

MONTE SAN MARTINO TRUST

June 2013



Fontanellato, near Parma, the site of former PoW camp PG 49. The town is hosting events to mark the 70th anniversary of the Armistice with Italy in September. But why is Fontanellato twinned with Wells, in Somerset? The explanation is on page 3

Seventy years on: our link with the past

As the Italian Armistice was declared, seventy years ago, young men took their first steps to freedom from PoW camps all over Italy. Some were excited, some afraid: all were uncertain about what would happen next. They were setting out on what would be the big adventure of their lives, in a foreign country with which we had been at war. It's easy to imagine how they must have felt, as they took off into the countryside, alone or in small groups, doing their best to blend in as locals – and mostly failing miserably!

For many of us, those young men were dads, not prisoners or soldiers, and the 70th anniversary has perhaps a special poignancy. Many are now long dead: few, if any, will still be alive for the 80th. This is the last chance for our generation to link hands with them across the years. A good time to remember: a good time to make an effort to join in the commemorative events that we have planned for later in the year, and which are described on page 3.

It's also a good time to make that donation you have, perhaps, been meaning to send to our Anniversary Appeal, which has so far raised £475,000 and is, therefore, getting tantalisingly close to our target of £600,000. The money will help ensure that the Trust can continue bringing young Italians to the UK to learn English, for the foreseeable future – our thank-you gesture to the thousands of brave Italian people who took such personal risks to help the escapers on their way to freedom.

I do hope you will join us on one of the walks, or at our annual lunch on 30th October at the Royal Overseas League in London. Our Monte San Martino family is growing; we are hoping for some good publicity this year and are close to assuring our financial future – all good reasons to celebrate, quite apart from the 70th anniversary of the Armistice.

Nicholas Young, Trust Chairman



Our Appeal... a great response

Progress towards the Appeal target of £600,000 has, inevitably, been in fits and starts – yet substantial and encouraging progress it is! When we last reported to you, in our newsletter of June 2012, we had raised £300,000 (which included money pledged). The total of Appeal donations by end-April 2013, including recoverable Gift Aid, was £475,000.

We have received literally hundreds of donations, a dozen and more in four figures, from individual supporters and well-wishers. Nationally known charitable trusts have been most generous as well. The most recent donor trusts include the Forte Charitable Trust, the Dorfman Foundation, the Pears Foundation, the Gerald Ronson Foundation and the Rothschild Foundation. We are enormously grateful to all those who have responded to the Appeal since it was launched in November 2011. We still have many fires smouldering encouragingly under further potential donors. We are also very hopeful that the Italian Embassy will hold a major event in our support later this year. With all this encouragement, we are confident that, in the course of next year, we will reach our goal. That means we shall have increased the Trust's total funds to approximately £1m and put the long-term future of our study bursaries for young Italians on a secure footing. Their arrival in the UK every year reminds us of the bravery shown by the Italian *contadini* in sheltering prisoners of war – bravery that inspired the Trust's foundation and that explains its continuing robust health.

Vanni Treves, Appeal Chairman

TREASURER'S REPORT

Many of the economic problems outlined in my recent annual reports are sadly still with us, which tempts me to "copy and paste" big chunks of last year's Treasurer's Report. However, I will desist from being a gloomonger again: journalists are much better at that role than I am!

On a positive note, I am pleased to advise that the financial position of the Trust continues to improve, with assets totalling just over £800,000. Of this figure, a little over £80,000 is held in cash, the balance being deployed in the investment portfolio.

Given our commitment to provide around 20 bursaries each year to Italian students, which costs the Trust approximately £35,000, we have to maintain a significant amount of cash, even though this yields virtually no return. We would like to get to the position where we hold assets of at least £1m as, at that point, we should be much better placed to finance the bursaries without having to rely too much on donations. It is worth noting that the trustees do not get paid, so the running costs of the Trust are minimal, being mainly compliance-related.

As most of you may know, the principal reason for the much improved asset position of the charity is the Appeal launched at the end of 2011. As Vanni Treves, Appeal chairman, says above, the total amount raised to date, including sums pledged, totals £475,000. This is a very good achievement for a small charity such as ours. We are accordingly extremely grateful to all our supporters, especially as more and more calls are made on your purse during these difficult times.

You can rest assured that we are being as prudent as possible with regard to the finances of the Trust. The investment portfolio, where the bulk of the capital resides, has generated useful returns, without increasing overall risk.

I am conscious of the fact that we are experiencing government policy-driven markets as a result of aggressive monetary policies, which are without precedent. It is worrying when states intervene in capital markets as such intervention can more often than not create artificial pricing. For example, 10-year gilts yield well under 2.0 per cent, which would have proved unthinkable as recently as three or four years ago. Eventually, the day of judgment will come but, in the meantime, investors will "keep dancing while the band plays"!

I am using my best endeavours to be mindful of these risks as we have not only obligations towards the Italian students but also to you, who have been so generous in your support.

Nicholas Gent, Treasurer

ARMISTICE ANNIVERSARY

Setting out on celebration trail

The 70th anniversary of the Armistice between the Allies and Italy is drawing ever nearer. To mark it, there will be a considerable number of Trust supporters on Italian soil from 6th to 8th September.

