

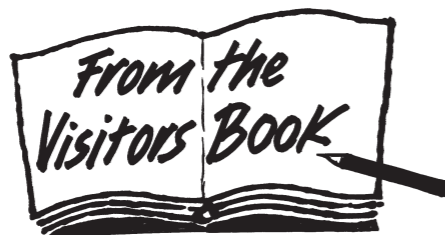
# NEWSLETTER

## DISTRIBUTION

With this final Newsletter, if you did not attend the opening ceremony you will receive a copy of the brochure produced for the Opening Ceremony which includes the names of all those who have donated to the fund. It had been hoped to produce a video of the Ceremony for those who did not attend.

As it happened conditions on the day, light, weather etc made the production of anything worthwhile impossible. Therefore we hope that from this Newsletter and the enclosed brochure you will be able to get a feel of that historic day. For those visiting Thiepval there is a splendid Guide Book available at the shop and at the Imperial War Museum and Michael Barker, a member of the FRC, has recently published an excellent work on Sir Edwin Lutyens which we hope will also be in the shop.

Finally, we are indebted to Pen & Sword Books for their efforts and support in distributing this newsletter on our behalf - thank you particularly to the team there which has consistently made this an easy task for us. Pen & Sword have confirmed that they will not be using our mailing list or your name and address for any other purpose. We would also like to thank all those who have contributed articles and photographs for the Newsletters including Earls Haig and Kitchener for permission to reproduce their photographs.



### The following are some of the comments written in the Visitors Book at the Centre since its opening

A truly superb exhibition presented with clarity and thoughtfulness. Long overdue and most welcome. A special thank you to everyone involved in the creation of this centre.

A magnificent exhibition and reminder of what happened here.

It will help to maintain the interest and understanding of future generations.

Very impressive. The new annexe is most informative.

An appropriate & informative centre, contributing greatly to an understanding of the terrible events that happened here.

Long overdue, but an impressive explanation of the terrible events that occurred here.

This is an excellent and informative centre for the Battle of the Somme. Congratulations to all involved.

Excellent learning centre. Wonderful architecture too.

Good centre -fills in the blanks. The Memorial speaks for itself.

Very interesting and touching. Excellent.

*Enfin un centre d'interprétation à Thiepval.*

*N'oublions pas tous ceux qui ont combattu pour la France.*

*Merci aux généreux donateurs. Excellent travail de Mémoire.*

*Merci aux noms de tous ces malheureux soldats.*

*Excellent travail de mémoire. Une visite émouvante.*

*Bravo aux réalisateurs de ce centre. Dommage qu'il ait eu besoin de plus de 80 ans pour le réaliser. Mieux vaut tard que jamais.*

A very informative exhibition, worthy of those who fell,

*Félicitations pour une aussi belle réalisation commémorant l'amitié longue entre la France et le Royaume Uni.*

A restrained and thoughtful building -the exhibition added to our visit. Thank you

Well thought out. A welcome addition to the Somme.

*BRAVO tout simplement- et encore merci à nos amis Anglais pour leur sacrifice.- qu'ils soient honorés.*

*Merci de nous avoir défendu.*



Charities Aid Foundation  
Registered Charity No. 268369

# NEWSLETTER 7

visitor CENTRE d'accueil

Patrons:  
His Royal Highness The Duke of Kent KG GCMG GCVO ADC  
Sir Michael Jay KCMG Permanent Secretary Foreign & Commonwealth Office  
Sir John Holmes GCVO KBE CMG HM Ambassador to France

March 2005

## 27th SEPTEMBER 2004: MISSION ACCOMPLISHED



HRH The Duke of Kent with Sir Frank Sanderson at the Official Opening of the Visitors Centre

