

Mainly, Cresswell Rutter.

With the aid of many excellent photographs from the 'Tartan Pixel' website, (Hussars in Black & White), showing many of the historical events, the men, and the geography of Egypt and Italy that would have been familiar to the 4th. Queens Own Hussars during the Second World War, has greatly aided me in writing a part history of a member of my family. This being my uncle Trooper Cresswell Rutter, who was regrettably killed in action in Italy, September 1944.

The 100 page or so book, entitled 'Mainly, Cresswell Rutter', actually came about after being left a parcel of letters and some family photographs at the death of my mother, Mary Allen, who was the elder brother of Cresswell (always known as 'Cressie').

Although my book covers a fairly wide period of time in my uncles life, I would very much like to donate this extract, in the hope that it adds further interest to an already very interesting and well documented website.



My uncle, Cresswell Rutter. This is unfortunately the only photograph that I have of him (and possibly in existence). It appears to have been taken in North Africa (Egypt) given the land terrain, and also the vehicle style, generally equipped for desert use, with soft siding and colouring etc.

The photograph to the right is now partially damaged, with the photograph on the left hand side being a part enlargement. If this photograph was taken sometime in 1943, my uncle would have been about 27 or 28 years old.

Italy, 1944.

This particular extract commences in July, 1944, and includes several photographs that I have been given permission to use, information from historical newspaper articles, and from the letters of my uncle.

Letter of 19th. July, 1944.

The last letter I have in my possession that was written by my uncle to his mother, informs her that he had just returned from seven days leave, but beer in the rest camp was (very unfortunately) rationed to half a pint per week per man. His letter indicated that he had enjoyed his time off, allowing him to sleep as long as he wanted, but not allowing him enough beer for his 'enjoyment'. I would think that a rationed 'half pint' of beer for a whole week, would have been swallowed very rapidly by my uncle. It would also appear that as a poor substitute for beer, he tried the local Italian wines, and I can just imagine what kind of hangover he would have had, given the volume of liquid he liked to down. I would also comment that my uncle Cressie, being a typical young working class lad from the north east of England during the nineteen twenties and thirties, before the war, probably had never tasted a bottle of red wine in his life. I also think that my uncle was a very heavy smoker. In his letter he notes that 'Woodbines' are 3d. (11/2 new pence), for a packet of 10. I can well remember this brand as a youth, now long gone. I also believe that Woodbines were colloquially called 'coffin nails' as they were the cheapest and roughest cigarettes made in England. Anyway, the supply of cigarettes (fags) appeared to be plentiful, and may have offset the obvious lack of beer. I would think that the seven days leave my uncle had just taken was not the best he had experienced.

At the end of the letter, my uncle hoped again, that he was going to get some leave back in Newcastle quite soon. Significantly however, this was the last letter I can trace that my uncle ever wrote home to his mother. This letter was in fact the answer to my grandmothers letter of 2nd. (May or June), and is perhaps the most important in determining who were Cressie's good friends, mates, colleagues, or whatever you want to call them. Cressie as we know, had just returned from a weeks (dry) leave, presumably with his regimental mates. There is a series of three photographs that I have been able to reproduce, dated 'July, 1944',¹ and features the 4th. Troop, Queens Own Hussars. On the back of these photos are the names of the soldiers, looking

¹ Hussars in Black & White (J MacDonald)

in a very happy mood. Like Cressie, they may have just returned to the regiment after a weeks leave period. The names on the photo however, may not be in any particular order, as there is some re-arrangement amongst the men, presumably so that one of them could take the photo. A few of the men may be in all of the three photos, but in slightly differing positions. Two of these very fine prints I have placed below. You can generally see how much the men have moved around or increased in numbers in these prints.



Italy, July, 1944. The names on the rear of the series of photographs are collectively (with some re-arrangements in the picture) : *Smith, Ody, Lyon, McCormack, Green, Bishop, Chambers, Taylor, Whitehurst, Morley, Love, Stevens, McDonald, Jones, Wood, Lamigan.*

Historically, after the weeks leave in June or the first week of July, the 4th. Queens Own Hussars started to prepare for an assault on the very heavily defended Gothic Line. This defensive position ran roughly from the town of La Spezia on the Tyrrhenian Sea side of the Mediterranean, to slightly south of Pesaro on the eastern Adriatic coast of Italy.