Those who were present at the **Fontanellato** lunch in the Royal Overseas League last November will recall Francesco Trivelloni, deputy mayor of Fontanellato, which is near Parma and is the site of PG 49 PoW camp, inviting us to join in the Armistice celebrations. The townspeople and those in the surrounding area were quick to offer hospitality to the 600 escaping prisoners when the camp's gates were opened. The hospitality that will be extended to their descendants in September will be no less warm.

About 60 Trust supporters have already booked flights and accommodation for these celebrations, which begin on Friday 6th September with a convention on Italian PoW camps arranged by regional authorities and foundations. A visit to PG 49 camp, now a neurological rehabilitation centre, takes place on Saturday morning. There will be a concert of 1940s music in the town hall in the evening. Also on Saturday, there will be an informal country lunch at a farm nearby and a guided bicycle tour of some of the routes taken by the prisoners along the lower ridges of the Parma Apennines.

The trust is enormously grateful to Fontanellato for its efforts on our behalf – and also to Federico Buccellati and his brother Antonio, the owner of of an agriturismo nearby, who have helped with the arrangements.

The Armistice is not the only event being celebrated in the area. The year 2013 is very important for opera fans as it is the 200th anniversary of the birth of Giuseppe Verdi, who was born in Roncole di Busseto, now called Roncole Verdi, just a few miles from Fontanellato.

Freedom Trail in the Marche

Some Trust supporters arriving at Fontanellato may, however, be just a little tired, as they will have taken part in the first three days of the other Armistice event in which MSMT is involved – the **Tenna Valley Freedom Trail**, in the Marche. This is being organised jointly with the WW2 Escape Lines Memorial Society, although it is fair to say that Roger Stanton, secretary of ELMS, and his colleagues have borne the brunt of the organisation. Besides the walkers going out from the UK, Italians living in the area are likely to join the walks and the ceremonies commemorating partisans and prisoners.

The dates of the Freedom Trail are 4th – 9th September. As detailed in the Trust's February newsletter, there are three day-walks (5th to 7th) based on Servigliano, the site of PG 59 camp, which hosted Keith Killby, the Trust's founder. Sunday 8th September will be given over to ceremonies. The treks are substantial, at about 15 miles each. But back-up vehicles will be on hand to ferry anybody wanting to do only a part of the route.

There is still time to join either the Freedom Trail or the Fontanellato celebrations. If you wish to do so, **please contact John Simkins or Christine English** at info@msmtrust.org.uk, or telephone John on 01372 815724, or Christine on 0208 4478500.



Francesco Trivelloni, deputy mayor of Fontanellato

Why is Fontanellato twinned with Wells, in Somerset? The answer is that they have PoW camps in common. There were, in fact, two camps at Wells and the area has a sizeable Italian community, some of whom are related to the PoWs. Outside the town, there is a statue of Romulus and Remus carved by an Italian former prisoner to thank the locals for their kindness to the prisoners. Much further north, near Malton in north Yorkshire, there was also a PoW camp at Eden Camp. In 1985, businessman Stan Johnson was about to turn the site into a crisp factory but came up with the idea of a modern history theme museum, focusing particularly on the Second World War, when some Italian former prisoners asked permission to look around their former home. This April, as it does every year, the Escape Lines Memorial Society held a moving remembrance service at Eden Camp, honouring the evaders and those who bravely helped send them on their way to freedom along a network of escape routes throughout Europe.

TV tribute to courageous Italian artist

The poignant story of Beppe Porcheddu, the father-in-law of Major Michael Ross, has now been told in an Italian television documentary. Michael, who died last year, was given refuge in Liguria by the Porcheddu family, at enormous risk to them, after escaping from Fontanellato. As he later told in his book, *From Liguria with Love*, he fell in love with one of the twin daughters, Giovanna, and returned after the war to marry her.

Beppe was an artist and was disabled by wounds received in the First World War. As Giovanna explains in the documentary, he was strongly anti-fascist because he valued freedom of expression and refused to be corralled into fascist painting. He had his passport taken away in 1935 and, while Michael was hiding at the family's villa near Bordighera, he was investigated by the authorities. But all the family survived the war.

Then, in 1947, Beppe disappeared, never to be seen again by his family. He said that he was leaving to organise an exhibition and told his wife not to search for him. Giovanna's mother concluded that Beppe, a religious man who sometimes suffered from depression, might have gone to a monastery. The family accepted his decision. Italian speakers can see the documentary, which was researched by journalist Michela Bellenzier and broadcast on 25th February, by clicking on www.tgr.rai.it and following these links: regioni/Liguria/Il Settimanale/Archivio.

Life in *The Cage*

When Dan Billaney escaped from Fontanellato, he took with him nine exercise books that contained the manuscript of *The Cage*, which he and fellow inmate David Dowie had been writing. The manuscript was returned to Billaney's parents in the UK in 1946 by Dino Meletti, a farmer who sheltered the two men at Soragana, near Mantua. But, tragically, Dowie and Billaney did not come back.

