

West Kington War Memorial



John Belcher



Introduction

Have you forgotten yet?...
For the world's events have rumbled on since those gagged days,
Like traffic checked a while at the crossing of city ways:
And the haunted gap in your mind has filled with thoughts that flow
Like clouds in the lit heavens of life; and you're a man relieved to go,
Taking your peaceful share of Time, with joy to spare.
But the past is just the same—and War's a bloody game...
Have you forgotten yet?...
Look down, and swear by the slain of the War that you'll never forget.

Siegfried Sassoon *Aftermath*

Why do I write these booklets and try and find out as much as I can about the men who are commemorated on the war memorials? My interest started when I used to go to the church in West Kington where I grew up. The memorial in the church there is a stone plaque with, until recently, 3 names inscribed. All three were men killed during the First War. A fourth name has been added of an airman who was killed during the Second War. The names intrigued me, who were they? Where did they live in the small village? Where were they killed and where are they buried? I asked the church team but no one could answer my questions.

It was after I had joined the Royal Air Force and served through the Gulf War in 1991 that I decided to satisfy my curiosity and find out more details about the memorial. I was spurred into action by hearing the Radio 4 “Today” programme’s “Thought for the Day” on 11th November 1997. The person giving the “Thought” said words to the effect of, the memorials are inscribed with “Their names livethe for evermore” and we say that “We will remember them” but unless we actually read the names and know who they were, how can we remember them.

Since then I have researched this booklet and the memorials in Chippenham, Biddestone, Castle Combe, Amesbury and Old Sodbury.

I do not pretend to be a historian but a person with an interest in history. My research is carried out when time allows using mainly 2 main sources; the CD-ROM version of “Soldiers Died in World War 1” and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission web site. Plus with the use of the Internet it is amazing the wealth of information that is freely shared by similar minded people..

Soldiers Died in World War 1 is a multi volume book was produced at the end of the Great War by each regiment and lists the soldiers who were *known* to have been killed during the war.

It is the responsibility of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) to permanently mark and maintain the graves of the men and women of the forces of the Commonwealth and certain civilians who died in the two world wars. Another responsibility is the commemoration by name of all those who graves are unknown or are buried at sea.

The CWGC has its own web site with a facility to search for the commemoration details of individuals and cemetery or memorial descriptions. I have included the descriptions from the site, shown in *italics*, for each person.

I try and trace the details on all the names on the memorial. Sadly sometimes I am not successful. This can be for a variety of reasons. The main reason is that the person had a common name which produces too many returns. The details recorded against the name by “Soldiers” or the CWGC are too vague or non-existent to allow me to say that I have the correct man. Also, a man might be commemorated on the local war memorial but he has a very tenuous link with the area. For example, he worked in the area before joining up but was born and brought up in a totally different town and his service records contain these details. Likewise, if the village is very small, I have found that a man would give his place of birth or where he was living as the nearest big town or village. It’s quite easy to imagine the recruiting officer saying “where is that?” and the recruit saying “it’s near.....” the nearby town was then recorded.

The other reason is because a number of soldiers died from wounds received in action but had been discharged from the Army by the time they died. Many are listed on local war memorials but are missing from official records. They are, in effect, not recorded as having made the ultimate sacrifice.

Alternatively there are quite often some names which have been left off the local war memorials despite having died and been recognised as war deaths. When the war memorials were being built, there seems to have been no hard and fast rule on who should be commemorated. Some areas would not inscribe a name unless they were actually killed or died as a result of combat.

*They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.*

Laurence Binyon *For the Fallen*

War Grave Eligibility

The CWGC records the place of burial or commemoration of all members of the Commonwealth armed forces who died *no matter where and no matter what the cause* (Courage Remembered 1988) during the periods 4th August 1914 until 31st March 1921. These dates were chosen as the start of the war and the official date of the end of the first war and not the Armistice. For the second war, the dates are 3rd September 1939 until 31st December 1947. Again the dates were chosen as the start of the war and a period of time after the war’s end to roughly cover the same length of time between 11th November 1918 and the official end of the war. This period after the end of the wars allows for men who died of wounds after the Armistice to be treated as war deaths.

As stated, all members of the Commonwealth Armed forces are entitled to a war grave. In addition certain civilian organisations are also entitled, provided that they died on duty because of the increased risks through the war. The organisations include the Mercantile Marine and other merchant navies, fishing fleets, war correspondents, Red Cross, Home Guard, National Fire Service, RAF Ferry Command and several others.

Personal Recollections and Pictures

Obviously the official records only hold the barest details. I would like to include personal recollections and photographs of the people commemorated. I try and include any relevant photographs alongside the details to add interest. Ultimately I would like to have a picture of the person as well as their headstones.

If you have any photos or personal recollections of the people remembered on the war memorial, please contact me so that I can update the records. Likewise, if there are any errors that need correcting, please contact me and I will make the corrections.

