

Worton & Marston at War

During the English Civil War, Wiltshire saw its fair share of troop movements of both Royalist and Parliamentary armies. Devizes was centre of much activity and on one occasion at least a skirmish occurred between the armies near Worton when troops led by Colonel Long encountered Roundhead troops whilst on their way from Devizes to Bradford-on-Avon via Melksham where the two sides met with small groups of soldiers on both sides breaking away. Presumably some ended up in the area of the two villages. Prince Hill in Worton is supposedly named from when Prince Rupert stayed in the area whilst commanding the Royalists troops in the area.

A helmet was once found at the Grange this was dated to be of about the time of the Civil War.

Gilbert Bradford, a Canadian soldier was billeted in the village during the Great War and married local girl Elsie Goodall at Christchurch in 1917. They lived in Canada but returned many times afterwards. Elsie died in the 1950's and Gilbert in 1989.

In April 1964 the Reverend Maurice Kirby, Vicar at Christchurch 1962 - 1964 received a letter from Ernest, a former member of the 1st Heavy Battery of Montreal (Canadian Forces) who had been billeted in Worton & Marston in January & February of 1915. He remembers one of the soldiers arriving at the village and stating "If heaven is anything like this I'm All for it". The force remained in Worton & Marston for 6 weeks before transferring to Avonmouth for shipping off to St. Nazaire, France. The gentleman was billeted at the Old Mill House with the Holloways he also remembered the "Worton Giant", Fred Kempster.

It is known that 6 men were billeted at the Old Mill House, Worton, 12 at Eastfield House, Marston along with a number of horses, that left in the region of another 120 or so billeted elsewhere. The Canadian Army paid 6d. per night per horse for stabling their horses.

Christchurch War Memorial

The War Memorial inside Christchurch is a simple brass engraved plaque mounted on a dark hardwood surround. The inscription reads:-



TO THE GLORY OF GOD
AND IN MEMORY OF
THE MEN OF THIS PARISH
WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES
IN THE GREAT WAR 1914-1918

H. A. DUNFORD
Welch Regiment Died 1915

E. J. BURBIDGE
Somerset Light Infantry Died 1918

H. O. FEW
Durham Light Infantry Died 1919

War Graves At Christchurch, Worton

EDWIN JOHN BURBIDGE

Private Edwin John Burbidge, 1st Battalion Somerset Light Infantry. Died 15th April 1918, age 19. Son of Edwin John and Ellen Burbidge of The Close, Marston. Edwin died around the Loos area of

France and has no known grave. He is commemorated on the Loos Memorial, Pas De Calais, France on Panels 38 & 39



The Loos Memorial



Worton Churchyard

Edwin is also commemorated with a headstone in the Churchyard at Worton erected by his family. The inscription is fading but his memory will be kept alive always. He is named on the war memorial plaque in Christchurch

HERBERT OWEN FEW

Private 64448 H. O. Few, Durham Light Infantry attached to 3rd Company Labour Corps. Died 11th August 1919 at home, age 30. Son of Stephen and Eliza Few of The Farm, Worton. The grave can be found in the South West part of the churchyard. It does not have the traditional Portland Stone marker of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission but is a Cross design as can be seen in the image below. Herbert is also commemorated in Christchurch on the war memorial plaque



Herbert Owen Few worked on the family farm until he went to serve his country. He was one of 5 children with James being an older brother. Younger siblings were Lionel (also named on the headstone), Eveline and Stephen.

Please visit the Commonwealth War Grave Commission Site by following the link for more information and certificates. [Enter site here](#)

The other casualty named on the Christchurch Memorial but doesn't appear to have an inscription on a headstone in the churchyard is.

HERBERT. A. DUNFORD



Private 18580 Herbert Dunford, 2nd Battalion Welsh Regiment. Died 26th September 1915, age 23. Son of Alfred and Mary Dunford of Worton. Commemorated on the Loos Memorial, Pas De Calais France on Panels 77 & 78

The Loos Memorial, France

The War Memorial, Village Hall, Worton



A short biography for each name recorded on the memorial is printed below.