### How it all began...

It was six years ago on my first 1st July Thiepval visit that I rashly asked Mike Johnson of the CWGC and Piers Storie-Pugh of the RBL why there were no 'facilities' at Thiepval to cater for the many thousands of visitors each year. Since that date, slowly but surely, an interested group of most generous people have been instrumental in creating a visitor centre that has received nearly universal acclaim. Following a meeting with Andrew Gadsby, the then Military Attaché at the Paris Embassy, and Sénateur Fernand Demilly, the Conseil Général of the Somme joined us as partners and are now running the centre as part of their excellent Great War memory. The arrangement with our French partners was that they would pay for half of the building and supervise its construction and that the UK would pay the other half and be wholly responsible for the educational exhibition and some of the landscaping. This joint project then benefited from considerable EU funding. The Mayor of Thiepval made the land available and

has been alongside us ever since.

Our Patrons bravely agreed to head-up our venture and gradually the fundraising committee that you see below came into being. This committee has been the kernel of our success; from Michael Barker, a Lutyens Trust architect, who advised on all architecture and design and finally created the whole of the Memory side of the exhibition to Professor Richard Holmes who maintained a close interest in the project and spoke at the Paris Embassy fundraising evening. Without this hard-working Committee we would not have succeeded: Clive Priestley as Secretary kept correct Charity order throughout the years, Robin Ollington produced the newsletters and souvenir programme, Helen McPhail kept us in line with current Battlefield Memory, Carol Nubbert used her IT skills on the accounts, the newsletters and the recording of all donations and Anthony Mather masterminded the opening ceremony. In fact all members have laboured in their varying and vital ways. Thanks are due to each and every one of them.

From among forty applicants from France and the UK, PlanO1, a new Paris based architectural partnership, was chosen for the building. The runner-up was a well known London practice. The UK exhibition designer, Graham Simpson Design Consultants, was selected from a list supplied by the Imperial War Museum. The IWM have been a constant source of support and supplier of exhibition material as have the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

After some inevitable delays some ground work started on 2nd July 2003, but the main excavations and building

work did not start until November 2003. It is therefore highly commendable that the building was able to be used on 1st July 2004 and that the whole centre including the educational exhibition could be opened by HRH The Duke of Kent and the Préfet of the Region on 27th September 2004.

The exhibition, designed by Graham Simpson and his graphics partners M2, now all renamed Cube3, who knew virtually nothing about the Great War at the beginning, have worked with our honorary historians: Nigel Cave, Peter Simkins, Michael Stedman and also with Michael Barker on the Lutyens and Memory panels. Our debt of gratitude to these kind and patient historians is immense. Months and months of study and work have gone into the panels of the exhibition.

However the people who have really made all this possible are the generous donors, all the way from the Trust who allowed Andrew Gadsby and me to tell the Conseil Général that we had a guarantor for £300,000 (this Trust subsequently donated £72,000), through over 2,300 donations to the £5 donation from a pensioner in memory of her father. With Gift Aid and other income added, donations finally totalled about £700,000, and we have finished up with a centre which we hope is worthy both to explain what those men did on the Somme and to stand in the vicinity of the Lutyens memorial.

Final funding was:- Somme £680,000 (incl all VAT) - EU £510,000 - Thiepval Project £700,000

My most sincere thanks to everyone who so generously took part in the creation of this centre.

Frank Sanderson.



Jonty Leggett and Emilie Poupard at the Opening Ceremony

**Killed in action:** Jean-Baptiste Pasquier, Thiepval, 1914. Ralph Paton Taylor, Mametz Wood, 1916, in the Welsh attack immortalised in David Jones's "In Parenthesis". Charles Harland Skey, near High Wood, 1916. Taylor's headstone at Dantzig Alley is inscribed, "God make us strong all they dreamed to wake and do". Opening the Visitor Centre, the Duke of Kent said that Europe had now lived at peace for

