

Lorna Thompson remembers her mother's cousin Charlie Whittet

I grew up in East Finchley a North London Suburb. I knew Charlie from childhood, he lived in the same house as me and my mum & dad. I always knew him as my strong, yet gentle 'Uncle' Charlie. He was, in fact, my mother's cousin and therefore my 1st cousin once removed!

He came to stay with my parents after the 2nd World War. Let's just say he was part of our family, like a big brother in a way. Sport loving he took me to see athletics, football and rugby always, of course, supporting Scotland. Enough of my story, this is about Charlie and his family.

Charles Strachan Goodman was born on 10th August 1899 in Guthrie Place, St Andrews to Bessie and Peter Whittet. He was the youngest of 4 siblings with brother Peter and two sisters Maria and Frances (Fanny). The family subsequently moved to Market Street, St Andrews.

Peter was the first to join the army and became a Lance Corporal in the Royal Engineers. Sadly, Charlie joined up later, when he was 18 and served with the Royal Scots Regiment. He survived and was demobbed in December 1919. He then got work as a builder's labourer for a couple of years. The army, however, was where he made his career. He enlisted again with the Royal Scots and was attested on 12th November 1921.

Whilst serving with the Royal Scots in Quetta Charlie was granted 6 months furlough in 1934 to spend time with his sisters in New Zealand. This turned out to be the last time they would see each other.



<u>1st Bn. The Royal Scots - movements from 10th May 1940</u>	
10th May, LESQUELLES	- Evening of 10th Bn moves into BELGIUM.
11th May,	At intervals Bn arrives at WAVRE.
12th May WAVRE	Enemy contacted for the first time during the
13th May WAVRE	Battle of Montcornet.
14th May, WAVRE	During the night Bn commences to withdraw commencing at 10 p.m.
15th May, ATH	Bn. arrives at intervals in the area of ATH. on completion Bn. moved in Troop carriers to GRAMMONT arriving in the early evening.
17th May, GRAMMONT	Bn. in position by dawn.
18th May,	Bn. withdraws through TOURNAI and arrives at FRIEDMONT.
19th May,	In the evening Bn marches to KALCH, (ceves) starting at 10 p.m.
20th May, KALCH (ceves)	Bn. casualties for one day numbered 200, 50 killed, 150 wounded.
21st May, KALCH	Bn. withdraws at midnight.
22nd May, KALCH	Bn. marches through BELGIUM on French fortified frontier line to WOOD. Bn moved by troop carrier at night.
23rd May,	Bn. in position in area of BETHUNE. Bn. withdraw at night.
24th May, BETHUNE	Bn. in position in area of BETHUNE. Bn. withdraw at night.
25th May, CALCHET-SUR-LE-DIE	Bn. arrives at interval during the morning and leaves at night.
26th May, LE-PARADIS	Bn. in position by early morning.
27th May,	Bn. finished.
Among those killed on 20th May were Major BRYAN - SHAW ; Lt. GALLIE ; Cpl. GARRIGAN ; Cpl. LOGAN ; wounded Lt. REDUFF - DUNCAN ; Lt. LIDDELL ; Cpt. THORBURN ; P.S.M. GURNEY ; MURRAY ; DAVIDSON.	

By the time WWII broke out Charlie was a Warrant officer commanding 'D' Company of the 1st Battalion The Royal Scots. May 1940 saw the retreat of troops towards Dunkirk. These are the movements of the last days of the battalion.

On 27th May 1940 'D' Company's last stand was at Le Paradis near Merville. Charlie and the few men still alive managed to hold their position. For his leadership and bravery on that day Charlie was awarded the DCM (Distinguished Conduct Medal). A few days later he became a prisoner of war.

Citation for award of the Distinguished Conduct Medal for
WOII Charlie Whittet

THE DISTINGUISHED CONDUCT MEDAL

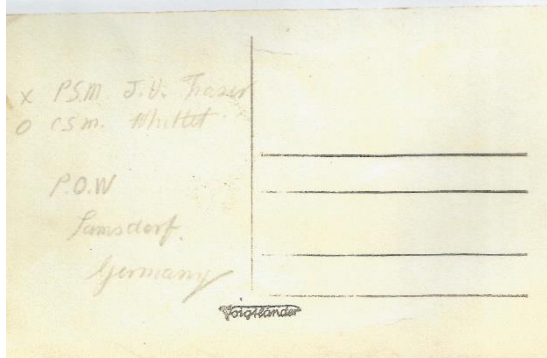
No. 3047747 Warrant Officer Class II Charles Strachan Goodman
WHITTET,
The Royal Scots (The Royal Regiment).

