his first hours of freedom after escaping from Servigliano camp, the bravery and unquestioning generosity of countless, nameless Italians to the 80,000 Allied prisoners on the run gave him a lasting admiration and affection for the Italians and a strong desire to thank them, which the MSMT endeavours to do. We met via an appeal he made in the Anglo-Italian Society's magazine. Keith was raising funds for a kidney transplant for a young Italian in the Monte San Martino area. Some months later, we bumped into each other at a film at the Italian Institute. Keith was starting to put together the Trust and kindly invited me to be the Token Woman. The other trustee was an ex-ambassador, soon to be joined by Stephen Sims.

Chandra scrupulously looked after our modest accounts and, most importantly, the wonderful Antonio Millozzi managed the Italian students.

Our big break was in late-1990, when Keith saw that the Independent newspaper was offering to publish free, appeals from fifty, I think, charities. We came second! This gave the Trust most welcome publicity, an enormous boost.

A hundred years well spent! *Cento altri di questo giorno*, as they say!

Keith Killby's autobiography, In Combat, Unarmed, can be obtained through info@msmtrust.org.uk (£10).

Sergio Mattarella, President of the Italian Republic, sent this message to Keith on June 15th:

Dear Mr Killby,

I would like to extend to you my warmest best wishes for your 100th birthday.

At a time when Europe is going through a particularly difficult and delicate phase, my thoughts go out to you and all those who, so mindful of the devastation brought about by the conflicts of the last century, work so tirelessly to strengthen the friendship between European citizens. The Monte San Martino Trust has now become a point of reference for young Italians who wish to enrich their curriculum with a formative period in the United Kingdom, thus preserving and strengthening the special ties that bring together our two countries and their citizens.

I wish to thank you for the effort and commitment which you have made to this most worthy cause and renew to you my warmest best wishes.

A hidden past

Patrick Bligh turned detective in an attempt to locate the Italian village where his father found refuge

MY FATHER Ken Bligh died when I was 11. All that I knew of his service in the second world war was that he was a Lieutenant in the Royal Engineers, was captured in North Africa, was a prisoner of war in Italy and escaped. About 15 years ago my late aunt gave me a written account of his escape that my father had left with her. It was from that that I discovered my father had been a prisoner in PG 49 Fontanellato and that in September 1943, when the Italian government declared surrender, he and the other prisoners left just a few hours before German soldiers arrived with the intention of taking over the camp. The account was frustratingly short.

It told me that the group of 12 that my father initially escaped with was led by Major Richard Carver (Field Marshall Montgomery's stepson) and they decided to go south to meet the advancing 8th Army.

The group split up and after walking over 350 miles, because of illness and bad weather, my father spent the winter in a small village called Castel San Angelo. In May 1944, when the snow began to melt, he continued his journey to



Castel San Angelo, near Rieti. But was it really here that Lt Ken Bligh hid during the winter months of 1943-44?

the coast and reached Allied lines. The account contained no other names of fellow escapers, nor of places except Castel San Angelo. My enquiries to try to discover something more of my father's imprisonment and escape led me to the Monte San Martino Trust. In 2013, along with my brother Andrew, I visited Fontanellato for the 70th anniversary celebration of the Armistice and there I met children and grandchildren of escapers who had investigated their relatives' escape stories. I decided to do the same.

I could see no way of tracing my father's route accurately. The only place I could focus on was Castel San Angelo. The dilemma was, which Castel San Angelo? The index to a map of Italy showed numerous Castel San Angelos. I reduced it to three possibilities: one near Cingoli, the second Castelsanangelo Sul Nera in Macerata, and Castel San Angelo in Rieti.

I needed help. John Simkins, of Monte San Martino Trust, considered my father's account and decided, on the basis of geographic indications in it that the Rieti option was the most likely. His colleague, Omar Bucchioni, made contact with a helpful member of the town council. An extract of my father's account explaining that persons of various nationalities including Albanians had taken refuge there was sent; confirmation that there had been Albanian prisoners detained in the area was enough to satisfy me that a visit was worthwhile.