## "A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM"

### Continuity from generation to generation imbued the Opening

nearly 50 years. For this, our forebears had fought in two wars. It was good that the ceremony joined their families and descendants of German soldiers who had also suffered at Thiepval. Two children, ever symbolic of new life and hope, were the first to enter the Centre - Emilie Poupard, great-niece of J-B Pasquier, Jonty Leggett, great-nephew of Charles Skey. A sense of continuity from generation to generation imbued the Opening and the laying of wreaths at the Memorial to the Missing. The official French speakers - Mme Genevieve Potié, *Maire de Thiepval*, M Daniel Dubois, President of the Somme *Conseil-general*, and M Pierre Mirabaud, Prefect for Picardy and the Somme - recalled the part played in and for France by our forebears. They were pleased that the Opening took place in the centennial year of the *Entente Cordiale*. The endurance, pain and victory of 1914-18 was witnessed by the presence of many UK

donors, whose gifts named a particular soldier, lost, wounded or unscathed; of Earl Haig, son of the Field Marshal, himself a POW in the second war, who as a boy of 14 had attended the unveiling of the Memorial in 1932; and of a group of Chelsea Pensioners, whose scarlet coats brightened the great arch of the Memorial at the wreath laying. However, two sets of young faces stood out. First, those on the Centre's panel of photographs of 600 of the men named on the Memorial, who had found themselves the enemies of other young men, in David Jones's words, "by misadventure". Then the young of today: the excellent choir from Thetford Grammar School; the Oundle girls who raised £6,000 for the Centre; the splendid musicians and guides from the Grenadier Guards; Emilie and Jonty. They look back to their counterparts of 1914-18 with love and respect, knowing that they enjoy the peace of which yesterday's youngsters had dreamt.

Clive Priestley

## Text of the speech delivered by HRH The Duke of Kent at the opening of the Thiepval Visitor Centre on 27th September 2004



It is now three years since I came here on a very wet afternoon and met you Monsieur le Sénateur, Madame le Maire and Sir Frank at the birth of the plan to create this Franco-British educational visitor centre. Since that time an enormous amount of work has gone into the funding and construction of this most impressive building. The French architects and British designers and the historians are to be congratulated, but it is the people of the Somme and the Donors of the Thiepval Project who have made it possible. The number of Donors here today shows the depth of feeling that the events of eighty years ago still stir in the hearts of the British nation. This centenary year of the Entente Cordiale is being celebrated in grand style in our capital cities, but perhaps the true and natural testing of the entente is best seen at local level. Here we have a project where the Conseil Général has not only found half of the funding for the building, but has also managed all the construction. On the British side even more money has been raised and an educational exhibition has been designed, constructed and installed. There has been a complete and natural blending of talents and complete co-operation. It is the natural and seemingly automatic way in which this co-operation has flowered in this locality that our nations should now celebrate. The exhibition explains the events of that terrible war and of the battle of the Somme, it does not try to draw conclusions - that

task is left to the visitor. However the substantial EU funding for this Project and the presence here today of HRH the Herzog of Württemberg whose 26th Reserve Division held this stronghold of Thiepval from 1914 to 1916, gives us proof that the peaceful Europe, which was so hoped for by all who fought here, is now a reality. However the events of the past are an essential guide to the future and if we ever forget them we will be doing so at our own peril. Today we remember all those who fell in this battle; and at the cutting of the ribbon in a few minutes time we will be symbolically assisted by the great niece and great nephew of just two of those who fell. Emilie's great uncle was Jean-Baptiste Pasquier a 35 year old reservist in the 137<sup>o</sup> Regiment d'Infanterie, who was Killed in Action on the slopes below this village in 1914; he is buried in the large French national cemetery in Albert. Jonty's great uncle was Charles Skey, a volunteer Royal Fusilier who rose through the ranks and was a Captain in the Black Watch when he was Killed in Action near High Wood in August 1916. He was 24 years old and his name is on the Memorial to the Missing. These young children represent the future of our nations and of Europe and we have a duty to help them create that new peaceful and free world that all these soldiers fought and died for. Let us hope that the education available in this centre helps to make it certain that no such a war ever happens again in these lands of ours.