Background reading of this period revealed that on the 15th. July, 1944, the advance on the Gothic Line commenced. *“In the centre of the advance to the Gothic Line defence, the British XII Corps (8th. Army) mounts an attack against Arezzo. The attack is preceded by an aerial bombardment at dawn, and is carried out by two divisions of 6th. Armoured Corps on the left, and the New Zealand 2nd. Division on the right. The German positions are held by units of the LXXVI Panzerkorps, 1st. Parachute Division, and by two infantry divisions (the 334th. and 719th.) and some units of the Panzergrenadiere. After sunset the Germans withdrew along the whole front”*² By the end of July, 1944, (29th.) the British 8th. Division, British XIII Corps, had reached the River Arno in the vicinity of Empoli (just south of Florence).

After an apparent lull in hostilities, instructions were issued on the 6th. August for the preliminary operations prior to a main offensive against the Gothic Line. This was finalised on the 17th. August. However, historical records note the allied progress in the area was still being maintained when on the 22nd. August, the Polish II Corps (British 8th. Army) reached and occupied the south bank of the River Metauro from Sant’ Ippolito to the Adriatic coast, south of Fano.

Clearly, the period from mid July, directly after the letter from my uncle was posted, to the end of August, 1944, saw some very fierce military action across the whole of the Gothic Line by all allied armies at some time.

² 2194 Days of War. (Salmaggi and Pallavisini)

The Last Letter Written From England

The last letter I have is of course the one that brings the greatest grief. The letter, somewhat typically in the British way of doing things, possibly a bit cold hearted, was sent from Newcastle to my uncle in Italy, but simply returned to my grandmother, and stamped PTO (Please Turn Over). Quite heavily stamped on the letter was the phrase that any relative or friend of a serving soldier, seaman or airman dreads. It simply read "*It is regretted that this item could not be delivered because the addressee is reported deceased*".

This letter was written on the 25th. August, 1944.

The writing style of the opening two paragraphs of the letter I recognise very distinctly, written by my mother. Firstly, my mother wrote that she was sorry to hear that there was no beer in the rest camp that my uncle had recently been staying at (Refer to letter, 19th. July, 1944). This must have been a great blow to him as it was clear from his past letters and younger days in Newcastle that he really enjoyed a pint.

After telling my uncle that their mother had been to Hexham for a short holiday, the remaining letter was then written by my grandmother. My grandmother was obviously aware that by August, 1944, the allied forces were becoming well established in northern Europe. Referring to one historical source, the entry for 25th. August, 1944, stated that "*At 7.00am. The French 2nd. Armoured Division enters Paris from the southwest, and half an hour later the US 4th. Division move towards the centre of the city from the south*".

Most importantly to this part of my family history, were the military activities on the Italian front on that same day, and I quote "*During the night the British 8th. Army (British V Corps, Canadian 1st. Corps and Polish II Corps) goes to attack the Gothic Line from the River Metauro*".

There is confirmation in this letter given on page 2, that my father, who was serving with the RASC may not have been too far away from my uncle at this time. The letter also mentioned that my father's hope was that there would be a bottle of 'Bass' waiting for him when he gets home, and must have been one of very great hope for the near future. My grandmother's hope was that her son would be able to get home for Christmas.

The remaining contents of the letter contains references to other members of the immediate family. The letter ends, with the last four words of my grandmothers letter to Cressie that cannot really be summed up. They simply say 'God bless you lad'. The last four words she ever wrote to him.

From the '45 Field Post Office' stamp, the letter to my uncle Cressie was either delivered to his unit, or returned to my grandmother on the 15th. September, 1944, this being unfortunately eleven days after his death.

The time lapse of some 12 days, from the 25th. August to the day my uncle Cressie was killed (5th. September) was a period of very great hostility between the opposing forces in Italy. As part of the British V Corps, (based on maps available) the 4th. Queens Own Hussars were engaged in the attack on the Gothic Line, heading towards, and reaching on the 1st. September, the town of Tomba di Pesaro.

The following day, the 2nd. September, the regiment advanced toward Rimini, along with Canadian and Polish forces. After a very short respite of only one day, the battle for Coriano Ridge / Rimini Line commenced. I refer to the 'Commonwealth War Graves Commission' account of this military action, and of the preceding months.