Dowie's niece, Sue Dowie-Chambers, says their last known location was Capistrello, in Abruzzo, where they left a chit dated November 1943. A book, *The Barbed-Wire University*, speculates that Billaney may have been killed in an encounter with an informer or they may have died from exposure. Their bodies were never found.

The Cage, and a novel by Billaney entitled *The Trap*, were published after the war – and now *The Cage* is getting an airing. It has been turned into a play by Peter Spafford and is being performed by the theatre company Fifty6 Ninety6. The three performances take place at the Junction, Goole, on 9th November, at Helmsley Arts Centre on 10th November and at Hull College (date to be announced). The play describes the experiences of the two men, who first met when imprisoned at Capua.

BOOK REVIEW: On Getting Through, by John Lindsay Alexander

The story of John Lindsay Alexander's escape is fascinating – and the tale of how it came to be published is itself intriguing. Sir Lindsay Alexander, as he eventually became, was a Royal Engineer lieutenant captured near Tobruk. He ended up at Fontanellato, by way of Capua and Rezzanello camps. At the Armistice, he set off south, together with Jack Gatford and, for some of the way, Michael Lacey, a Trust veteran. They decided to keep to the spine of Italy, intending to hide in the mountains and gain breathing space to see where the Allies would land.

After a long trek Lindsay and Jack found refuge in the village of Balsorano, in the Liri valley in Abruzzo. After a failed attempt to get to the Sangro, and another spell in Balsorano, they reached the village of Norma, which gave them a bird's eye view of the Anzio landings and German retreat. Liberated by Americans, they were ushered into the presence of General Mark Clark, only to be imprisoned briefly until given security clearance.

Lindsay completed the final draft of his memoirs shortly before his death in 2000. In part it was based on his manuscript *On Getting Through*, written in 1944. His sons Patrick and Charles always intended to publish it, but the actual publication came about in unexpected fashion. On a trip to Italy, Patrick went to Balsorano and the lady of the inn where he stayed took an interest in his story. About a year ago, she let him know she had traced one of the two girls who took food to Lindsay and Jack. She turned out to be her aunt – named Fiorina Mollicone, who now lives in Canada. Patrick and Charles met Fiorina in 2012 and the book contains an account of her memories. There followed a request from the Liri Valley for the diary and it then became apparent that the memoir was being translated. The outcome is that 500 handsome paperback copies of *On Getting Through* have been published by Associazione Culturale Il Liri, with text both in English and Italian. Patrick supplemented the diary with letters Lindsay wrote to his family and the result is an extremely readable and well edited account of extraordinary adventures.

The revealing contents of a school exercise book

When **Professor Peter Jones** came across the war diary of his father, Albert, (**pictured right**), the discovery motivated him not only to write up the story but to track down the *contadini* family that had sheltered Albert in the Marche after his escape from a PoW camp at Sforzacosta. Here, Peter tells a heart-warming tale.

I came across my father's war diary only after his death, and then my eldest son, who was helping with clearing the effects, collected that and other war artefacts into a file. It was some years later that a casual conversation prompted me to open the file and read the diary. And that was just the beginning.

My father, Albert, was a young, East End lad who left school at 14 and was a bank messenger before volunteering for the Army in 1939. He was evacuated from Dunkirk, having been wounded when strafed by enemy aircraft. Once recovered, and promoted to corporal, in May 1940 he was transferred from the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers to the 50th Battalion Recce Corps for deployment to North Africa.

He was captured at the Battle of Gazala Lines when his battalion was virtually wiped out. His diary, started when a PoW, records the boredom of the camps, the minutiae of the days, the importance of the Red Cross and the parcels, the tensions among the prisoners and the lead-up to the British "stay put" orders to PoWs after the Italians declared the Armistice in September 1943. It was this event that triggered his escape from PG 53 at Sforzacosta, near Macerata, and a flight across the foothills of the Apennines. He evaded capture and was given sanctuary by the Marzialetti family. He lived with them for 11 months, working on the land and becoming a member of the family. He was originally one of four escapers, but two were recaptured by the Germans and sent to the Stalags in Germany and not heard from again.

To escape detection and survive, Albert needed to become part of the local community, learn the language and become a *contadino*. Always on the lookout for an opportunity to get back home, he made a number of attempts but they were either foiled by German intelligence or just bad luck. In his diary, referring to contact with an SAS officer, he suggests a connection with Operation Simcol, which was a parachute mission behind enemy lines in October 1943 to evacuate Allied servicemen. But an attempt to rendezvous on the coast near Pescara to be taken off by the Royal Navy failed.

'I found not only the farmhouse but even the children of the family'

The diary refers to a number of occasions when he had to evade the Germans and the local fascists, involving long journeys to safe houses of other members of the extended Marzialetti family. As the Allies fought their way north up the spine of Italy, the diary becomes silent on the specifics of the activities and for a long time it was hidden and lost following a surprise raid by Germans. Found again, the diary, written in a school exercise book, was brought home among the few possessions he had. Repatriated via the 2nd Allied PoW Repatriation Camp in Naples, he arrived back in England in September 1944.

