

Peace at Last - 60 Years On

Back in October 2017 an article appeared in the mail online about a woman who's stillborn baby had been traced. It was a story that struck my heart, I had grown up with the story of my parent's first-born child being stillborn. The saddest part for me was that mum did not know what happened to her baby, I'd heard stories that perhaps he had been buried with an adult or perhaps just disposed of. Mum carried her baby full term and went into labour not knowing her baby was already dead. When she asked to see him, she was cruelly told not to be so stupid she must know he was dead. It still brings tears to my eyes to think of how appalling this was and how on earth my parents managed to recover. On reading the news story I thought perhaps my brother could be found.

I sent an enquiry to Brief Lives - Remembered and almost immediately received a reply from Paula. After confirming some details with my aunt who is the only person still alive other than my mum who was there at the time and completing the enquiry form. After just over a week from my first email, I received a message from Paula to call her as she had news. Ironically, I received this message and news on my dad's anniversary 23rd October.

Paula had traced my brother's resting place; she was able to provide a map and details of his burial in the Catholic section of the cemetery and that he was buried in his own casket alongside other babies.

I called my mum and broke the news to her, the effect on her was profound. My brother would have been 60 years old. My 83-year-old mum kept telling me she was finally able to find some peace knowing where he was, a huge relief after 60 years of wondering. It is sad that my dad didn't live to see this, but I have to wonder at the timing of Paula's discovery.

Since this time, I have been back to the UK (I live in New Zealand) and with the help of the staff at Streatham Park Cemetery in London, mum has visited my brother's grave and I finally laid flowers for him. The cemetery staff have been so supportive and understanding in helping with the visit, they drove us through the cemetery as it is very large and mum cannot walk these days, they even went out and placed a peg in an otherwise clear expanse of grass to show the grave site. An entry has been made in their book of remembrance and although a headstone is not possible as he is buried in a common grave, a memorial stone is currently being made and will be place with a rose bush in the Garden of Remembrance at the cemetery.

Although none of these things can make up for the terrible experience my parents had at the time, it was how things were done back then. We now know someone did care, my brother was buried appropriately but sadly he didn't have his parents there to mourn him that day but has never been forgotten and has finally been found.



I cannot express my thanks enough for the amazing service that Paula provides through Brief Lives - Remembered.

A brief life acknowledged.

To update the story of my brother Brian who's resting place was discovered in 2017 by Paula,

ironically her call to me came on my dad's anniversary. Today would have been my dad's 90th birthday and what would have been my brother's 65th birthday is coming up next week, so it is timely not just because of these important dates but also because I have just returned from the UK as my mum passed away just before Christmas. I know she was at peace to be with dad and finally with her baby Brian who she never met and that is due to the work of Paula and Brief Lives Remembered.



After Paula discovered where baby Brian was laid to rest, mum was able to visit and we were able to lay flowers and a small decorative pebble on his grave, subsequently mum was able to have a memorial stone placed in the garden of remembrance at the cemetery and obtain a copy of his stillbirth certificate.

The acknowledgement that baby Brian was born was hugely important to my mum because until the last few years he existed only in her memory and heart.

Mum was cremated and her ashes buried with dad, but she also took her baby's stillborn certificate with her along with a small bag of soil from his grave, this was the closest she could be to him.

As is often the way, we thought of asking for donations in lieu of flowers at mum's funeral, as I was thinking about this it came to my mind that the most and only appropriate organization to receive these donations would be "Brief Lives Remembered" and so some family and friends responded and made some donations which I am very grateful for and hope will in some small way help another family obtain some comfort in the solving of the mystery of where their baby rests. Thank you, Paula, for bringing priceless peace to my mum.