



Launch of Book on Alderbury War Memorials

On Sunday, veterans will lead acts of remembrance in towns and villages across the country.

No Village, however small, was left unscathed after two world wars and a dozen other conflicts robbed them of some of their finest young men.

The Alderbury War Memorial, erected in 1922, bears the names of many of those who perished from Alderbury, Whaddon and Clarendon, carved into its column of Chilmark stone.

But it was only the starting point for some extraordinary detective work by the local history group and two of its number in particular – Mary Hinchcliff and Bernice Range – to create a definitive record of those with a village connection who made the ultimate sacrifice.

The book, *Alderbury War Memorials: In Freedom's Cause* published last year, sets each death in context of the time and the battle fought.

“We felt it important that the names on the war memorial should not be forgotten” Bernice explains.

“We wanted to bring them to life and put flesh on the bones – a lot of them were village heroes.”

Finding the information led them from church war memorials to cemetery gravestones, from regimental and military museum records to those held on the web, and from the Wardrobe in Salisbury to Hong Kong, Australia and America.

What was undertaken as a quick six month exercise ate up the best part of three years with Mary concentration on the First World War and Bernice on the second.

“It’s been a worldwide journey of research and experience,” says Bernice, “but it was a fascinating project to work on.”

As well as researching the men who died in foreign fields, she also looked into the deaths of men who died on home soil, among the a young RAF pilot whose Spitfire crashed on Alderbury Common.

Grave 160 in Alderbury churchyard is the final resting place of Colonel Samuel Kirkby, an officer in the Royal Sussex Regiment who had received the Military Cross for gallantry when he was just 18

He was killed in a car crash on his way back to Longford Castle in 1943 where it's believed he was on the staff of General Montgomery involved in piloting the D-Day landings.

Four Generals attended his funeral.

"He was such a brave man – one of the last to leave the beaches at Dunkirk," says Bernice.

RASC driver Edward Grout also survived Dunkirk, but was later sent to Singapore and taken prisoner when the island fell in 1942.

He died on the infamous Burma-Siam railway in 1943.

The oldest person ever to be honoured with the George Cross lies in Alderbury churchyard.

Aged 61 when the Second World War broke out, William Foster was too old for active service.

He had been wounded in action in the Boer War and invalided out of the army in 1902 only to re-enlist 12 years later and serve with distinction in the Great War, receiving the DCM and the MC.

Now he wanted to do his bit and joined the Home Guard.

He was instructing a group of recruits on the techniques of throwing live grenades when a Mills bomb rebounded.

Lt Foster threw himself on the bomb saving the lives of his comrades.

Following the outbreak of hostilities in 1914, most Alderbury men joined local regiments, but others found their way to the battlefields from elsewhere.

Alderbury Blacksmith's son Lance Corporal Edgar Mouland, the first Alderbury man to perish, was one of 8,709 Anzac troops killed during the Gallipoli campaign.

He had enlisted in Australia within a month of Britain entering the war.

The five Bundy names listed on the war memorial belong to two sets of brothers, all first cousins.

Brothers Ernest and Arthur Bundy who lived in silver Street, joined the Canadian Corps with their brother William.

The trio was among ten Alderbury men who fought under Canadian colours.

"They travelled all the way to Canada where they enlisted, trained and were shipped back to England to be sent off to the Western Front," says Mary.

Ernest and Arthur were killed within three months of one another in 1916 and their cousin Thomas died at the end of that year.

Robert, Thomas's brother was killed in April 1918.

The fifth Bundy, Walter another to join the Canadians, was fatally injured shortly after the Battle for Vimy Ridge in 1917.

"I used to sit in church and hear all these names read out and wondered "Who are these Men? Where did they serve" says Mary.

"Now when I hear them, I say "Ah yes.""

Mary spent time looking through the original war diaries held at the National Archives at Kew.

“It was very moving to think those very volumes had been through the ravages of battle,” she says.

“Once a slip of paper fell out – secret orders for the next day’s battle.

“I felt goosebumps all over.”

Alderbury War Memorials: In Freedoms Cause is published by the Alderbury and Whaddon local History Research Group, Price £6.50

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