

Dear Margaret

This is going to be a "blast from the past" - we last met when you visited Birchington tracking down your ancestor, Commander William Norman. His grave was in a terrible state. We were trying to get the Australian Navy Board interested in helping restore it, but I certainly had no joy from them.

However, last year Terry Wilson moved into the village and asked if he could tidy up our churchyard, as he'd done in his previous village. We were all delighted and after sorting out quite a number of graves, with beautiful results, he asked me if there was any particular one that he could tackle. I suggested the Norman grave - and showed him what it had originally looked like. Over the next three months he and a mate plodded away and gradually began to rebuild it. Finally just before Christmas he took this photo - his friend took the one of him sitting beside the grave with a couple of the old bottle he found dumped in the cavity, while it was derelict.



Commander William Norman's grave - with its lid on at last- courtesy of Terry & friend - Oct 2015



The whole monument has sunk a bit since 1869, and the ground has risen higher with grass cuttings etc mounted up around it.

The lid reminds me of a giant jigsaw!!!! But at least it looks much better now and Terry and his friend are thrilled with the result. He has been in touch with Normanton, Carpentaria, and sent them a DVD which I had put together with all the material we have gathered about your wonderful ancestor. They have been most appreciative of this and for Terry and for us, it has made all the work worthwhile.

Very best wishes to you

(Archivist to All Saints Church and the Birchington Heritage Trust.)