

Les Trois Fourchettes

Patricia Allen

The incredible and deeply moving story of the owner of one of these personal objects.... a fork.

The story started when Alan Lee on behalf of the Dover Society received an email from Herve' Savary a retired French Gendarmerie Officer (Major).

"I devote part of my free time to carrying out research on the fighting (last stand) which took place in June 1940 during the battle of Saint-Valery-en-Caux (Normandie). The 51st were captured. I research family descendants, write articles in local newspapers and organise ceremonies. I am in contact in particular with The Gordon Highlanders, Black Watch and Duke of Wellington's Regiment.

I would like to take this opportunity to tell you about my extraordinary discovery that occurred a few weeks ago concerning a soldier (from Ramsgate) who fell in June 1940, declared "MISSING" and who appears on the Ramsgate Book of Remembrance and the Dover Memorial.

I live a few kilometres from the places and villages where fierce fighting took place in the pocket of St-Valery-en-Caux on the 11th and 12th June 1940. A retired Officer, I consult the registers of town halls and the Army historical service, cross-check information with archives and books and finally collect testimonies and organise commemorative ceremonies.

A few weeks ago, I was handed 3 forks which had been found by a resident of Houdetot where the 1st Black Watch Battalion fought on June 11th and 12th 1940. (twenty Black Watch Highlanders are buried in Houdetot Communal Cemetery). Two of these forks

bore the inscription BW (Black Watch) and the numbers 4095 and 4211. I finally found the key for me to succeed.

The owner of one of these moving personal objects was Private Robert Balfour of the 1st Black Watch Battalion, number 2754095. I discovered that this soldier was "MISSING" on June 12th 1940, in Houdetot and is commemorated on the Dunkirk, Ramsgate and Dover Memorials.

Now in touch with Robert's nephew who is living in Broadstairs, I am organising the official delivery of this registered fork back to its family in Kent.

Eighty-four years after the terrible and sometimes forgotten battles of 1940, this exceptional and moving find only reinforces my desire to commemorate the history of these fighters. I hope you liked this story and I remain at your disposal for any further information on the Balfour family."

Further research revealed that Robert Horne Balfour was born 2nd October 1914 in Perth, Scotland to Thomas Balfour 1879-1958 formerly a soldier in the Household Cavalry and Beatrice Louise Screen 1882-1926. Robert was their third born son after John, born 1906, and George, born in 1910.



Fourchettes BW Mappen et Webb 1939

In 1917 their daughter Elizabeth Margaret was born.

When he was of age, Robert enlisted in the military, joining the Black Watch Regiment and was stationed in Dover, Kent where he met a local girl.

On 9th January 1939 Robert Balfour was married in Dover at Christ Church to Doris May Dawkins, the daughter of James Henry Dawkins 1873-1947 a dock labourer and Faith Hessegrave Allison 1878-1944. The wedding was reported in the Dover Express and East Kent News on Friday 13th January 1939.

“The bridegroom and the best man were dressed in the full Highland uniform of their regiment; the Black Watch and two pipers played the bride and bridegroom out of church. The cars were supplied by Messrs. Lewis Bros.”

In the 1939 Register newlywed Doris Balfour and her baby son James Robert, born 29th June, were living with her parents at 26 Adrian Street, Dover. Her husband Robert was away fighting for his country.

The following year Robert and Doris welcomed another son, David. In June 1940 Private Robert Balfour was reported as missing in action. In the Dundee Courier and Advertiser of Wednesday 13th 1944 it was reported that ... “Private Robert Balfour who had been reported as missing since June 1940 was killed in action at St. Valery.” He was 25 years of age.

On 2nd February 1944 widow Doris Balfour married Josef Antoni Borysiewicz, a Polish born citizen. They lived with their children very happily in Ramsgate where Doris died in 2014 aged 94 years. Today we remember Robert Horne Balfour ...GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS **Ann Burke**

Thanks to all of you who have renewed your membership,
there is still time to renew for this year.

We have gained eight new members since March 2024:

Katherine Williams of Chilham, Kent

Camilla Otaki of Dover

Michael Parkinson of Dover

Penelope James of Canterbury

Yvonne Parker Brown of Dover

Brian McGee of Dover

Bob Henderson of Dover

Mr R Clifton of Dover

We sadly heard of the death of Mr T Wheildon Brown who passed away in August 2023.

We send our condolences to Mr Clifton, his friend, and all his relatives.