Once I had come across the diary, I was determined to track down the Marzialetti family. The only reference in the diary to the location of Casa Marzialetti was some local place names. My father had once returned to Italy, in 1963, but there was no record of that visit, nor any contact details for the family other than a poor-quality photograph.

However, in 2011, with the help of Antonio Millozzi, the coordinator within Italy of the Monte San Martino Trust, and his son Giuseppe, I was able not only to find the actual farmhouse but even the children of the family still alive who remembered "Alberto" and the impact he had on their lives. The Marzialettis have great affection for the memory of my father and I visited the family again in September 2012, viewing the archives in Rome as well as those of Macerata. The family are always very welcoming and I have been able to add colour and context to the diary through those visits.

I am now in the final stages of the research, having recently found valuable additional material in the National Archives and the Regimental Museum. I intend to start the first draft of the story later this year. So far, I have one publisher interested.



‘Well, you have come to the right place!’

*Armed with old photographs, **Fiona Battle** set out to research her father’s escape. As she relates below, she had more success than she ever thought likely*

For a number of years I had been thinking of visiting Italy to try to find the village where my father, Bill Bass, and his fellow officer Larry Holroyd, had been hidden for six weeks, after walking out of Fontanellato PoW camp at the Armistice. My family had very little information about my father’s time there, but we had a few photographs taken when he returned to Italy in 1949 with my mother, and I remember as a child packing up Christmas parcels to send to “Luigi Franchi” and his family.

One photograph had the name Spiaggere on the back, and my mother had told me this was near Bardi, which is in the upper Ceno valley south-west of Parma. An invitation to holiday with friends in Italy in 2012 gave me and my husband Robin the opportunity to investigate further.

After visiting Fontanellato, we drove to Bardi, an attractive hill town. We drove down the steep hill out of Bardi to the valley bottom and up the other side. Within half an hour of driving up the mountain, we reached a sign to Spiaggere. After another fifteen minutes’ drive up a very rough track through small fields and scrubby woodland we were in the tiny village. This consisted of about five dilapidated houses with farm buildings and I immediately recognised Luigi’s house and the village water trough from my photographs. There was a cacophony of sounds – dogs barking, chickens clucking and guinea fowl squawking, but no one appeared. One of the houses showed further signs of occupation: a vegetable plot, some cats, and several enormous (thankfully, kennelled) dogs.

We climbed up the hill behind Luigi’s house to look at the other buildings. One was built against the hillside with a door at the upper end into the loft. Comparing this with a photograph of my father showing my mother where he had been hidden, we could see the lintel and stones above the door were the same. It was an extraordinary feeling standing in the same place, nearly 70 years later. I undid a piece of wire holding the door shut and it swung open to reveal an empty loft. It was incredibly exciting to have found the place where my father and Larry had been hidden. I searched the beams just in case my father had scratched his initials there, but found nothing.

We left a copy of the old photographs and a note outside the door of the occupied house. Back at the valley bottom, I wondered if perhaps we should have visited the nearest village to Spiaggere. We had a long drive ahead but decided we would regret not trying, so we drove back up the mountain, past the turning to Spiaggere, to the village of Lezzara. Being siesta time there was no sign of life. But just after we had turned around and begun to drive slowly out of the village, a child appeared. In halting Italian, I asked if her parents were in the house. “I am English,” she replied. She fetched her mother and I explained that I was trying to find information about Spiaggere, where my father had been hidden in the war.

‘It was incredibly exciting to find the place where my father and Larry had been hidden’

Domenico showed me the path down the mountain, still called ‘Il sentiero degli Inglesi’

“Well you have come to the right place!”

We were welcomed into their house and Maria told us her family were from Lezzara. She had married an Englishman, but they return for holidays. Maria’s father, Signor Sidoli, and his brother had been partisans and their homes had been safe houses for PoWs.

Domenico, Maria’s cousin, was telephoned and soon he, and his wife Mirna, arrived in great excitement, carrying an album of wartime mementos of his father’s. Domenico had been a small child during the war but he had kept his father’s album and other wartime memorabilia. He had, after the war, worked in London for a few years, as had many from the Bardi area, so luckily spoke fluent English.

I started leafing slowly through the album. I turned a page and there was a familiar photograph of my own parents on their wedding day and, on the opposite page, one of my father and his best man, Larry, who had stayed together throughout the war. This caused great excitement. A bottle of wine was opened, bread and cheese produced. Domenico looked at the photograph of my father and said: “This man was at Spiaggere.”

He told me my father and Larry had stayed up at Spiaggere and, if the coast was clear, they would sometimes come down to Lezzara in the evening. He showed me the path down the mountain, still called “Il sentiero degli Inglesi”, and he showed me his house, virtually unchanged since the war, the table where my father and Larry would have had dinner, and the shelf where the radio had been as they listened to the BBC broadcasts. Unfortunately, my father and Larry were not among the lucky ones who got home. Larry injured his leg (probably, we learnt, from

being shot at by one of the local fascists) so they had to give themselves up to the Germans so as not to endanger the lives of those who had sheltered them. They spent the remainder of the war in German camps.

Domenico identified other people in my photographs, including the uncle of Bruno Franchi, who farms and occasionally stays in the “occupied” house at Spiaggere. Before we left, he showed us, in his shed, an American jeep that had been left behind, complete with bullet holes!