So, in May, before joining the Freedom Trail in the Tenna Valley, I and my wife Liz visited Castel San Angelo. The mayor, Luigi Taddei, confirmed that escapers had taken refuge in the area. I was able to tell him of the objectives of the MSMT and explain how applications for bursaries could be made. I then walked around the village and the countryside that my father might have sheltered in during the winter months over 70 years ago.

Was it the same place? I don't expect I will ever know but I like to think that it was, and that the Italian people who helped my father were as generous and welcoming as those that I had met on my visit.

The cave where Dad hid

MY SISTER Pat Krivine and I had long planned to visit Sulmona, in the Abruzzo, eastern Italy, to pay our respects to the brave and generous families who had helped our father and many of his comrades during the difficult days following their break-out from Camp 78 after the Italian Armistice in September 1943. We were able to make the trip at the time of the Freedom Trail based on the town in April.

We had limited information about the wartime exploits of our father, Signalman Bill Lewis. Sadly, he died in 1973 when we were too young to ask detailed questions. However, we had some knowledge based on his sketchy diary, and news following his return to Sulmona in October 1973 with 100 former comrades.

He was captured in the Libyan desert and was shipped to Italy,

eventually arriving at Camp 78, near Sulmona, in May 1940. Despite some terrible experiences at Camp 78, we understand there was also an enormous spirit of comradeship. Activities were arranged, including football matches and plays including the *Mikado*. Dad remained a keen fan of Gilbert & Sullivan all his life. Red Cross parcels and letters from home held special significance, and must have broken the monotony of being imprisoned.

With help from English residents of Sulmona, we were introduced to Luigi and Mario, who live in Marane village. They had been born post-war but had plenty of stories from their family history. Apparently, in 1943 everyone in Marane knew that some escaped prisoners of war, including Dad and Charles Pomeroy ("Pom"), were hiding in a cave high up the mountains behind the village, but everyone kept the secret. Mario and Luigi knew about the Primiero-Santo family who had provided immense support to Dad and his comrades while they were lying low by providing food and clothing. The cave was immediately above their house. Dad's diary refers to many days when he had "no grub" and also the "B. awful weather" – so the days when a meal of pasta with vegetables was carried up to them must have seemed like a feast. The Germans were in the area, posing huge risks to anyone who helped the PoWs. Indeed, we were shown the white cross on the mountain that marks the grave of an Italian partisan who had been shot by the Germans for doing just that. Every year a service is held in his memory.

Mario and Luigi took us up a steep rocky track that led to the cave and I climbed inside. This was extremely emotional and it certainly brought me closer to this traumatic time in my father's life. The cave was dark and bats flew out when Mario shone his flashlight in one corner. This was a pretty inhospitable and uncomfortable space, which offered nothing more than a simple shelter. From his diary, we can tell that Dad was based in the cave for a couple of months, returning to Camp 78 a few times, on the lookout for food. He was on the run for six months, but was recaptured by the Germans only a few hundred yards from the Allied lines.

We were also shown the former home of the Primiero-Santo family, who emigrated to Australia after the war. We know Dad was immensely happy to visit members of the family in 1973. They remembered him and proudly showed him that they now had mains water.

The three-day 16th annual Freedom Trail in Sulmona began on the 23rd April. A throng of people of all ages assembled in Piazza Settembre XX and miserable weather didn't deter the walkers. We walked some of the way on the stage to Campo di Giove but waved goodbye to our friends just outside Sulmona.

Our experiences in Sulmona were emotional but enlightening. The Italians we met were passionate and very mindful of the sacrifices that had been made by the families who had experienced great hardship during the Fascist regime and later under the German occupation.

We have some regrets that we did not attempt the full first day of the Freedom Trail but we hope to return another year with our families. We also want to track down the Primiero-Santo family in Adelaide and make contact with any surviving descendants.