## Entente very Cordiale

Probably not since the unveiling of the Memorial to the Missing in 1932 had such a large party departed from London specifically to visit Thiepval. How different the mode of travel then from what the 350 passengers on the Eurostar Entente Cordiale from Waterloo experienced on this historic day 72 years later. The passenger list itself evoked memories of the past with such names as Lutyens, Haig and Kitchener on board together with the Royal party, headed by HRH The Duke of Kent, Patron of the Fund. Thanks to the organisational skills of Lt. Col. Anthony Mather in the role, not only of RTO, but also Master of Ceremonies, ably assisted by his Grenadier minders, everything ran smoothly. Everybody travelling had a common bond, and unlike most train journeys, usually conducted in silence, conversations soon started up with surprising links and interests emerging.

Interest was added to the journey from Lille onwards, by a commentary on the passing countryside and its relevance to the Great War, and this was again reinforced by printed notes doing the same for the coach journey to Thiepval. The French authorities looked after us well. We were greeted at Haute Picardie Station by almost a ring of steel, embarked on our coaches, and with a splendid posse of Gendarmerie Nationale outriders to clear the route to the Centre both on the outward and return journeys. Security was, of course, of prime importance. This at times had its humorous moments, none more so than when the party of Chelsea Pensioners be-medalled and buttoned almost fused the electronic scanner; whilst a Pensioner in full rig, able to discuss the merits of the Harley Davidson as against the Honda in French, left the Gendarmerie full of admiration. The return journey to the UK went equally smoothly with the buzz of conversation even louder for a while punctuated by the arrival of food and the occasional doze. As promised on the itinerary, arrival was on time, and everybody departed

not only having had a most remarkable and moving experience, but also proud that they had been part of the Thiepval project, and in so doing had ensured that the story of those recorded on the memorial would now be told to the many thousands of visitors for years to come.

Robin Ollington



Chelsea Pensioners smartening up on arrival at Haute Picardie



## FACES THAT BECAME FAMILIAR

With the Visitor Centre project well established it seemed fitting that we should try to bring visitors face-to-face with some of the men whose names fill the piers of the Memorial. As well as recording their details within a database it was also agreed that the visual impact of the "Missing of the Somme" panel would form a focal point of the exhibition. As a result of the appeals made and research through published sources we had collected around 2,000 pictures by the time that the selection of the 600 commenced. Researching their stories has confirmed that the Thiepval men are a microcosm of the time. From every part of the British Isles and from

every walk of life, the miner, the labourer, the baker, the accountant, the poet, the lawyer, the sportsman, the student, etc., they are all there on the Memorial. The thought of what they did and the impact that their loss had on the families at home are still haunting. The wives and mothers who never came to terms with the loss, waiting for their husbands or sons to return, "one day". Children placed into orphanages and sent to a new life in Australia and Canada. Streets and villages that were united in mourning as a result of the well-meaning Pals battalions. The men and boys who were working around the Empire but left their jobs to return to help the Mother Country. All represent stories that we should never forget. During the time that we worked on the project the faces of these men have become familiar to us. Through their individual stories we feel that we have developed a personal connection with them and their families. Even this familiarity could not prepare us for the impact of seeing the panel for the first time. Looking into the faces of these



"Missing of the Somme" panel

men we were overwhelmed with emotion for what was lost on the Somme. Knowing the impact that each loss had on the men's families made those feelings more poignant. We look forward to continuing our association with the project as a way of ensuring that each of these men, although missing, is not forgotten.

