Roy Carnegie – three uniforms

In February 1993, local resident Roy Carnegie told the newsletter of St. Andrew's Church, Lisbon how strange coincidences weave our lives and destinies in the most extraordinary ways, in a two-part story: 'Truth is Stranger than Fiction', followed by 'Three Different Uniforms'. The unabridged text is republished below, with the kind permission of the editor of those newsletters, Eva Sanches (née Carnegie), Roy Carnegie's daughter.

By Eva Sanches (née Carnegie)

TRUTH IS STRANGER THAN FICTION

Mr. X lived in Poland until the outbreak of the war. He joined the Allied forces and after the end of the war became a naturalised British subject. During his flight from Poland, his documents were stolen. The thief was later killed. The family, hearing of the death, held a funeral and buried Mr. X**.**

As Lisbon was neutral territory during the war, it was used as a relay for mail between Britain and Poland. Mr. X managed to get news to his family that he was alive and well and the family, having thought him dead for four years, rejoiced to know that he was indeed alive. Forty years later, Mr. X and his wife retired to Portugal. Mrs. X, due to arthritis, needed a hip replacement operation and consulted a Cascais surgeon. The operation was successful and during conversation with her doctor during recuperation, Mrs. X. told her husband's story.

It turned out that the doctor's wife's grandmother was that lady who had forwarded the letters to Poland during the war and that she was still alive and living in the same house in Lisbon!

Mr. and Mrs. X are members of St. Andrew's congregation - you all know them well! Roy and Dorothy Carnegie!

Roy's next story will be how he wore three uniforms at the same time during the war!

THREE DIFFERENT UNIFORMS

A Polish uniform

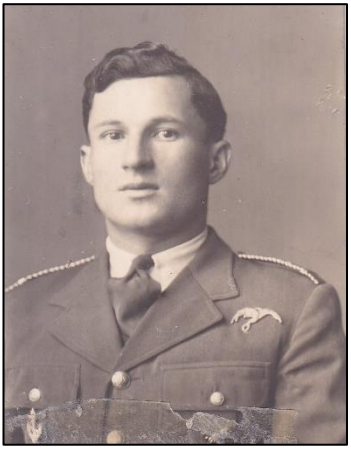
In Poland before the war National Service was compulsory and as a student I was advised to do military service in the middle of my studies.

Roy Carnegie's original Polish passport of 1934

In 1939 I was serving in the army in a Polish uniform. When the Germans started bombing, I was with a platoon in the town of Oswiecimw, later to be called Auschwitz. We withdrew towards Krakow but found the entire brigade had moved to Lwow, and on the way there heard that the Russians had invaded Poland. We had no choice but to make for Hungary.

In Hungary I was interned in Esztergom camp and became friendly with the camp Commandant who took me on his frequent journeys to Budapest. In Budapest I happened to see a building with the Polish Eagle emblem denoting the Consulate. Escaping from the camp to the Consulate, I was given clothes, a new identity and my 'Job' was to help other Poles by going to the railway station and advising on the train which went to the transit camp at Barcs on the border of Yugoslavia.

One day I was arrested by the Hungarian police and put in Tolonc House Prison. All my belongings were stolen from the Metropol Hotel where I had been staying. The Red Cross finally persuaded the authorities to transfer us to Budapest Military Prison which was built on top of the hill with a sheer drop below. A few days later, we lowered down sheets and escaped, sheltering until daylight in a small monastery nearby.



A French uniform

We returned to the Consulate which organised transport to Barcs and fishermen to take us across the River Drava to Yugoslavia. From there we went to Zagreb, Split, Marseille and Avignon, where I was given a French uniform to wear. Working with the Polish supply unit under a French officer, I was in Paris when the Germans invaded France. After my officer disappeared, I decided to escape to Spain, acquiring a rusty bicycle for the purpose. French police stopping me at a crossroads, advised me to go to La Rochelle instead and on arriving there, l found hundreds of other Poles. The next day, a huge empty coal container, commandeered by the French army was brought to La Rochelle and four days later we all disembarked in Plymouth, in Great Britain.

A British uniform

We were fed and put on a special train to Scotland. Eventually we became part of the British Army and I was issued with my third uniform – a British one. After four years, in June 1944, I returned to France with the invasion forces.

Roy Carnegie (top left) at Coulter, Biggar, in Scotland – 1940

Roy Carnegie (right) in Germany near the end of WWII – May 1945

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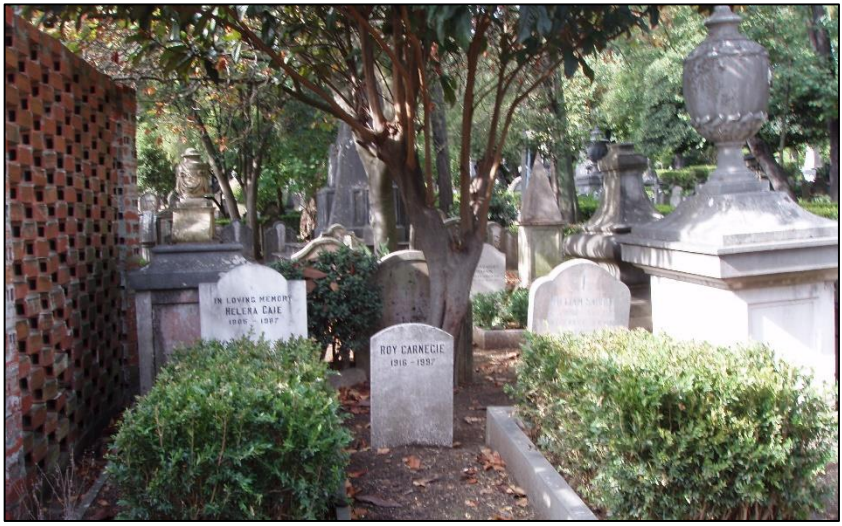
Aftermath

Roy and Dorothy's wedding in 1944

After WWII, Roy returned to Scotland where he had married Dorothy in 1944 at Ladybank. They bought a small hotel in Carnwath and then later bought The Crown Hotel in Carluke, both in South Lanarkshire. Their plan was for their daughter Eva to take over the hotel after graduating from her degree in Hotel & Catering Management from Strathclyde University. However, having holidayed in Portugal in 1969, Eva met her future husband-to-be and they were married in Lisbon in 1973. Eva's parents accordingly decided to sell the hotel and came to live in Portugal in 1985, where they lived next door to Eva in Murches, Malveira de Serra.

Acknowledgements

These articles appeared in a St. Andrew's Church Newsletter, which were put together for a few years in the 1990s by Eva Sanches (née Carnegie), Roy and Dorothy's daughter. The minister at the time in St. Andrew's Church was Rev. Roy Hill. Roy and Dorothy Carnegie were both very regular parishioners and also never missed the Remembrance Service in St. George's every year. Roy died in 1997 and Dorothy died in 2013; both are buried in the British Cemetery in Lisbon.



Roy and Dorothy Carnegie's grave in the British Cemetery in Lisbon

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Eva Sanches *teaches English to post-graduate students studying Tour Guiding at the Lusofona University in Lisbon and is a tour guide herself. Roy and Dorothy's grandson Jamie now lives in his grandparents' house in Murches. Following the "family tradition" to a degree, Eva and Jamie have two passports, but not two or three uniforms!*