Jill Burford and Pat Krivine visited Sulmona to find out more about the experiences of their father, Bill Lewis, who escaped from Camp 78. Jill reports on an enlightening, if emotional, trip



"Dark, and bats flew out": Jill Burford scrambles out of the cave that provided a home for her father, Bill Lewis, after he escaped from Camp 78 at Sulmona

Tenna Valley Trail

MSMT supporters were delighted to join the Escape Lines Memorial Society (ELMS) on the fourth annual Tenna Valley Freedom Trail in the Marche from 11th-16th May, **writes Christine English.**

We were guided on the walks as we visited former safe houses and the prisoner of war camp at Monturano. We heard dramatic stories about escapers and their local helpers as we walked through the glorious countryside. We are grateful to the families who fed and watered us at our stops, remembering their families' connections to escapers. Ian McCarthy, our expert guide who is based in Servigliano, where the walks started and finished, provided excellent translation.

A high point was meeting Cristina Franca at the memorial plaque to Signalman Sydney Smith near the village of Montelparo. Her family has laid flowers every week for more than 70 years at the place where Smith was shot dead by the SS. Cristina was presented with a plaque by ELMS to thank her family for their faithfulness to an Allied soldier who died in their village.

On Sunday May 15th, a moving ceremony took place – unfortunately in the rain – in Comunanza, which the Trail had not previously visited. A plaque was installed there to honour six escaping British and American prisoners who were shot dead by Fascists on May 2nd 1944. The plaque also commemorates three partisans shot dead the following day and a further two English PoWs killed on June 14th.

MSMT co-hosted the Trail but is extremely grateful to Roger Stanton and colleagues in ELMS who handled all the organisation. We also warmly congratulate Roger on being awarded an MBE in the Queen's birthday honours. Roger founded ELMS in order to commemorate escapers and helpers throughout Europe and the award recognises the enormous efforts he has made to ensure they are remembered.

Shortly before the Trail, at the end of April, ELMS held its annual reunion in York. As usual, the focus of celebrations was the service of commemoration, which was held at the fascinating Eden Camp.

Two military bands opened and closed the ceremony, at which wreaths were laid on behalf of organisations and families associated with escapers, evaders and their helpers during the second world war. This year, the regular attendees were delighted to welcome two groups of students, one from Italy and the other from the Basque country. The latter group enthralled guests at the dinner with a display of dancing and singing, celebrating the heroism of their forbears. MSMT supporters are warmly encouraged to attend in future years.



The ceremony at Comunanza



INBERG

Memories alive on Monte Bisbino

AT THE end of April, Mark Dobson and his family spent the weekend at Como for a series of events that included the presentation of a book describing the remarkable exploits of Mark's father, Major-General Tony Dobson (**left**).

Following the Armistice in 1943, Tony Dobson, then a Major, walked out of the opened gates of PG 29 at Veano, near Piacenza, where he had been detained. After a few days hiding in the countryside, he settled in a farmhouse where he and other officers, assisted by partisans, set up an escape line to neutral Switzerland. He eventually made his own way there via Milan and Como. During his internment, he met Nellie Homberger, his future wife and Mark's mother, on the ski slopes.

On April 24th, Mark's family, including his mother, attended a ceremony at the town hall in Cernobbio for the presentation of the book *Il maggiore Tony Dobson*, by Franco Edera, published in both Italian and English. Franco Edera is the curator of a small museum in the former Carabinieri barracks on Monte Bisbino – a place Tony had been warned to avoid during his trek. Franco learned about the Dobson story after Mark's mother left a note in the visitors' book on a previous trip.

On April 25th, Italy's Liberation Day, Mark's party attended a festival at Monte Bisbino. "The book was handed around to whoever was interested, which seemed to be half the community," says Mark, who has kindly lodged a copy in MSMT's archives.

Tony Dobson's story can be read at www.msmttrust.org.uk under Escape Stories.

OBITUARIES

The Trust is sad to record the deaths of the following PoW escapers and MSMT supporters

Lawrence Bains, CBE, DL

Lawrence died in London on December 5th 2015, a few miles from where he was born in 1920. He had recently started work as an insurance clerk when war broke out in 1939, and he volunteered for the Signals Corp and left for Palestine in 1940.