On 27th May 1940, at LE PARADIS near MERVILLE, this Warrant Officer was commanding 'D' company 1st battalion. At about 0900 hours his position was heavily attacked by elements of the S.S. Division 'TOTENKOPF' supported by armoured fighting vehicles, mortars and artillery. Very soon after the attack started the farm house, which C.S.M. Whittet's company was occupying, was set on fire and three trucks containing the battalion's reserve of small arms artillery and mortar ammunition, which were beside the farm, also caught fire.

C.S.M. Whittet successfully withdrew the remainder of his company, through the blazing farm and exploding ammunition to some outhouses in rear of the farm occupied by Headquarters company, which then became the rear of the battalion position. C.S.M. Whittet was ordered to occupy this position with his own company and stragglers from other companies of his own battalion and from other units. Although there were very few N.C.O.'s to assist him, he occupied his position and set a very high example of courage and devotion to duty by remaining completely in the open without any cover whatsoever under aimed small arms fire from a range of some hundred and fifty yards until the position was occupied. Later he went out further into the open to bring back a wounded man.

For the remainder of the day with a force finally reduced to about 10 effective men with one Bren gun and very limited ammunition, C.S.M. Whittet maintained his position, himself directing the fire of his men from a most exposed position. It was largely due to his personal gallantry and leadership that his command was able to maintain its position in face of greatly superior numbers.

Charlie's home between 1940 and 1945 was Stalag VIIIB. Charlie's sisters and cousin (my mother) occasionally received postcards from him; some were photographs including Charlie and others showed something of (the best part) of life there.



Christmas Hats

and (above

Amateur Dramatics



Charlie's medal miniatures are in the Royal Scots museum in Edinburgh Castle.

I've also got a letter sent to Charlie by the Regimental Paymaster in Glasgow dated 17 August 1942 responding to his request of 22 May 1942 for information about his pension.

The Royal Scots Record Office,
c/o G. P. O.,
London.

17th August, 1942.

3047747 C.S.M. C. Whittatt,
Gefangenennummer, 10305,
STALAG, VIII B,
Germany.

Reference your letter of 22/6/42.

1. You are now eligible for pension in respect of 23 years 8 days qualifying service. Completed 21 years qualifying service on 7/8/39.

2. Periods of qualifying service are :-

11. 9. 17	-	15. 12. 19	=	2 years 96 days.
12.11. 21.	-	15. 8. 42	=	20 years 277 days.
				<u>23 years 8 days.</u>

3. Broken periods of qualifying service are allowed to reckon provided that a break of over five years has not occurred between periods and that former service has been acknowledged on re-enlistment. It is not necessary that a full pensionable term should be served on present engagement before former qualifying service is allowed to reckon.

4. At present no soldier can elect to come on pension until he has served 22 years on his current engagement. Prisoners of War Cannot so elect until after release, but can do so any time within three months from date of release.

Ed. Taylor Major

Ref: RLS/1.

for Officer i/c Infantry Records.

No. 3047747 GSM C WHITTET.
British Prisoner of War No. 10305.
Halley VII B.

Q.F.102
Ref: NB/POW/59.

With reference to your application for a statement of account, you are informed that:-

1. Your gross rate of pay is eleven shillings per day.
2. A monthly deduction of _____ as being made in respect of _____
3. Your net rate of pay is eleven shillings per day.
4. A weekly deduction of eleven shillings is being made in respect of insurance.
5. A monthly deduction of two pounds twelve shillings is being made in respect of Income tax.

6. The following remittances have been paid:-
Mr D Gaskin, 92, Bedford Road, East Finchley, London N2
(£25) twenty five pounds on 1/1/52

Your credit balance on 11-3-53 amounted to £488. 12. 54
four hundred and eighty eight pounds twelve shillings five pence

Army Pay Office,
Glasgow.
MTG.
Regimental Paymaster,
GLASGOW.

Stamp: **Halley VII B**
Depot:
NO 134

Signature: M. Butler Lieut.
Officer i/c 2nd W. Section,
"Non-effective" Wing.

28 / 3 / 53.

At the end of the war Charlie was demobbed from the Royal Scots. His only relative in the UK was my mother, his cousin. She and my father invited Charlie to live in their home, until he decided what 'he wanted to do'. In fact, he lived there until he died in 1970. They became his new family, and when I was born I was like a niece to him. On 17th September 1946 Charlie was requested to go to Buckingham Palace for his investiture and receive the DCM from King George VI. My mother and father were able to accompany him for the ceremony.

In June 1969 Charlie, at the age of 69, had one more opportunity to 'join up' to the Royal Scots. He visited, with the Royal Scots Regimental Association, the 1st Battalion stationed at Osnabruck.



Lorna Thompson
September 2018