Pam & Ken Linge

## IN OUR FATHERS' FOOTSTEPS

Both our fathers were wounded in the First World War – but survived or we would not have been here. One wrote a diary about it: the other would never speak of it at all. We grew up with the background impression of a Breughel or Dante-like inferno that could not, must not, ever recur. Even the savagery of the Second World War did not reproduce the mud and the tree-stump wastes and the awful effects of lethal artillery and machine guns on thousands of troops, the horror of the trenches. The Thiepval Visitors' Centre seemed a very good idea; but – we were both

approaching 80 – too old to go and see it? Meticulous organisation and unheard-of punctuality on the railways made it remarkably simple. The terrain in the Pas de Calais is flat for miles but low hills and woods, some with familiar names, appeared as we neared Thiepval. Names such as Owen, Sassoon, Graves came to mind but still were remote and of another world. The opening ceremonies showed the right sentiments, from the words of the local Mayor in her flamboyant poppy hat to the Duke of Kent's speech. The constant drizzle as we went from the marquee to the new building and to the Lutyens Memorial seemed fitting – we shouldn't really be enjoying ourselves in brilliant sunshine – but it was still hard to envisage this as a battlefield. Then we went through the glass doors and were confronted by a wall of faces,

some 600 photographs of the dead. Here were raw, innocent expressions and sometimes the shape of the caps and the crude appearance of rough khaki cloth reminded us of our own family pictures from around 1914. These were volunteers and quite unaware of what lay ahead; some even wore smiles at the hope of tackling the Boche. Before them were mud and the terrible guns.

The Visitors' Centre is low key, almost deferential, excellent for its purpose of explaining something of what happened in the 1914-18 war, so that future generations shall know. Our fathers William and Frank will, it seems, have their names etched on the glass of the buildings, and we suppose that is some form of reconciliation.

*Joan & William Pennycook*



*Earls Kitchener and Haig in conversation*

## The transmission of memory...

...is an odd business, like Chinese whispers or passing a parcel. Each generation removes something, or adds something.

Our forefathers and foremothers knew that the 1914-18 war exceeded all previous human experience of military slaughter. They imagined that the avalanche of deaths would, themselves, be enough to change the world for the better. That illusion lasted less than 20 years.

The Great War also produced a greater determination to honour individual sacrifice than any previous war: memorials were built in every town and village in Britain and France; vast cemeteries were laid out with individual graves; monuments were

created to list the missing. For many decades that seemed enough. When I first visited the Somme in 1979, it did not occur to me that anything was lacking. I had read books about the battle. I visited the cemeteries. I walked along the lines of the trenches, which were still more visible than they are today.

When I went back in 1998, to write about the 80th anniversary of the end of the war, it was obvious that there WAS, by then, something absent. Brigadier Andrew Gadsby, then the military attaché in the British embassy in Paris, had mentioned the absence to me but it was only when I re-visited the Somme that I saw that he was right.

I overheard a British school-teacher in his 30s trying to explain to 60 distracted 14 year olds what the battle, and the war, had been all about. In general terms, the teacher was accurate enough. In details, he was often mistaken. Above all, he seemed not to be able to comprehend or convey the monstrosity, and majesty, of what had happened on the Somme.

There were private museums; there was a municipal exhibition in Albert; there were Canadian, Australian and South African visitor centres. But nowhere on the Somme, in fact nowhere on any British battlefield of the Great War, was there an official British visitor centre or museum to help the younger generations, brought to Picardy and Flanders by books like "Birdsong", to grasp what had happened there.

I discovered that Sir Frank Sanderson

had already been making this point to the Ministry of Defence for a couple of years. He had run up against a, partly understandable, reluctance by traditionalists to see the battlefields turned into tourist attractions.

I wrote my article in The Independent, quoting Sir Frank and others. It had some small effect in attracting help to Sir Frank's cause. I watched in astonishment and admiration, and occasionally wrote updates, as the campaign for a proper visitors' centre at Thiepval grew and grew.

The outcome, which I visited for the first time on the day of its official opening, is, to me, a triumph of unobtrusive impact. The density of the information provided is, I think, just right for younger visitors and not insulting or patronising for older visitors. (It was not an easy task to balance both these things.)

Suggestions that the building spoils the site are, to me, wilfully unfair. The site was, quite frankly, rather bleak and unwelcoming before.