His troop served in the Egyptian Western Desert from 1940 through the siege of Tobruk in 1941 and in the subsequent campaigns until the battle of "Knightsbridge" in June 1942 when the regiment, with its ammunition exhausted, was overrun by German tanks and almost annihilated. The survivors were captured, and Lawrence was taken through a series of transit camps to Sforzacosta in the Marche. There he experienced 11 months of cold and dirt and inadequate food that was the lot of the prisoners and, he came to realise, of some of their guards too. After the Italian Armistice in 1943, Lawrence and three friends disobeyed orders to stay in the camp and escaped into the countryside.

He did not know where in Italy he was but he was soon befriended by Italian farmers. He went into hiding, living with them for the next nine months, moving from farm to farm, evading Fascist police searches and living rough in barns and haystacks when it became too dangerous for the farmers to shelter him.

He succeeded in rejoining the Allied forces and forged friendships with Italian families that would last his whole life, as well as gaining a love of Italy, its countryside, food, and especially its wine that drew him back time and again. His support for the Monte San Martino Trust was a reflection of his deep gratitude to those families that had undoubtedly saved his life in 1943.

After the war Lawrence returned to insurance, becoming an underwriter in Lloyds until 1968 when he started his own business in property and investment. He was also very active in local politics, rising to become Mayor of Hornsey in 1964, Chairman of the Greater London Council in the Queen's Jubilee year of 1977-78, and Chairman of the Haringey Health Authority, among many other posts.

He was appointed Deputy Lieutenant for Greater London in 1978 and awarded the CBE for his services to the local community in 1983.

Lawrence married in 1954, and is survived by three children and six grandchildren. The grandchildren all remember, with some incredulity, their grandfather's stories of dodging patrols and bullets in the countryside south of Macerata, and of the kindness and generosity of the people he met there.

Charles "George" Hervey-Murray

George, who died on June 16th 2015 aged 94, was helped by a family in Meta, in the Abruzzo, after he and two fellow PoWs escaped from a train en route to Germany. George had been captured near Tobruk in June 1942 and flown to PG 21 Chieti in Italy. There he used previously learned skills to make compasses and teach companions how to sail, the latter in case they were able to escape by sea. He also met up with Denys Simons, who, like him, had been educated at Malvern College.

After being ordered not to escape following the signing of the Armistice, the PoWs soon found themselves being guarded by Germans, who put them on a train to Germany. As the train slowed down, Denys, his friend Bob Curran and George jumped off the train and headed south to meet the advancing Allies.

After several days walking and being helped along the way by local partisans, they reached Meta, where they were looked after with incredible kindness by the Durante family. After a few days they continued on their way towards the Allies. Unfortunately, Denys became very ill and they had to return to the Durante family in Meta for medical help. They stayed there for three more weeks, with the Durante family constantly risking their lives to look after them and nurse Denys back to good health.

The three then sent off again, but after several more days they were captured after taking refuge in a barn; they think they were betrayed by a German sympathiser. After being shipped off to Germany, the three of them spent the remaining war years in Oflag 79, near Brunswick.

After the war George married Betty in 1945 and returned to Reading University to complete his studies in agriculture. He then joined the National Institute of Agricultural Botany in Cambridge where he headed up the Cereals Section before joining RHM at their agricultural research station near Dunmow. He wrote a number of books and presented at many European conferences. George's two sons have both attended MSMT lunches and one of his grandsons has welcomed MSMT students.

In 2003, Denys commissioned a professional film company to make a documentary about their escape. He and George went back to Italy and spent several enjoyable days reminiscing and retracing their steps. The result, *A Kind of Holiday*, can be found on YouTube.

