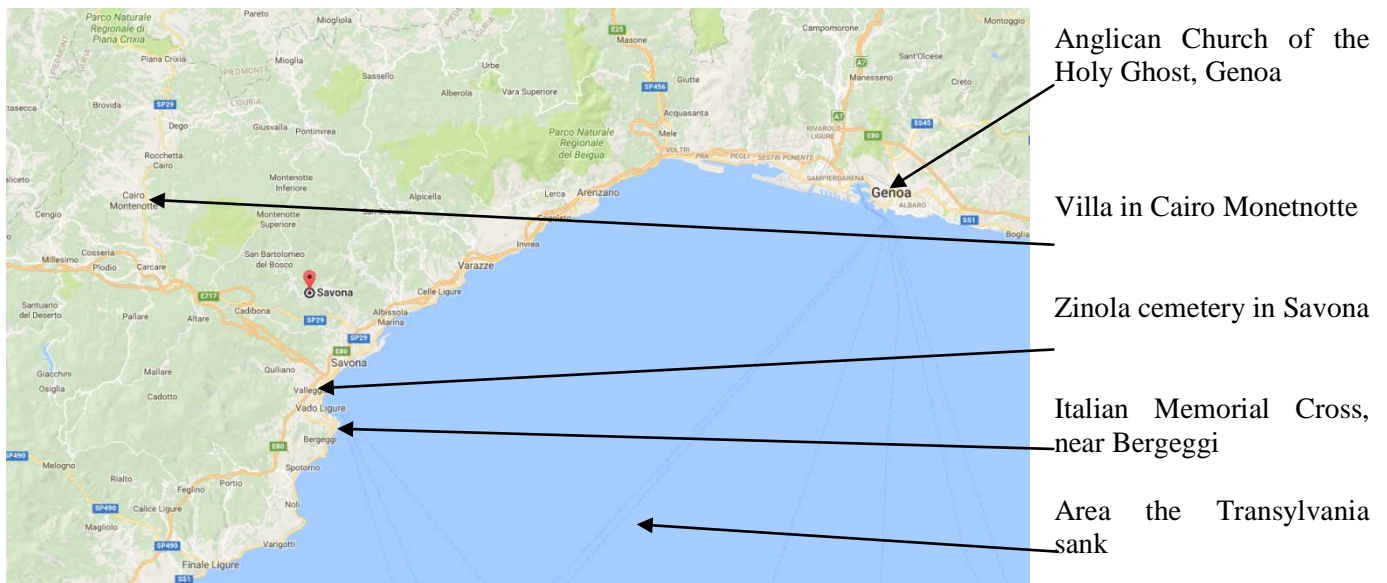


Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> May 2017 was the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Cppu grandfather, Frank George Basdell (1879-1917). He was a regular soldier who had been fighting in WW1 and he drowned when the troop carrier, SS Transylvania, was torpedoed off the Ligurian coast near Savona. To mark this date members of the extended "Basdell" family were meeting in Savona and would be joining Italians there to mark this date.

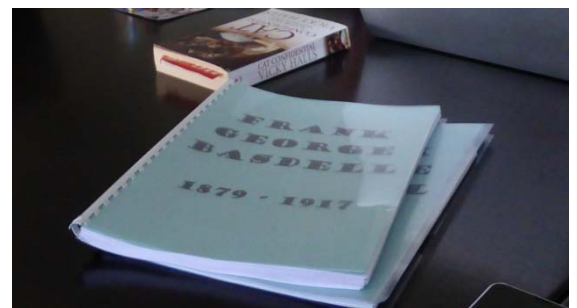
This blog of our trip to Italy splits into sections:

- A brief history of the sinking of the Transylvania
- A description of the week with the family in the villa at Cairo Montenotte near Savona
- The story of the events to commemorate the sinking of the Transylvania.

Most of the organisation for this family get-together was done by my cousin Alison, who lives in Australia with her husband Ross. She organised a 10 bedroom villa at Cairo Montenotte where we all could stay and liaised with the Italian authorities over events etc.



I liaised with Alison's brother, Robin Salter, to obtain family history information that he holds. I combined this with family history I already held to pull together a booklet on Frank George Basdell which included a description of his army & family life, letters written home during WW1 and photographs of him, his family and his life. He had joined the 2<sup>nd</sup> Gloucestershire Regiment in Bristol in Dec 1896, had been posted to several places in the UK, had fought in the Boer War, had been posted to Malta & China, had fought in WW1 near Ypres in France where he was wounded; later he was posted to the Balkans and he was returning there, after leave home, when he died.



There is a Memorial Wall and graves maintained by the Commonwealth Graves Commission in a cemetery in Savona. Also the Italians had placed a memorial cross to mark the sinking of the Transylvania on the cliffs at Cape Vado overlooking the bay where the ship went down.

FGB had four daughters when he died. Descendants, including grandchildren, great grandchildren and a great great grandchild, from all four branches of this Basdell family gathered to mark this date. 22 family members including partners (marked in bold below which shows some of the descendants of FGB)) came together from Australia, USA, Canada, Paris and the UK.