With much hugging and promises to keep in touch, Robin and I set off south for the rest of our holiday, over-whelmed by how much we had managed to find out. We have since visited the National Archives at Kew and found my father’s Liberation Questionnaire, together with a letter he wrote to the War Office telling them about the help he had been given by Luigi Franchi and Signor Sidoli. I now have more information with which to carry on my research. The next step is to try and contact Luigi’s granddaughter in Milan.

The prisoner and the partisan

*The announcement of **Vilma Goddard’s** death last year came too late to record in the 2012 newsletter. We now have the opportunity to tell her remarkable story*

Vilma Goddard (née Costa) was born in 1922 into a moderately well-off family who lived in a villa conspicuously sited on a ridge on the outskirts of the spa town of Salsomaggiore, near Parma.

Vilma’s father, Armando, was astute enough to see that Mussolini’s ascendancy to power meant trouble ahead. He bought a small farm called Casa Aldrisi 4km to the south and it was farmed on a share basis with Mario and Alice Ghizzoni. At a time of severe food shortages, it was to prove a very good move and, unwittingly, an excellent hideaway for an escaped prisoner. The villa was also only 14km away from the PoW camp at Fontanellato.

At the Italian Armistice, having been interned there and now given his freedom, Lt John Goddard MC of The Buffs headed south.

John decided to call at the villa early on Sunday 12th September 1943, and in so doing he caused Vilma’s life to make a colossal change. Often the better-off Italians had fascist leanings – indeed their neighbour was a local fascist leader – so John was lucky to choose the house of his future in-laws, rather than that of the fascist who would have shot him, or, at least, have him bundled off to Germany.

For the next 20 months, Vilma, her family and many others showed fantastic fortitude, kindness and bravery in sheltering John. The winter and spring of 1943-44 were spent mostly at Casa Aldrisi, with trips back and forth to Salsomaggiore. A combination of better weather, things hotting up generally in the Salsomaggiore area (a local German headquarters town), and an urge to get back to Allied lines led John and Vilma to head off south-west. They arrived at Bardi, a partisan stronghold about 50km from Salsomaggiore in the autumn of 1944. There, Vilma ran medicines and messages for the partisans – a pretty 22-year-old girl could get about the (German occupied) countryside with greater ease.

Meanwhile, John had struck up a friendship with Fernando “John” Berni. Berni had spent most of his life in England but had been in Italy at the outbreak of the war and was stuck there. He was popular enough locally to be elected Mayor of Bardi. His later claim to fame was that he founded Berni Inns in the UK with his brothers. By now John and Vilma were in love – any romance forged under the circumstances they had been through was likely to be pretty deep. Uniquely, they were married in a civil ceremony by John Berni on 3rd January 1945 and within a month were on the move again southwards. They were back in Allied hands on 10th May and arrived in Liverpool on 10th June – a huge culture shock for Vilma.

John went back to the family engineering firm and Vilma brought up their son and daughter, ultimately at Dunsfold, near Godalming, in Surrey. John died at the tragically young age of 49 in 1968. Vilma moved to Gloucestershire and was to live there for the next 40-odd years with her daughter, Janet. She died, aged 90, in March 2012.

Her book, *A Partisan View*, is available from www.lulu.com at £20, and from there and other eBook sites at £3. The Goddard family is generously directing profits to the Monte San Martino Trust.



Vilma Goddard, pictured shortly after the war

In Combat, Unarmed

We are very excited to announce the publication of the autobiography of Keith Killby, founder of the Monte San Martino Trust, entitled *In Combat, Unarmed*. The book has come into being through the energy, skill and generosity of two people, thousands of miles apart, who have never met.

Malcolm Angus, Keith's nephew, who lives in Australia, came to the UK on a visit last year determined to get from his uncle the definitive version of his early life and war years. This took about a month of daily conversations, rewrites and disagreements and was finally achieved through much patience and tenacity.

Shortly afterwards, a Trust supporter from Ohio, Dennis Hill, visited Keith, as his father had been in the same PoW camp; Dennis had already done much research into this camp – Servigliano, in the Marche – and into his father's story. This led to a very generous offer by Dennis to design and typeset Keith's book, liaising with Malcolm about which photos and maps to include, and sending many versions to me (and Nick Young, our chairman) to proofread. Dennis found a printer, I applied for an ISBN number, Malcolm kept us all on track and the result is a fine-looking, fascinating and entertaining book of over 120 pages.

The tone is set in the first chapter as Keith describes an early event in his life: "The cot I slept in was hinged with metal bars, and from it I attempted my first escape – head first. The fire brigade was summoned to cut me free."

Twenty-five years later, Keith is to be found looking after the wounded in the desert as a medical orderly, before joining the SAS, executing a raid on Sardinia from a submarine, being captured and escaping from Servigliano at the Armistice. His adventures on the run in Italy make gripping reading as he tries to survive in the Marche countryside, receiving help from many Italians before finally being recaptured and sent to two camps in Germany. His account is imbued with his customary wry humour, compassion and common sense, and his affection for Italy and the Italians shines through. I have found it unable to put down, as I'm sure you will too. Our thanks go to Malcolm and Dennis for all their immensely hard work, to trustee Ian Laing for his generous support – and, above all, to Keith for sharing his inspiring story with us.