*"Following the fall of Rome in June, 1944, the German retreat became ordered and successive stands were made on a series of defensive lines. In the northern Appenine Mountains the last of these, the Gothic Line, was breached by the allies during the Autumn campaign and the front inched forward to Ravenna in the Adriatic sector, but with divisions transferred to support the new offensive in France, the Germans dug into a number of key defensive positions, the advance stalled as the winter set in. Coriano Ridge was the last important ridge in the way of the allied advance in the Adriatic sector in the Autumn of 1944. Its capture was the key to Rimini and eventually to the River Po. German parachute and panzer troops, aided by bad weather, resisted all attacks on their positions between the 4th. and 12th. September, 1944. On the night of the 12th. September, the Eighth Army reopened its attack on the ridge, with the 1st. British and 5th. Canadian Armoured Divisions. This attack was successful in taking the ridge, but marked the beginning of a week of the heaviest fighting experienced since (Monti) Cassino in May, with daily losses for the Eighth Army of some 150 killed".*³

³ Extract: Coriano Ridge War Cemetery, Part II. (Commonwealth War Graves Commission).

My uncle was killed at Coriano Ridge on Tuesday, 5th. September, 1944, basically at the start of the Coriano Ridge assault, probably near the village of San Savino ⁴ when it could be reasonably stated that the fighting was at the heaviest. This was three and a half years after leaving England, never having returned, and nine months before the ultimate end of the war.

Daily research into the battle for Coriano Ridge / Rimini Line revealed that this period must have been absolute hell on earth. The names on the backs of photographs previously shown suddenly take on a new meaning as discovery is made of family names, and of the date of their reported deaths, and more shockingly that some of the friends / mates / colleagues, probably died alongside each other during that horrific seventeen day period. We must look again at the group photograph of 4th. Troop for instance, and recognise the names of these quite happy men sitting on top or around their Sherman tank in July, 1944. Two months later, several of them dead alongside my uncle.

As a basic thumbnail account of the period between the 4th. and 21st. September, 1944, on the Italian front, I include the following historical extracts from books and newspapers.

4th. September. In the western sector, divisions of the British V Corps advance towards the hills of Germmano and Coriano, defended by positions manned by General Feuerstein's LI Mountain Corps and General Herr's LXXVI Armoured Corps.

5th. September. In the eastern sector, the battle begins for the capture of the hills of Coriano and Gemmano, west and south west of Cattolica. My uncle Cressie was killed on this day, along with at least eight other men or the 4th. Queens Own Hussars.

6th. September. Units of the British V Corps (8th. Army) prepare an offensive on a large scale to secure Coriano. Patrols from the Canadian I Corps reach the River Marano.

7th. September. During the night the Germans withdrew from their positions on the hills north and north-east of Florence.

⁴ Based on the date of the death of my uncle, and the recorded plan of the battle engagements.

- 8th. September. Units of the British V Corps and I Canadian Corps are still held up by stubborn German resistance on the Coriano and Gemmano hills. Consequently the allied advance on Rimini is stalled.
- 9th. September. The British V Corps and Canadian I Corps step up their attacks on the Coriano and Gemmano hills. In Val d'Osola and Val Cannobina, held by the (Italian) partisan's, a provisional government was set up.
- 10th. September. The allied advance to reduce the Gothic Line continues. In the US 5th. Army Sector the allies cross the River Serchio at Vecchiano, capture Villa Basilica and cross the Sieve. But in the east, units of the German 10th. Army keep up their powerful resistance of the Gemmano and Coriano hills.
- 11th. September. Units of the American IV Corps (5th. Army) reach the suburbs of Viareggio, whilst the South African 6th. Armoured Division enters Pistoria.
- 12th. September. At 11.00pm the second battle for the capture of the Coriano hill-top begins.
- 13th. September. In the British sector the 5th. Armoured Division (Canadian I Corps) and the 1st. Division (British V Corps) take the Coriano and Gemmano hill positions, and the Germans are forced to retire to the north, leaving the road to Rimini open.
- 14th. September. The units of the British 8th. Army that captured Gemmano and Coriano now reinforce their positions and advance towards the River Marano, which is crossed by several patrols. In the western sector the American 5th. Army continues to pound the defences of the Gothic Line.
- 15th. September. No records.
- 16th. September. No records.
- 17th. September. In the western sector, the American IV Corps (5th. Army) opens a general attack on the left flank (Gothic Line).

18th. September. No records.

19th. September. No records.

20th. September. The 4th. Indian Division (British V Corps) enters San Marino.

