



# WWII Memories

**Volunteer Researcher: Chris Walpole**

## **Note to readers:**

Our research files have been compiled by a committed and diligent team of volunteer researchers.

Please be aware that while our volunteers have received training in basic research skills, they are not professional historians.

We welcome further use of our research-files (with due credit). However, we encourage you to perform your own fact-checking / research processes before relying on any of the information contained here.



**World War Two** memories gathered circa 2000:

Belstone resident Bill Crocker (now deceased) remembered: the German POW's clearing the snow from the lane between Tongue End and Belstone after the heavy snows in 1947.

Belstone residents Tom and Norah Marshall (now deceased) comment: German POW's were in the camp at Willsworthy, and probably remained for a time after the war. Okehampton Museum states that trusted POW's worked on farms, and there is a photo dated 1946 showing German POW's at Whiddon Down.

Belstone resident comment: Some kind soul had put the American soldiers to camp on Brenamoor [common ground in Belstone parish]. Fortunately, they were sufficiently skilled in driving a jeep fast backwards to avoid a small boy on a tricycle. Brenamoor is hardly recommended as a camping place for our allies.

John Bowden comment (he still lives in Sticklepath): As a youngster John remembers watching over his back gate as American tanks (probably Shermans) and jeeps came up Skaigh lane (just) from Sticklepath shortly before D-Day. They stayed for a few days at the "picnic ground" at the bottom of Skaigh Lane hill, where the battalion of 'coloured'\* troops dug trenches. The soldiers weren't allowed off the camp, so the children acted as go-betweens carrying liquor from the *Devonshire Inn* at Sticklepath in exchange for sweets and money.

Ron and Pat Bray comment (Pat still lives in Belstone): Another lot of 'coloured' American soldiers camped briefly not far along the Taw Marsh track where the sloping stones cross the road; they offered sweets to the local kids.

Sid Cooper (now deceased) comment: during the war the Owlsfoot garage area (on the old A30 above South Zeal) was used by a group of 'coloured' American soldiers who were in charge of laundry arrangements; lots of large mobile washing machines were there.

Joyce Kastner (now deceased) comment: When the Americans were camping on Watchet Hill behind Belstone prior to D-Day a Sergeant came in to *Resugga* [where she lived] for his bath – it was a luxury for him.

Donald Phare comment (he still lives in North Tawton): American soldiers in Belstone; when the first 'coloured' American soldiers came through the village, it was the first time people would have seen 'coloured' people. He would have been 7 or 8 years old. For the first few days after arriving they pitched tents on the piece of common land below *Well Park*, where



Donald remembers his grandmother having a washing line. The washing line was cut down by the soldiers. On other occasions the soldiers would camp on the flat piece of moor below Watchet and above *Taikoo*; when they came to leave they would dig small holes and bury their candy and other sweets (not really being allowed them), and the village boys would go and dig them up. It was the Americans who bulldozed the track from Watchet to Cullevers Steps. Apparently there are some dual heritage children in the area resulting from the American stay.

The following can be found in the Belstone Church baptism records ...

*Kinski<sup>†</sup>, Megan Ann ([born] 8.12.45), Feliks + Edna May, Sticklepath, engineer/seaman Polish Navy [baptised] 4 Aug [1946]*

[<sup>†</sup>The name Cisinski was assumed on joining the Polish Navy in Great Britain in 1942 to protect his family in Poland against possible German persecution. His proper name – Feliks Kinski was officially restored after the end of the German occupation of Poland, and the Marriage and Birth Certificate altered accordingly.]

\*Please note: The word 'coloured' was in use at that time. Today we would say 'People of Colour'.