In Combat, Unarmed can be obtained for £10 by contacting Letitia Blake on info@msmtrust.org.uk.

Letitia Blake, Hon. Secretary

'English kindness and the rainy weather'

Eighteen young Italians came to the UK on Trust study bursaries in 2012, with feedback suggesting that they both profited from, and thoroughly enjoyed, their month-long stays.

Five studied at CES Oxford House, in Wheatley, while the rest were at Central School, London. Students were asked to evaluate the following, using a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being the highest): reception by a Trust member at a UK airport; the home stay accommodation; tuition; contact with the representative in Italy; and contact with the UK student organiser. Thirteen of the 18 students responded: the marks awarded were overwhelmingly 1 or 2.

Asked for their memories, Giulia Andreoli, who went to London, recalled "the English kindness, the multicultural reality, the beauty of London, some museums and the rainy weather". Marta Scocco, who secured a job as a journalist in Belgium shortly after her course at Wheatley, spoke of "a great school, a lovely time with my host family, and fun travel with my international schoolmates".

The managements of both Central School and CES Oxford have changed in the past year or two and we have renewed our excellent and long-standing relationships with them. Peter Williams, principal of CES Oxford, said: "The MSMT students have been without exception some of our loveliest and most memorable students of the summer. Each of them contributed to the school community in their own ways."

We are very grateful to Edward Gretton, the Trust's UK student organiser, for making sure that travel and accommodation arrangements worked smoothly – and also extremely grateful to our wonderful volunteers who meet students at airports.

If you are able to help with this valuable work, please contact us.



Keith points to the hole in the wall at Servigliano through which prisoners escaped

GUEST SPEAKER EDWARD STOURTON RECALLS ROSSANO FREEDOM TRAIL

Fontanellato luncheon, 2012

A record number of Trust supporters gathered at the Royal Overseas League club in London on 13th November 2012 for the annual Fontanellato luncheon, which proved to be an uplifting occasion. The luncheon brings together the families of the former prisoners of war and celebrates the bravery of the Italian people who gave them refuge while they were on the run.

This time there was an added sense of excitement as we looked ahead to 2013 and the 70th anniversary in September of the Armistice with Italy. Among the 109 guests were five "originals", men who had been prisoners in Italian camps: Cavaliere Ufficiale Keith Killby, OBE, the Trust founder; Major Michael Lacey; Mr Rivers Scott, Mr Frank Unwin, MBE; and Major Mick Wagner, MBE.

Welcoming the guests, Nick Young, chairman of MSMT, waved the diary that his own father had kept while a prisoner at the Fontanellato camp, near Parma. "I bring it to the lunch every year," he said. He went on to outline the events that the Trust is holding in 2013, and in which he hoped as many supporters as possible would participate. He introduced Francesco Trivelloni, the deputy mayor of Fontanellato, who had come from Italy for the luncheon with the express purpose of inviting Trust supporters to join the town's Armistice anniversary celebrations from 6th-8th September. Mr Trivelloni recalled his own time as a student in London on a Trust bursary, eight years previously, describing it ("and the British weather") as a great experience. "In Fontanellato we consider it very important that as many as possible of you participate in the events in September," he said.

Resuming his own speech, Nick Young paid tribute to Mr Vanni Treves, CBE, chairman of the Trust's fundraising Appeal, for the enormous efforts that he and the Trust's fundraiser, Mrs Sue Comber, had made over the 12 months since the launch of the Appeal.

He then introduced the luncheon's guest speaker, Mr Edward Stourton, the BBC broadcaster. Reminding the audience that Mr Stourton presents Radio 4's Sunday programme, is a former BBC Paris correspondent and a founder member of Channel 4 News, he described him as "my favourite broadcaster: those wonderful, mellifluous tones and that sense of deep integrity".

"No pressure, then," joked Mr Stourton, who began by describing the Rossano Valley Freedom Trail, led by Brian Lett, two months previously, in which he had participated in order to record interviews for a BBC Radio 4 programme that will be broadcast in September 2013 to commemorate the Armistice. There was, he said, one difference between the Rossano trail and a similar one he had done in the footsteps of escapers over the Pyrenees. "The difference can be described in one word," he said. "Lunch!" He added: "We were never far from a bowl of pasta or a glass of wine."

In a more serious vein, he said that, as a broadcaster, "covering a walk is an incredibly effective way of bringing history alive". Moreover, "interest in the Second World War is growing all the time and we are still finding out new things about it. We want to hang on to those stories, make sure they do not slip over the edge of history."

The Grace before lunch was said by the Rev. Charles Gordon Clark. Flowers were presented to Christine English and Letitia Blake, the lunch organisers, for their hard work in making such a splendid occasion possible.

Date for the diary: the 2013 Fontanellato luncheon will be held at the Royal Overseas League on Wednesday 30th October. Invitations will be sent out later this summer.