Of course, Thiepval must remain as sober and dignified and serene as Lutyens intended. I am not sure how that aim was served by greeting visitors with a small sign and a gravel car-park.

The succeeding generations will continue to interpret and re-interpret the Somme in their own way. The visitor centre will, at least, give them solid duck-boards of undistorted and unromanticised facts from which to begin.

*John Lichfield*



## REFLECTIONS

*"Their Name Liveth For Evermore".*

THETFORD GRAMMAR SCHOOL CHOIR AT THE EDUCATION CENTRE INAUGURATION



*HRH The Duke of Kent meets the Choir*

Reading my pupils' reflections, written after their participation as the choir at the inauguration, I am convinced that they will never forget. Nine of the 72,000 names were of Old Boys of Thetford Grammar School and laying our wreath for them at the Stone of Remembrance, after everyone else had departed on that Monday afternoon, was a moving experience for all.

One pupil had searched the Memorial for a great-uncle: "It is difficult to describe exactly how I felt when I looked up and saw his name, but I remember wondering what sort of

person he would have been and could I possibly have met him if he hadn't been killed. This was a really strange feeling, and from then on I began to understand what I was really doing there". Another felt as if "all the Missing were looking at us. It was a slightly ghostly atmosphere, as if the war was somehow locked into the Memorial - the blood, pain, tears, and young men". For one singer it was strange that the Memorial "was so quiet in a place which had experienced such chaos".

"The Education Centre is fantastic. The large volume of information is presented clearly in a surprisingly small space, and comes back to haunt you when standing, mesmerised, under the arches of the Memorial seemingly shrouded by their names, voices and souls. The immense pain and bravery which you learn of in the Centre suddenly become so very real when you consider the large number of the Missing - snuffed out at the prime of life".

Are any of the pupils in any doubt as to why we got involved with the Thiepval Project? I think not. "It was wonderful to meet so many people so dedicated to Remembrance", said one. Another concisely summed up the feeling of the entire group: "I am really glad I went because everything we did helped remind me of the sacrifice those thousands of men made so we could be here today".

I am grateful to all who shared their thoughts with me, and in particular to those whose words I have used: Elizabeth Barclay, Sarah Douglass, Amy Jordan, Susannah Martin, and Isabel Spencer.

*David Seymour, Head of History*



## "a privilege and honour"

The actual exhibition at Thiepval has now finally been completed. It represents a tremendous team effort by a very large number of people, who have been most generous in sharing

their knowledge and experience with us. We have been most encouraged by early responses to the exhibition, which is testimony to their input. Michael Barker has described the final

product as 'a triumph'. It communicates in a very concise, engaging and accessible way, the events of nearly 90 years ago to the visitors, particularly schoolchildren, through graphics, photography, maps, animation and film.

Thiepval has been a privilege and honour for M2 to have worked on. Indeed, so engrossed have we become with the subject matter, that we are currently devising more projects which examine aspects of the Great War from a wide variety of perspectives, that will, we hope, continue to illuminate those dark days for a new generation.

*David Edgell, M2*



# The Reason Why

When I was at school, history lessons ended with the Battle of Waterloo, so I never got to learn about the Battle of the Somme. I might have had an interest in the First World War because my grandfather was a prisoner of war, but he, like many people of that age group, preferred not to remember the bad times. At school there were other priorities, so history after the Battle of Waterloo was dropped.

But when I was asked to deal with the donations that were being made to support the Visitor's Centre adjacent to

the Thiepval memorial, interest was awakened. This was reinforced when I made a visit to the Memorial. I saw this rather unusual building standing on a ridge, looking full of soaring arches and open spaces, and the question kept repeating in my mind - why?

So when I returned home I visited the local library and read all that I could about the Battle of the Somme. I found it both fascinating and humbling and over the months since then, especially reading the letters from donors that have accompanied so many donations, it has made me realise what a terrible waste of human life had occurred and what a legacy it leaves for future generations.