J. Ellis - believed to be James Edward Ellis - Ordinary Seaman C/JX348741, Royal Navy - died 8 November 1942, aged 19, serving aboard H. M. S. Walney. James was the son of William & Elsie Margaret Ellis of Devizes (former residents of Worton?). James has no known grave and is commemorated on the Chatham Naval Memorial, Chatham, Kent on Panel 57 Section 2



H.M.S. Walney, a Royal Navy cutter was destroyed when attempting to land troops in the harbour of Oran in North Africa. The number of troops lost was heavy and of the ships compliment 5 officers and 75 ratings were killed.

Chatham Naval War Memorial

R. G. W. Henly - Raymond Glen Whitton Henley, Stoker 1st Class D/KX90386, Royal Navy - died 13 September 1944 as a result of a motor accident while serving aboard H.M.S. Angelo. Raymond was the son of Harry Launcelot & Alice Janet Pender Henly (nee Whitton) and the husband of Joan Henley of Edinburgh, Scotland. Raymond and Joan had 2 children, also named Raymond and Joan. Raymond (Snr.) is buried in Bari War Cemetery, Italy, Grave Reference XI B 11



CWGC Headstone at Bari, Italy



Raymond G. W. Henley

A. W. Ellis - Albert William Ellis, Private 4618513, 2nd Battalion Sherwood Foresters (Notts & Derby Regiment). Albert 24th April 1943, aged 23, while serving with the 8th Army in North Africa. Husband of Betty Lydia Ellis of Worton. Albert is buried in the Massicault War Cemetery, Tunisia, Grave Reference V. B. 17.



Memorial Donation In Christchurch

On Communion Sunday at Christchurch a very special and beautifully ornate table top bible stand is proudly displayed on the altar. This item was the gift of the sister of Paul Sangster Rivington. Around the base of the lectern is engraved TO THE GLORY OF GOD AND IN PROUD AND LOVING MEMORY OF PAUL SANGSTER RIVINGTON RAF 10TH JULY 1941. "O WHAT THE JOY AND THE GLORY MUST BE"

Unfortunately since the church at Worton is unlocked during daylight hours the lectern is not always on public display but is used frequently during Communion Services.

Paul and his twin brother Peter were Devizes boys educated at nearby Dauntsey School in West Lavington. Both attended church services at Christchurch, Worton. On leaving school in 1938 Paul gained a place at RADA. He had just finished his first year when war broke out and immediately volunteered to serve as a pilot with the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. Paul was called up just after Christmas 1939 and underwent pilot training at White Waltham Airfield. Unfortunately Paul failed to gain his wings and re-mustered as a Wireless Operator/Air Gunner.

Whilst training at RAF Cranwell, Lincolnshire, Paul was killed on the 10th July 1941 whilst on a training exercise when both he and his Polish Pilot lost their lives after hitting a tree whilst attempting to fly under low cloud which had formed in the base vicinity.

Aircraftman 2nd Class (W. Op./Air Gnr. U/T) 903070 Paul Sangster Rivington is buried in St. Andrew's churchyard, Cranwell in Plot 2, Row D, Grave 18.



St. Andrews Churchyard, Cranwell



The Memorial Bible Stand at Worton Church



Paul is also commemorated on the Dauntsey School War Memorial at West Lavington.

Paul's brother Peter also served in the Royal Air Force during the war years as a pilot with Coastal and Ferry Commands. As a civilian pilot Peter flew Lancasters and assisted in the Berlin Airlift between 27th June 1948 and 12th May 1949.

Evacuees

I know very little about the evacuees that were billeted with families in the two villages during WWII. There were a number of children pictured outside the library hall and in another showing them helping out at haymaking time. If anyone has memories of being evacuated to the village or if you stayed

there after the war end please get in touch. I have reproduced the photographs in the people gallery and would love to put names to the faces.

We have recently been donated an article about war time memories of Pete Weston who was an evacuee to the village. You can read the article on the main parish page.

Another article written by a villager is also featured - The Day The Plane Came Down

In Commemoration of the outbreak of WWI - Worton & Marston Villages have created a booklet in memory recounting the story of the two villages during the war years and of the losses to the villages.