

LOST GRAVE OF JEWISH COMMANDO HERO FINALLY REMEMBERED AFTER 45 YEARS

Over the past 25 years, with a combination of determination and thorough research, AJEX Archivist Martin Sugarman has made it his mission to ensure that any Jewish war grave errors that are discovered or reported are corrected.

Sugarman has ensured hundreds of Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) headstones, and descriptions or additions to the headstones have had significant changes made as well as amendments on the CWGC web site showing each veteran was Jewish. The late Harold Pollins (retired senior tutor at Ruskin College Oxford and researcher), the late Andy Green (a private researcher and active member of the Western Front Association), Saul Issroff and Gina Marks of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain, Stan Kaye, a private researcher, Genealogist, Cathie Hewitt, Founder of 'Jews of the RAF' website, Col. John Starling of the Pioneer Corps/Logistics Corps Museum and Harvey Kaplan of the Scottish Jewish Archives, have all successfully and persistently worked with Martin for hundreds of amendments, which will be implemented in the coming months, or have already been changed.

The most recent stone that has been changed is that of Kurt Theodor Goldschlager.

Kurt Theodor Goldschlager was born in the Weiden district of Vienna, Austria, one of four brothers, Erich, Paul and Robert who later lived in Chicago with the changed surname Gordon. Their father Julius was an architect, who died of natural causes in 1940, and mother was Irene, nee Von Posner; she was deported to Auschwitz and murdered in 1942. In the 1930's Kurt had been a member of the Austrian National swimming and water polo teams.

Kurt fled to England in June 1939 and worked for a Jewish charity in London. He then joined the British army Pioneer Corp (PC) from 1940-43. He was advised like many European Jews in the forces to change his name, in this case to 13801160 Pte Kenneth Edward Clarke. He then volunteered into No 10 International Commando for a year in 1943 as a Corporal, 13118804/550135, probably in No 3 Troop (Jewish Troop) but may also have served in the Dutch Troop. He then returned to the PC, but was again posted to No 10 Commando in the last 4 months of the war, where he was an interpreter and interrogator in the front line, using his extensive language skills.

Whilst fighting in Europe after D Day with No 10 Commando, he was Mentioned in Despatches for bravery near Osnabruck. He had cycled under fire in full view of the enemy to organise bringing a medical team to an ambushed and wounded Commando unit and so saved many lives; he cycled further on and arranged for artillery covering fire for the Troop whilst they made good their escape; he then entered Osnabruck ahead of his Troop and persuaded a whole company of heavily armed Hungarian Nazis to surrender, an act which was apparently captured on film and saved many more lives.

Before being demobilised in summer 1946, he took part in the de-nazification process after the war in Germany. Post army, Kurt ran a ladies tailoring business in Harrow Road, London, which failed, and so he moved to Manchester. He never married. In May 1977 he was a victim of a mugging and badly injured, sadly dying soon after of his injuries at Ancoats hospital. He was buried in a pauper's grave with no name marker, in the Roman Catholic section, at Southern cemetery in Chorlton, Grave Section I, plot no. 1563. Nobody was aware he was Jewish or had family in the USA. And so it would have remained.

However in April 2021, Kurt's American niece Tracy Fish (nee Gordon, daughter of his brother Paul) of San Diego, California contacted Martin Sugarman, Archivist at AJEX via the American WW2 researcher Leah Garrett, telling Kurt's story; Sugarman knew of Kurt as he appears in the 3 Troop list of fighters in his book, 'Fighting Back'. Joe Flacks, AJEX Chairman of the Manchester branch, worked with Sugarman and they obtained finance from philanthropist Jerry Klinger in the USA (President of the Jewish American Society for Historic Preservation) to have a headstone with Kurt's name placed upon his unmarked grave.

and also a larger headstone placed in the nearby Jewish cemetery, which explains who Kurt was and how his grave location, once unknown, can now be found.

A Jewish war hero whose burial place was all but lost, is now remembered and kaddish (the Jewish prayer for those who have passed away) will be said for him each year by the local Jewish community in Manchester. In October a re-consecration ceremony will take place organised by AJEX Chairman of the Manchester branch, Joe Flacks where Goldschlager's stone will be officially re-consecrated. Flacks says, "All at AJEX are grateful to Rabbi Dovid Lewis MA of Bowdon Synagogue in South Manchester for supervising the wording and installation of the memorial stone at the Southern Cemetery Jewish section". The Southern Cemetery is the largest municipal cemetery in the UK and the second largest in Europe. The Jewish section of the cemetery was initially used from 1892 by the Manchester Reform Synagogue; later shared from 1924 with South Manchester Synagogue, the Sephardi community from 1934, and Whitefield Synagogue from 1957.

On seeing the stone for the first time, niece Tracy Fish said, "It is very moving indeed! I'm sitting here tearing up, and I'm somewhat speechless! It never occurred to me that the stone was going to be so individually personalised, and so beautiful. I was expecting a simple plaque with ALL the names of the men buried there that served in the No.10 commandos. So this is blowing my mind! It's really beautiful! All these men deserve recognition for their service."

Sugarman continues to ensure Jewish Servicemen and womens' graves are corrected. If you suspect that CWGC headstones are incorrect or that important published facts about deceased servicemen and women on the CWGC web site (<https://www.cwgc.org>) or elsewhere, are wrong please contact Martin Sugarman: 07806 656756.

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Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen and Women (AJEX).

Martin Sugarman, AJEX Archivist

Image of Kurt Goldschlager from his niece Tracy Fish.