Travelling to the opening ceremony last September was an incredible juxtaposition between the journey through the Channel Tunnel on the Eurostar and then standing at the memorial, in the wind and rain, for the service of memory for all those souls who gave their lives so that we could be here today.

My conclusion has been that it is vital that future generations can find out what happened and having the Visitors Centre so close to the memorial gives the opportunity for the question to be answered - Why?

Graham Clark  
Charities Aid Foundation



# 'Have you forgotten yet?'

'Aftermath', Siegfried Sassoon

Each battle site or military cemetery told its own story. At Lochnagar Crater the sheer scale of the great pit in the field, left by a colossal explosion in the opening moments of the Battle of the Somme, was eloquent. The teenagers on their school tour of First World War battlefields stood silently, considering the lives lost in an instant, relating the losses to the number of pupils in their own school, or their local population. Their history teacher described how it happened, the careful months of preparation and the single crashing blast. They listened, staring at the hole, to Siegfried Sassoon's pithy poem 'The General' ('...But he did for them both with his plan of attack') and a longer passage from Frederic Manning's novel, *The Middle Parts of Fortune*, a vivid description based on personal experiences of that day of battle.



of students, by the time they walked through the cemetery gate or looked at the inscriptions on a British memorial in this French landscape they had become separate observers, drawing individual conclusions from the headstones or the monument. Quietly, carefully, some of them wrote down the inscriptions or stood gazing at the age of a man who died there. These were the graves of people of their own age-group, would have been their older brothers or neighbours or boy-friends. They saw the proud or grieving family-sponsored words at the foot of the stone, and thought of how their parents would feel if they went off to war and died there. 'Until we meet again' 'Faithful unto Death' 'Greater love hath no man ...' The heroic pride of Rupert Brooke's 'The Soldier' ('If I should die, think only this of me ...') felt appropriate in these plots of ground that are, very literally, for ever England: a counter-balance to the pain and grief represented by each headstone. Edward Thomas's reason for enlisting aroused their interest: asked, while still training in England, why he wanted to fight, the poet picked up a handful of earth. 'Literally' he said, 'for this'.



Standing in the fields above the Ancre valley, the group heard A. P. Herbert's 'Beaucourt Revisited' - 'The shell-holes hold our history, and half of them our blood' and Wilfred Owen's letters describing the discomforts and continuing misery of the front line: 'We had a march of 3 miles over shelled road then nearly 3 along a flooded trench ... It was of course dark, too dark, and the ground was not mud, not sloppy mud, but an octopus of sucking clay, 3, 4 and 5 feet deep, relieved only by craters full of water. Men have been known to drown in them ...' Hearing the reality expressed by the poets, the group put aside their text-books and concentrated on their surroundings, the landscape of the past that came to life through explanation and memory. At each military cemetery or memorial, the young visitors seemed to change. Stepping out of the coach as a group

with their significance in terms of society and literature as well as history.

In modern Visitor Centres our young students read the displays, bought pocket-money souvenirs and postcards, chattered - and fell silent again at the images and statistics of savage warfare. When we reached the great Memorial to the Missing at Thiepval, Lutyens's tribute to the 72,085 men of the British Army whose bodies have never been traced, they gazed in awe at what Sassoon called the 'intolerably nameless names'. They understood that the names on the great pillars were the proud confirmation that these men had fought and died for their country - for them - and that many were volunteers fresh into battle. They spoke with dignity of their parents and grandparents and family memories transmitted through them.

Sometimes a well-prepared girl or boy identified a relative's name, tucked a



note (often containing lines of poetry) or a little wooden cross against the pillar, or laid a wreath on the central Stone of Remembrance. As we turned for home, we talked about well-known phrases - 'The pity of war' or 'Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori' - as with concentration and feeling they recognised their own part in an unending thread of recollection and commemoration.

Helen McPhail

This article on BATTLEFIELD TOURISM first appeared in the Daily Telegraph on 10 November 2004, published to mark Remembrance Day.