21st. September. The Canadians of the I Corps and the Greek 3rd. Mountain Brigade enter Rimini which the Germans have evacuated. Since the beginning of operations against the Gothic Line, the British Army has lost 14,000 men, killed, wounded or missing.

During the battle for Coriano Ridge / Rimini Line, the 4th. Queens Own Hussars lost many men. My research found that a total of 27 men from the regiment were killed in action during that two week period, but this cannot be given as an absolute total. This clearly omits the amount of men wounded, or that were reported as missing, or even killed and buried at military cemeteries, possibly never to have their final fate recorded. Along with my uncle, I would like to take this opportunity to record the names and personal details of those men I know fell at Coriano Ridge and Gemmano Hills, and are buried at the two military cemeteries mainly associated with this horrific period of time, that of Coriano and Gradara.

**Regimental Casualties (4th. Queens Own Hussars)
During The Battle For Coriano Ridge / Rimini Line, 4th. to 21st. September, 1944.
The following names and personal details are taken from the available records
of burials from Coriano Ridge Cemetery, near Rimini, Italy.**

Date	Rank/No.	Name	Family Details	Grave No.
05/09	Tpr. 7948265	Ivor H. CORFIELD	Age 20.	XII, A . 2.
05/09	Tpr. 14258054	James FILBEY	Age 27. Son of Tom and Ethel Filbey, of Bury, Lancashire. Husband of Mary Filbey.	XVI, D. 9.
05/09	Cpl. 7894247	Raymond C. LUFF	Age 24. Son of Herbert Cecil and Lucy Emma Luff, of Bristol.	XII, A. 7.
05/09	Tpr. 4926216	William J. OLIVER	Age 33. Son of William Charles Oliver and Ada Oliver. Husband of Kathleen Elsie Oliver, of Clerkenwell, London.	VI, C, 12.
05/09	Cpl. 7902944	Norman A. PARTON	Age 34. Son of Frank and Edith Marion Parton. Husband of Kathleen Parton, of Salford, Lancashire.	XII, A. 4.
05/09	L/Cpl 7897704	William T. RICKARD	Age 28. Son of William James Rickard and Rhoda Rickard, of Redruth, Cornwall.	XII, A. 1.
05/09	Tpr. 3603090	Cresswell RUTTER	Age 29. Son of George and Sarah Ellen Rutter of Newcastle upon Tyne. Husband of Mary E. Rutter.	XII, A. 6.
05/09	Tpr. 14388985	William A. WESTON	Son of Thomas Arthur and Viola Lillian Weston, of Stoke, Warwickshire.	XII, A. 8.
05/09	L/Cpl 7905895	Harold A. WILLMOTT	Age 26. Son of Louis John and Hannah Maria Willmot, of Kingswood, Bristol.	XII, A. 5.
11/09	Tpr. 5350559	William SADLER	Age 22. Son of Arthur and Agness Sadler, of Buckland, Portsmouth.	XII, A. 3.
13/09	Lt. 240865	Harold N. T. HALL	Age 28. Son of Maj. H.F. Hall DSO, and Dulce Evelyn Hall. Husband of Mary Hall.	XVI, F. 11. *
13/09	Tpr. 7929776	Alfred LANIGAN	Age 23. Son of Richard and Margaret McCall Lanigan, of Glasgow.	XVI, F. 11. *
13/09	Tpr. 2568501	David McCORMACK	Age 28. Son of Mrs D. McCormack of Raploch, Stirlingshire.	XVI, F, 11. *
13/09	Tpr. 7909217	Arthur D. SMITH	Age 28. Son of James and Susannah Smith.	XVI, F. 11. *
17/07	Tpr. 7942960	Robert A. HASTINGS	Age 41. Son of Charles and Annie Hastings. Husband of Grace Hastings.	XX, D. 7.
17/09	L/Sgt. 7914778	Joseph LYON	Age 24. Son of Thomas S. and Mary S. Lyon, of Cowdenbeath, Fife.	XX. D. 3.
17/09	Tpr. 4041341	Charles WHITEHURST	Age 36. Son of John and Ellen Whitehurst. Husband of Mary Whitehurst, of Sandyford, Staffordshire.	XX, D. 6.
19/09	Tpr. 3970149	Herbert G. THOMAS		XIX, B. 12.

The names of casualties in bold italics, and marked * thus, are placed in a collective grave as their remains could not be individually identified.