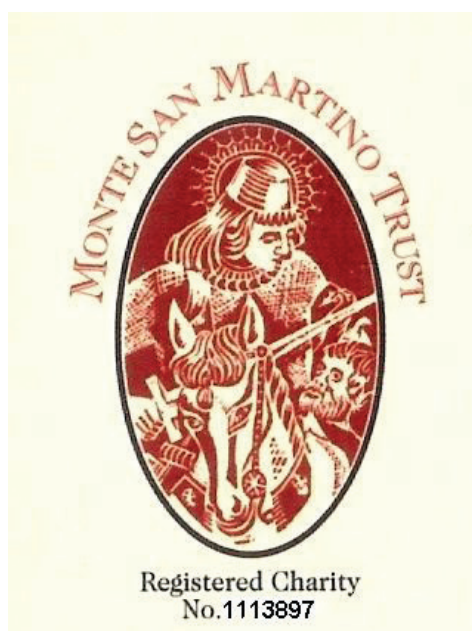
MSMT welcomes new trustees

We are delighted that the following three supporters of the Trust have agreed to join the board of directors.

Anne Copley has had an interest in Italy ever since she took an Italian “A” level at Oxford High School. At St Andrews University she did extra-curricular Italian studies with a Signora Cranstoun, a Venetian whose story of becoming the wife of a Scottish laird was an epic wartime romance. Italy has always been the country of choice for visits and holidays, and she divides her time between a home in Oxford and a house in the Marche, in Montefalcone Appennino, which she bought in 2003.

Although she had always been aware of Italian PoW camps (her uncle Carol Mather escaped from Fontanellato), she discovered that many of her Italian neighbours had sheltered Allied escapers, and that PG 59 Servigliano was just down the road from Montefalcone. This prompted a deepening interest in the stories of those involved, and she is very pleased that her researches have helped several families with intertwining pasts to reconnect. Anne related some of these stories as guest speaker at the Trust’s luncheon in 2014 and is bringing her knowledge to bear as a member of its Commemoration work group (see page 4).

Anne is currently Head of Legal for BPIF, the trade association for the print industry. She qualified as a solicitor after deciding upon a career change, following several years working in radio and television, from *University Challenge* to Ken Loach documentaries.



Christopher Prentice, CMG, retired from the Diplomatic service at the end of June, after five years in Rome as Ambassador. He joins the Trust’s board following the retirement as trustee of another former Ambassador to Italy, Sir Tom Richardson.

Christopher joined the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in 1977 and spent much of his career on Middle East affairs, including postings in Kuwait and later as Ambassador in Amman (2002-2006) and Baghdad (2007-2009). He also has extensive European experience and served for three years in the Private Office of the Foreign Secretary. Christopher speaks Italian, Hungarian and Arabic. He is a former cricketer, and played a first-class match for Oxford University against Worcestershire.

Christopher gave strong support to MSMT while Ambassador in Rome. In 2013, he visited Monte San Martino on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Armistice with Italy and took the opportunity to present an MBE to Antonio Millozzi, the Trust’s representative in Italy.

Miles Skinner is the first grandchild of a former prisoner of war to become a trustee, testifying to the continued support for MSMT by younger people. Miles’s late grandfather, Stan Skinner, was a PoW at Sulmona who eventually reached Allied lines. Both Stan and his wife Jo, who died in 2013, were strong supporters of MSMT. Miles himself has already made a significant contribution, as members present at the annual luncheon in 2015 will recall. As guest speaker, Miles told how, earlier in the year, he had run from Lucca to Rome, the equivalent of ten marathons, in just seven days. Supported throughout the run by his family, he raised over £20,000 for the Trust, largely through adroit use of social media – a skill which the Trust needs to make increasing use of.

A Chartered Surveyor by profession, Miles works for CBRE, the real estate services and investment firm. He is now based in London, having returned in 2015 from an 18-months stint in Frankfurt, Germany.

LIST OF TRUSTEES

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

Officers: Edward Gretton (UK student organiser); Antonio Millozzi, MBE, (Representative in Italy); John Simkins (Administrator and newsletter Editor).

Founder: Cav. Uff. Keith Killby, OBE.

A DATE FOR YOUR DIARIES! This year the Trust’s annual luncheon will be held on Tuesday November 8th at the Royal Overseas League, London. We are delighted to announce that the guest speaker will be Christopher Prentice, CMG, who recently retired as Ambassador to Italy (see above). Information about the luncheon and an acceptance form accompany this newsletter.