# Donation Statistics

With this, our final newsletter, here are some statistics to complete the project. All told, we received nearly 2,350 donations totalling about £700,000 when Gift Aid and interest are taken into consideration. Of these 2,350, more than 100 were from people who gave their support in the form of their time. This ranged from producers, actors and actresses who rehearsed and put on *Some Desperate Glory* for Remembrance Day 2002, through the landscape architects who gave freely of their time to ensure that the centre was well-sited and discrete, through the specialists who supervised the excavation of the site, to numerous

other professionals who offered or were cajoled into giving their services to help the project.

Having received 70% of our monies by the end of 2002, we were able to ensure that building work commenced in the summer of 2003 ready for our 2004 opening.

We averaged 39 monetary donations a month with the top months for receipt of donations being July 2002 with 450 donations and July 2003 with 267 - they certainly took some recording. Hopefully, I recorded your names correctly and if you're reading this, then I can't have been too far off the mark. Perhaps fittingly, we received 1 donation in the first month of fund-raising March 2000, and 1 donation in the last month, December 2004. Over 300 people donated more than once, and more than 520 people made their donation in remembrance of someone - mostly of those who died

during the war, but in some cases, in memory of a father or grandfather or another who survived the war. Many of the anecdotes were extremely moving and it was sad that due to pressures of space, we were unable to quote them in full in the Souvenir Programme.

I would just like to thank one particular lady who for me epitomises the spirit which I think the project inspired in many people. Mrs E.D. Thomas was aged 82 in 2002 and she was our donor whose cheque book appeared to have been pre-printed with the project's name. She donated at least 10 times and it was always a great pleasure to read her letters. Her repeated donations represent her enduring remembrance and gratitude and she particularly remembered all those men from the Bank of England who died and who are commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial.

Without all of your donations the building of the visitor centre would not have been possible - and for me, it has been a privilege to have been involved in something that I believe will prove to be so valuable.

Carol Nubbert

## VISITING THE SOMME

If you would like to visit the Somme and the Thiepval Visitor Centre and you haven't already had an opportunity to go or want to pick up some useful ideas, you might like to have a look at the website prepared by the Somme Tourist Board. Aimed at the UK market, it is full of relevant information on how to get there, where to stay and what to do. Find it at [www.somme-battlefields.com](http://www.somme-battlefields.com)

| 31st Dec 2004 FUNDING IN EUROS                   |  |  |                    |
|--|--|--|--------------------|
|  | Somme  | EU                                     | Thiepval Project   |
| <b>Building and landscaping</b>                  | 586 000<br>55 000 (RTE)                          | 431 000 FEDER<br>Péronne               | 565 000 (£406,000) |
| <b>Educational exhibition and other expenses</b> | (310 000 Allowance VAT for partially refundable) | 278 000 (£200,000)<br>EU INTERREG IIIA | 408 000 (£294,000) |
| <b>Total</b>                                     | 951 000  | 709 000                                | 973 000 (£700,000) |
| <b>TOTAL €2,633 000 - £1,896,000</b>             |  |  |                    |

**Fundraising Committee:** Sir Frank Sanderson Bt, Chairman, Colonel Piers Storie-Pugh MBE TD DL Royal British Legion, Co-Chairman, Mr Michael Barker, The Lutyens Trust, Lieutenant General Sir Peter Graham KCB CBE, Professor Richard Holmes CBE TD, Mrs. Helen McPhail, Wilfred Owen Association, Ms. Carol Nubbert, Donor Records, IT and Newsletter, Mr. Robin Ollington FRSA, Newsletter, Mr. Clive Priestley CB, Secretary  
**Ex officio:** Brigadier Andrew Gadsby, Brigadier Roy Ratazzi CBE, Brigadier Timothy Gregson MBE, Military Attaché, British Embassy, Paris, Lieutenant Colonel Anthony Mather CVO OBE, Opening ceremony