Edward Stourton: 'Covering a walk is an effective way of bringing history alive'

OBITUARIES

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



Toby Graham, pictured in Gibraltar in 2007

The death of **Professor Dominick “Toby” Graham, MC**, at the age of 92 in March, has deprived MSMT of one of its most distinguished – and colourful – PoW veterans.

Toby was captured in North Africa and first imprisoned at Chieti, where his attempt to escape through a sewer was foiled by a fire. Transferred to Fontanellato, he got out for a day but was recaptured. When the camp’s gates were opened in September 1943 at the Armistice, however, he set out on a six-week journey to freedom.

He described it in his book, *Escapes and Evasions of an Obstinate Bastard* – the epithet used by one of his two companions when he decided to go a different way from them as they approached the fighting in south Italy. He wore peasants’ clothes, was lodged and fed by *contadini*, spent a night in a barn with a sick cow and was fired at several times by Germans scouring the woods. Finally he was escorted with a party of 17 by a drunken guide to a village near Ortona, where a Canadian patrol found him being shaved in a barber’s chair.

After rejoining the Allies, he commanded a battery with the Guards Armoured Division in north-west Europe. Going forward to replace a wounded observation officer, he was wounded in the arm but continued to direct fire. The citation for his MC declared that disregard for his own safety had enabled counter-attacks to be repelled and an offensive thrust made.

After the war, Toby became well known as a military historian, after taking a PhD at London University and joining the University of New Brunswick. His book, *Tug of War* – one of three written in collaboration with Brigadier Shelford Bidwell – is a classic account of the Italian campaign.

Toby was an early supporter of the Trust and a regular attender of the Fontanellato lunches. When no longer able to make the journey, he once caused an alarm by vanishing from his own home in Staindrop, County Durham, but was eventually found lunching at the Army and Navy Club in London. It was also typical of Toby that, while participating in a

Freedom Trail, aged over 80, he only very reluctantly allowed himself to be stretchered back after feeling unwell. He was up and running the next day.

Toby was married three times. The Trust expresses deep condolences to his widow, Ursula. She and Toby married in 2002 after meeting, as the only two passengers, on a container ship to New Zealand, where Toby was going to visit his daughter.

Toby’s obituary was carried in the Daily Telegraph on March 11th.

Major Anthony (Tony) Gregson, M.B.E., who died in October last year, aged 92, forged a life-long love for Italy, and a lasting friendship with an Italian family, while on the run.

Tony was raised at Burdon Hall, in Durham, before attending Cheltenham college and subsequently the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich. When war broke out, he became a Gun Position Officer in the 74th Field Regiment Royal Artillery. One morning in April 1942, on the way to Fuka, Tony found himself and his convoy in the middle of Rommel’s 90th division as the desert mist dispersed. He managed to drive through the entire division only to be captured a mile away when his truck started over-heating.

Transferred to PG 21 Chieti, he immediately set to work on a tunnel, only to be transferred again the day before they were set to escape. (The tunnel wasn’t wasted – a number of PoWs made a success of it some days later.)

Soon afterwards, at PG 19 in Bologna, Tony had his chance. Clinging to the underside of an 8KW truck he managed to break free from the camp. After a few hours of discomfort he then found that the truck had actually come full circle and returned to the camp! Not to be thwarted, he scaled the walls and hid himself in a farmer’s manure heap.

For the next two months, Tony walked south through the Apennines, with a button compass to guide him. All along the way he was helped by the brave Italian country folk who helped so many others like him. He finally found the allies at Cassino, 350 miles south-east of Bologna.

After the war Tony often revisited Italy and built a lasting friendship with the Loro family who had found him in their manure heap. Even at the age of 83, Tony still rode his Motoguzzi T3 all the way there and back. He was a man of great character and ingenuity and those few years in Italy were happily relived throughout his life.

T.F. (Denys) Simmons, who died in Rome in August 2012, aged 91, left a remarkable record of his daring escape – a documentary film entitled *A Kind of Holiday*. It was made in 2003 with the help of a professional film director, Franco Taviani, and tells how Denys, together with Robert Curran and George Hervey-Murray, jumped from a train as they were being transported to Germany. Denys had been captured at Tobruk in 1942 and had spent just over a year at Chieti PoW camp before being moved to Sulmona.

The trio managed to remain free for about six weeks before being recaptured by the Germans. They then were taken to Brunswick (Germany) where they remained until the camp was freed by Allied forces. After the war, Denys returned to Rome to work on the Allied Control Commission, whereupon he met and married his Italian-born wife, Bona.

The Simmons family has now also had to face up to the loss of Bona, who died in April this year. One of their children, Giovanna, says that both parents had full and interesting lives. She adds: “I am a living example of the bonds that developed in the wake of the September 8th Armistice and deeply appreciate the Monte San Martino Trust’s efforts to keep them alive.” The Trust has a copy of the *Holiday* documentary, which pays tribute to the Italians who helped escaping PoWs and was broadcast in Italy recently by RAI Storia.

A woman as witness

The literature on Italy in the Second World War is to have a valuable addition with the publication of the memoirs of Mrs Lucy de Burgh, entitled *My Italian Adventures: An English Girl at War*. The book is unusual in that few accounts of Italy were written during the war, and in that the author is a woman: the women serving with the allied armies in Italy may have numbered fewer than 50.