**Regimental Casualties (4th. Queens Own Hussars)
During The Battle For Corinao Ridge / Rimini Line, 4th. to 21st. September, 1944.
The following names and personal details are taken from the available records
of burials from Gradara Military Cemetery, Province of Pesaro, Italy.**

<u>Date</u>	<u>Rank/No.</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Family Details</u>	<u>Grave No.</u>
04/09	Tpr. 7905960	John E. HADLEY	Age 26. Son of Mt. & Mrs. F. Hadley, of Shirehampton, Bristol.	I. B. 5.
04/09	L/Cpl 7940253	Arthur W. WEBB	Age 31. Son of Arthur and Elizabeth Webb, of Oxford.	I. B. 4.
06/09	Lt. 193523	John N. E. SLEE	Age 23. Son of Percival and Madeleine Slee, of Western-super-Mare, Somerset.	I. E. 11.
11/09	Sgt. 7900037	Reginald G. HATTON	Age 25.	I. E. 9.
12/09	Lt. 166298	Robert H.S. BROGDEN	Age 23. Son of Robert and Monica Brogden, of Burnham on Sea, Somerset.	I. E. 12.
12/09	Capt. 124190	Arthur HICKSON-BROWN	Age 38. Husband of Anne Hickson-Brown, Barrister-at-Law (Inner Temple)	I. B. 2.
12/09	Tpr. 7942731	Ernest E. WALKER	Age 22. Son of Leonard and Eva Walker, of Tollerton, Nottinghamshire.	I. B. 3.
17/09	Sgt. 7901170	Eric V. MITCHELL	Age 24. Son of Joseph and Jessie Mitchell, of Reading, Berkshire. Husband of Mary Nancy Mitchell of Reading.	I. E. 13.
19/09	Tpr. 5053699	Nairne W.J. HILL	Age 29. Son of Samuel and Selina Hill, of Stockwell, London.	I. E. 8.

Of the photographs that I have been able to reproduce of the 4th. Troop, Queens Own Hussars taken on the same day, (in July 1944) but with a little re-positioning of the men, presumably to have someone take the picture, I find this third one the most significant. The names on the back of the photograph are again given below, with those men killed during the two week battle for Coriano Ridge, along with my uncle given in bold, underlined italic text. It is not known for absolute accuracy that the group names are given in any correct order of left to right for example, but it is a very powerful recognition of loss between some very good friends.

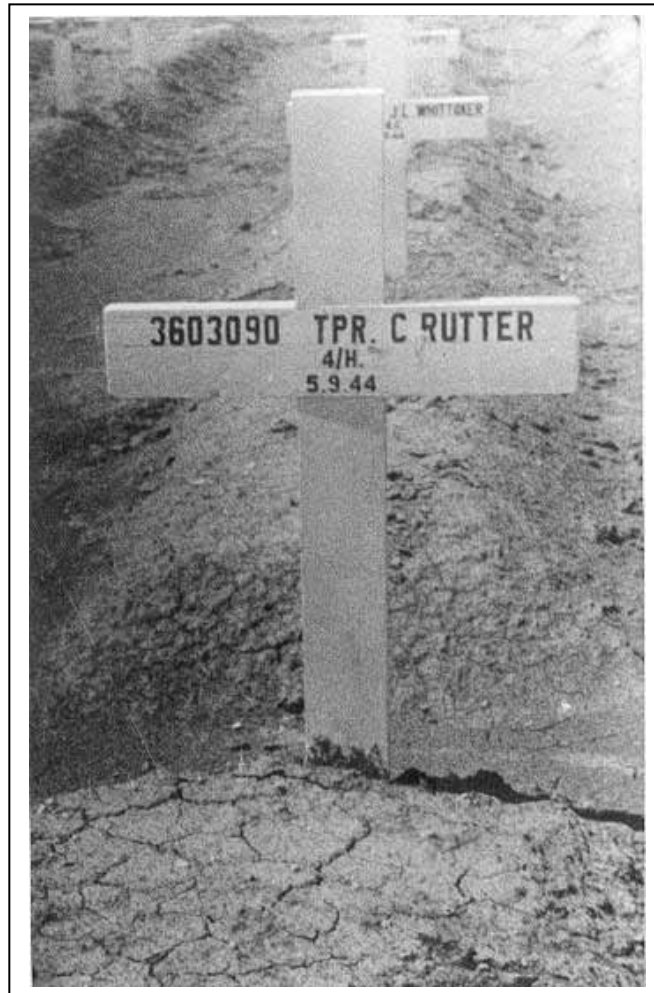


Italy, July 1944. 4th. Troop, Queens Own Hussars.

