

Couple to boycott Remembrance Day service over war memorial fence row



Sylvia Bird and David Williams at the war memorial in Great Bedwyn. By Paul Morris

Angry villagers will boycott Sunday's Remembrance Day service because the parish council removed a fence around the war memorial they paid for.

Sylvia Bird and Dave Williams both have family members commemorated on the Great Bedwyn war memorial, which has the names of the nine soldiers from the village who died in the Second World War.

The replacement marker memorial stone and fence were put in place in 1993 after the original name plaques on nine memorial trees were lost and two of the trees were under threat of being cut down.

Both were paid for with funds raised from the families whose relatives the memorial commemorates after they were contacted by Mrs Bird.

On Monday a new chain fence was put up. The original picket one was removed last month.

Mrs Bird, 80, of Jockey Green, said: "I won't be attending the service on Sunday, and it will be the first one I have missed in a very long time. I just can't face standing next to the parish councillors.

"This is vandalism. The picket fence was put there to protect the stone and the dedicated ground around it.

"It has been maintained over the last 21 years with minimal payment from the parish council.

"They had no right to touch the fence, as it doesn't belong to them, it belongs to the families."

Mr Williams, 74, also of Jockey Green, said: "My wife's uncle is commemorated on this memorial and I am angry that the families were not told about the changes. I won't be able to attend the remembrance service on Sunday because of this issue."

Mrs Bird was at the original memorial tree ceremony in 1946. Her second cousin is one of the nine fallen men.

Changes to the fence were first suggested at a council meeting in January after the closure of the Royal British Legion office in the village.

Parish council chairman Roger Durie said: "The parish council are responsible for maintaining the fence and we felt the picket fence did not enhance the memorial.

"I think the new fence looks so much better and makes the stone more visible.

"We always take residents' views into account and residents have had the opportunity to come to parish meetings and put their views across."

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