At the time of writing, in 1946-47, the author was named Lucy Addey – she later married Lt. Col. Hugo de Burgh, who led the break-out of PoWs from Fontanellato.*

The book falls into two parts. Part I tells of the author’s recruitment in 1943 as ATS Officer, Military Intelligence, posted to Italy, where her confidential research with maps had a direct bearing on the progress of war, logging the final assault on the Gothic Line. Part II covers her work for the Allied Screening Commission, when she travelled around Italy and Austria, meeting the partisans, recording the Nazi atrocities they suffered for sheltering Allied troops, and ensuring they received compensation. Besides being a riveting personal story, it paints a bigger picture of the aftermath of war and how people were coping.

The memoir, which has had no changes since it was written, has been commissioned by The History Press, in association with the Imperial War Museum. Edited by Mary Hodge, there is a foreword putting the story in its historical context by Sir Max Hastings. There is also a note on the Monte San Martino Trust by Nick Young, the chairman: Mrs de Burgh has kindly said that the author’s share of the proceeds should go to the Trust.

The launch of the book is planned for September 26th at the Imperial War Museum. MSMT supporters will receive invitations later in the summer.

*The de Burgh family is in the final stages of organising their expedition in September to commemorate Col. de Burgh’s escape into Switzerland, by retracing his climb over the Alps from the Ayas Valley to Zermatt. About 20 family members and friends intend to take part. Our best wishes go with them.

On the front cover of a school exercise book, which was recently discovered in a house in Fontanellato, are written the words “URDU VOCABULARY” and the signature “M. W. Lacey, Lt. RA. 1/43”. A photocopy of the book is being sent to Major Michael Lacey, a Trust veteran and former prisoner, at his home in Haslemere, so that he may brush up his Urdu.

MBE for Antonio

Antonio Millozzi, pictured right, the Trust's indefatigable organiser within Italy, has been made an Honorary Member of the Order of the British Empire.

The award, for services to charity, recognises the tremendous work that Antonio, who lives in Monte San Martino in the Marche, has done in being the point of reference for the Trust in Italy, ever since it was founded by Keith Killby. As part of his work, Antonio liaises with Italian schools and students on the annual UK study bursaries. Together with his son Giuseppe, he has also recently been active in setting up a study centre at Servigliano, dedicated to the history of the former PoW camp there.



Antonio is to receive the award from the British ambassador during the Tenna Valley festivities in September. He said: "I consider my work for the Trust a duty. As a war orphan, and hence indirectly a civilian victim, I too need to bear witness to the disasters that war brings. I am grateful to the British government for honouring a foreigner because it shows that the values of historical memory go beyond territorial boundaries." The Trust congratulates Antonio and thanks him and all the Millozzi family warmly for their great efforts.

Seventieth anniversaries come thick and fast in 2013. On 14th August, it will be 70 years since H.M. submarine Saracen was badly damaged by depth charges and sank off Bastia, Corsica. One of the survivors was the radio operator, Dennis Read, a Trust supporter. It had been Saracen which had landed an SAS party, including Trust founder Keith Killby, on Sardinia.

There is already a plaque to Saracen in Bastia but now the French government wants to commemorate the part that the submarine played in the liberation of Corsica by attaching a plaque to the wreck itself. Saracen is a war grave and has been located by the French government 900ft below the surface of the sea, three or four miles off Bastia. A French TV documentary is also being made. Terry Hodgkinson, an author, who is married to a Corsican, has commissioned the plaque and there are plans for a celebration on 14th August. Placing the plaque, however, has run into problems as bad weather has delayed attempts by a salvage vessel to lower a camera probe to the wreck, which lies three or four miles off Bastia.

Anybody wishing to brush up their Italian might well be interested in a language study group that Trust supporter Jenifer Landor is leading in the town of Agnone, in Molise, north west of Campobasso, in the latter half of August. The courses run periodically and take place in the medieval Palazzo della Citta` in the old town. The school belongs to Jenifer's Italian cousin and lessons cater for a range of skills. Jenifer says Agnone, which is two hours away from Rome, is the perfect place to learn Italian because, unlike Siena where she herself once did an intensive course, there is little danger of a conversation in English.

Jenifer is hosting a course from 17th to 31st August, which would tie in well for anybody planning to join the Freedom Trail in the Marche on 4th September. She plans to increase the number of courses in future years and would be happy to stay in touch with people interested in those.

For details, go to www.inmolise.co.uk and contact Jenifer at jenifer@inmolise.co.uk



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MSMT archive

The Trust has a large and unique collection of memoirs written by former prisoners of war in Italy, telling of their experiences and escapes. It is housed at the home of Keith Killby, the Trust's founder, although the Imperial War Museum has indicated that it would eventually like to accommodate it. Recently, we have had the collection professionally scanned, which makes it more secure and puts it into a format likely to be of immense value to future historians and researchers into family history. We are currently considering how best to make the archive accessible.

We regret that our website, www.msmtrust.org.uk, is currently inaccessible as it is being rebuilt.

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