Smith, Ody, **Lyon**, **McCormack**, Green, Bishop, Chambers, Taylor, **Whitehurst**, Morley, Love, Stevens, MacDonald, (front row, left) Jones, Wood, **Lanigan**.

I am not sure where my uncle's body was buried originally. It is likely that he was buried reasonably close to where he fell. However, the/his permanent burial place was selected in April, 1945, with Coriano Ridge taking the name of the cemetery. After the site of the cemetery was selected, it was created from graves brought in from the surrounding battlefields. Coriano Ridge Cemetery contains 1,939 Commonwealth burials, and includes one female, that of Sister Francis Edith Hennan, serving with The Queen Alexandra's Imperial Nursing Service. (28th, January, 1945).

It is abundantly clear that when any new cemetery is laid out and worked, and given the expanse of land required at Coriano Ridge, individual graves can be very shocking at first sight. So it was that the photo sent to my grandmother caused her some very great grief. My mother told me many years ago that she never wanted to visit the gravesite because of this photograph.



**The grave of my uncle, Cresswell Rutter,
after re-burial in April/May, 1945.**

My uncle Cressie was posthumously awarded his service medals, which my grandmother displayed in her bedroom for many years. These medals included the North Africa and Italy Star's.

In the mid nineteen seventies, my grandmother, via my brother Stanley, donated our uncles medals to his regiment, the 4th. Queens Own Hussars. The regiment was stationed in Germany at the time, not far from my brothers own regiment, the 15/19th. The Kings Royal Hussars. However, in October, 1958, government reorganisation of many historical regiments took place, and amalgamated the 4th. Queens Own Hussars with the 8th. Kings Royal Irish Hussars, and were renamed 'The Queens Royal Irish Hussars'. Notwithstanding, the medals were accepted on an historical basis, and as a mark of respect, the display of these medals is to be maintained at the entry door of the Regimental Sergeant Major's office. (This amalgamation may have been influenced by the close historical development of the two regiments and the temporary formation of the 4th./8th. Hussars in 1942).



My brother Stanley (left foreground) presenting the medals of our uncle Cressie to the Regimental Sergeant Major of The Queens Royal Irish Hussars, at a celebration in Germany.

In continuance, on the 1st September, 1993, the Queens Royal Irish Hussars were amalgamated with the (3rd & 7th) Queens Own Hussars, and to date are known as **The Queens Royal Hussars**. I have placed within the Appendix, a small flow-chart showing the historical development of the regiments and some battle honours.



Visiting Coriano Ridge Cemetery, near Rimini, Italy, 1988.

Mother and myself at Cressie's grave.

Coriano Ridge Cemetery as it appears today, is in fact a very nice place to visit. After researching the names of my uncles regimental friends/mates who are also buried there, and amazingly seeing photographs of a few of them laughing together only a couple of months before several of them died, gives Coriano Ridge for me personally, a feeling of being something 'a bit special'.

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Coriano Ridge and Gradara Military Cemeteries.

The following prints were taken from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website, giving general views of the cemeteries associated with the battle for Coriano Ridge and the Germano Hills, September, 1944.



Coriano Ridge



Gradara

The setting for the Gradara Military Cemetery (above) appears to reflect the terrain of the Coriano Ridge and Germano Hill district.

Acknowledgements.

I wish to take this opportunity to acknowledge the valuable contribution given to me via the personal web-site of Mr. Martin Clark, and allowing me to use the personal photographs of his uncle, (Sgt. John Macdonald) and from contributing photographs given to him by wartime members and family of the men who served with the 4th. Queens Own Hussars.

Martin Clark has very graciously donated web-space for an abridged section of this part family history, and placed in (www.tartanpixel.com/hussars/cresswell.asp) "Hussars in Black and White".

I have been in contact with Mike Whitehurst, who now lives in Phoenix, Arizona, and who's father Charles Whitehurst was regrettably killed in action, also during the battle for Coriano Ridge. His father died on the 17th. September, twelve days after that of my uncle. "Charlie Whitehurst", like Cressie was with the regiment during it's earliest days in North Africa, and I am sure these two people would have known each other reasonably well. Charles Whitehurst features in the series of group photographs of the 4th. Troop, of the 4th. Queens Own Hussars.