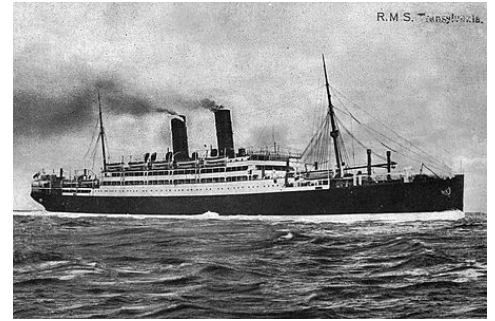
<i>Daughters</i>	<i>Grandchildren</i>	<i>Great grandchildren</i>	<i>Great great grandchildren</i>
Mabel <i>Married Maurice Jack Salter</i>	Angela Salter  Robin John Salter	<b>Clare Salter</b> <i>Married Victor Stephen Newman</i>  <b>Christopher John Salter</b> <i>Married Deborah Jean Newton</i>	
	Peter Salter	<b>William Basdell Salter</b> <i>Married Nicola Plaxton</i>  <b>Eleanor Jane Salter</b> <i>Partner Ian Thornton</i>	
		<b>Andrew Maurice Salter</b> <i>Married Gileng Sum</i>	<b>Jack Tiger Salter</b>
	<b>Alison Marian Salter</b> <i>Married Ross Francis Humphreys</i>	<b>Katherine Grace Humphreys</b> <i>partner Matthew Thorogood</i>	<i>1<sup>st</sup> baby due July 2017</i>
<hr/>			
Kathleen Francis <i>Married John Ernest Kinsey-Miles</i>	<b>Ann Kinsey-Miles</b> <i>Married John Henry Boutall</i> Elizabeth Kinsey-Miles		
<hr/>			
Cecelia Margaret <i>Married Ernest Harold Clifford Poole</i>	Phillip Derek Clifford Poole <b>David Roderick Poole</b>		
<hr/>			
Bertha May <i>Married Kenneth W Lester Smith</i>	<b>Julian Lester Smith</b> <i>partner Nikki Janosch</i> <b>Mark Lester Smith</b> <i>Married Susan McDonald</i> Roger Lester Smith		
<hr/>			

Usually when I write a descriptive blog of our travels I mainly use photos I have taken supplemented with a few from John. This year I have had access to facebook I have incorporated some of these photos and others from various sources into this document. I letters & photos booklet that I prepared in advance of our week in Italy.

## Part 1: **Brief History of the sinking of the Transylvania**

### **History**

On 4<sup>th</sup> May 1917 the "SS Transylvania" was torpedoed off Cape Vado, a few miles south of Savona, Italy. The ship was en route to Bulgaria / Salonika. The SS Transylvania had left Marseilles on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1917 with an escort of 2 Japanese destroyers, the Matsu and the Sakati. At 10am on 4<sup>th</sup> May the ship was struck in the port engine room by a torpedo from a U-boat. At the time the ship was on a zig-zag course at a speed of 14 knots, being two and half miles south of Cape Vado, Gulf of Genoa. She at once headed for the land two miles distant, while the Matsu came alongside to take off the troops, the Sakati meanwhile steaming around to keep the submarine submerged. Twenty minutes later a torpedo was seen coming straight for the destroyer alongside & Matsu saved herself by going astern at full speed. The torpedo then struck the Transylvania and she sank very quickly, less than an hour having elapsed since she was first hit. On board the Transylvania were 2860 British soldiers, 200 officers and 50 Red Cross nurses. Of the passengers, 29 military officers (including Lt. Basdell) and 373 other ranks were killed.



Within 40 minutes of the first hit the ship had sunk. The 60 Red Cross nurses were able to disembark in the first stages of the disaster. Amazingly 2708 passengers did survive, the majority saved by Japanese lifeboats. However Ligurian fishermen, who saw the attack from the shore, braved strong winds in their boats to help with the rescue. A newspaper article said :

*Many survivors owed their lives to local Italians who sent out a flotilla of rescue craft from surrounding villages. A survivor said "They cared for us and looked after the graves of many dead since"*

The people of Savona raised a memorial to this incident on the headland overlooking the sea where the Transylvania went down. In a special area within the Savona Cemetery, the Commonwealth Graves Commission maintains the graves, of those whose bodies were recovered, and a Memorial Wall, to all who died. In October 2011 the remains of the sunken ship were discovered on the sea bed 630metres deep near the Ligurian coast. The ship had split into two parts lying 150metres apart on the sea bed. The wreck has become home to rare white coral reefs.

### **Cemetery**

The graves and a Memorial Wall for those who died are located within a separate area in the cemetery in Savona. It was created and is maintained by the Commonwealth Graves Commission. The body of Frank Basdell was never found and his name is on the Memorial Wall. John & I have visited the cemetery before and these photos date from that visit.





TA CIRCA DUE MIGLIA E.S.E. DA QUESTO PUNTO  
 IL QUATTRO MAGGIO 1947 IL TRASPORTO BRITANNICO  
 "TRANSYLVANIA" VENNE AFFONDATO DAL COMUNE NEMICO  
 DEI 407 UFFICIALI E SOLDATI CHE ALLORA PERIRONO  
 AL SERVIZIO DELLA PATRIA 89 RIPOSANO NEL VICINO  
 CIMITERO DI ZINOLA  
  
 QUESTA CROCE È POSTA IN MEMORIA DEI GLORIOSI  
 ESTINTI E IN TESTIMONIANZA DELLA GRATITUDINE  
 IMPERITURA DEL POPOLO BRITANNICO VERSO  
 GLI ABITANTI DI QUESTI LIDI PER  
 IL GENEROSO LORO SOCCORSO AI SUPERSTITI"

Another memorial to  
 this event was erected  
 by people of Savona at  
 the top of the cliffs  
 overlooking bay where  
 Transylvania went  
 down.



Access to & around this memorial is via a steep  
 narrow stoney path and I felt far less confident to  
 tackle it this trip.