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Edward Samuel Booy

Surname	Christian Names		Service Number	Rank	Regiment
Booy	Edward Samuel		11853	Pte	1st Gloucester Regt
Born	Age	Enlisted at	Address		
Gabalfa, Glamorgan	29	Cardiff			
Date of Death	Where killed		Cause of Death		
20/08/1916	Somme		Killed		
Cemetery	Plot		Country		
Thiepval Memorial	Pier and Face 5A and 5B		France		
Next of Kin	Next of kin address		Town		
Jane Booy	61 Philog Terrace		Whitchurch, Cardiff		

Notes

Pte Booy was born at Gabalfa, Glamorgan. He enlisted into the Gloucestershire Regiment at Cardiff. He was sent to France on the 20th January 1915 and served with both the 2nd and the 1st Battalions of the Regiment. Reported as wounded on the 9th March 1915. He was killed on 20th August 1916 when serving with the 1st Battalion.

When Booy was killed, the 1st Battalion was engaged in heavy fighting in the Millencourt - Henencourt area of the Somme in particular, the area around Railway Copse, Black Wood and High Wood. On the 20th August 1916, 12 soldiers are noted as "Killed In Action".

The Thiepval memorial stands near the rebuilt village of the same name some 4 miles north of Albert in the Somme Region of France. It commemorates over 70,000 British and 830 South African soldiers who died during the period starting in July 1915 when the British Third Army took over from the French until 20 March 1918. The village of Thiepval was totally destroyed in the battle and, at one stage after the War, was considered for permanent erasure from the list of French villages.



Alfred Tom Drew

Surname	Christian Names		Service Number	Rank	Regiment
Drew	Alfred Tom		18408	Pte	5th Wiltshire Regt
Born	Age	Enlisted at	Address		
West Kington Wick	27	Devizes	West Kington Wick		
Date of Death	Where killed		Cause of Death		
09/04/1916	Sanna-I-Yout		Killed		
Cemetery	Plot		Country		
Basra Memorial	Panel 30 and 64		Iraq		
Next of Kin	Next of kin address		Town		
Edith Annie Drew	West Kington Wick				
Notes					
<p>Father Thomas Drew (Deceased)</p> <p>Pte A Drew 18408 Chippenham Wilts Regt. Appeared in the casualty list 1 July 1916 reported as missing in Mesopotamia.</p> <p>Wilts Times 1 July 1916</p> <p>Early in April the 13th Division attempted to break through the Turkish Division, which was besieging Kut in an effort to relieve the British garrison. After the 5th Wilts had rushed the enemy trenches at Hannah, they were held in open country in front of Falahiyeh. At dusk they withdrew to bivouac by the rivers a mile in the rear having suffered 219 casualties. Falahiyeh was captured that night and the Battalion took part in an attack on Sanna-I-Yout before dawn. Direction was lost through encountering a marsh on the line of advance. A few men got into the Turkish trenches but eventually the troops dug in under heavy fire 500 yards from the Turks and held on all day. In all they suffered a further 228 casualties.</p> <p>The 5th Wilts war diary records the action:</p> <p>Advanced 4.20a.m. Direction lost on left owing to sniping and small marsh and Turkish starlights coming from disputed direction. Lost our bearings after machine gunfire. Confusion in darkness. Troops dug in about 650yds from enemy. All day and night lines strengthened by men coming in from front. Many wounded crawled in and many were collected. 18077 Pte. J.H. Nelson and 9842 Pte. W.G. Price displayed conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty in collecting wounded and evacuating them. They have been recommended for the DCM. Capt Robertson collected Battn. together as far as possible.</p> <p>Casualties. Killed: - Lt. Col R.C.B Throckmorton, 2/Lt J.E. Binns, Wounded 2/Lt. V.M.W.W. Vreidenbury, 2/Lt. C.C. Webb.</p> <p>Missing: - Capt. J.W. Greany DSO, Capt L.W. Murphy, 2/Lt. D.E. Cruikshank afterwards reported wounded, 2/Lt. Gilborne, 2/Lt. H.S. Diggers.</p> <p>Other ranks: - Killed 21 Wounded 161 Missing 37</p>					

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The Basra Memorial was originally sited within Basra War Cemetery but in 1997 the Memorial was moved by presidential decree. The move, carried out by the authorities in Iraq, involved a considerable amount of manpower, transport costs and sheer engineering on their part, and the Memorial has been re-erected in its entirety.

The Basra Memorial is now located 32 kilometres along the road to Nasiriyah, in the middle of what was a major battleground during the Gulf War. The Memorial consists of a roofed colonnade of white Indian stone, 80 metres long, with an obelisk 16 metres high as the central feature. The names are engraved on slate panels fixed to the wall behind the columns. More than 40,000 British, Indian and West African dead who died in the operations in Mesopotamia from the Autumn of 1914 to the end of August 1921, are commemorated on the Memorial.

Albert Oliver Victor Poole

Surname	Christian Names	Service Number	Rank	Regiment
Poole	Albert Oliver Victor	16468	L/Cpl	8th Gloucester Regt
Born	Age	Enlisted at	Address	
	20	Bristol		
Date of Death	Where killed		Cause of Death	
28/03/1918	Doignes Area			
Cemetery	Plot	Country		
Arras Memorial	Bay 6	France		
Next of Kin	Next of kin address		Town	
Emily Anne Poole (Mother)	West Kington		Emily Anne Poole (Mother)	

Notes

Father Thomas Poole (deceased)


LCpl Poole enlisted into the Gloucestershire Regiment at Bristol. He joined the 12th Battalion and went to France with them on 21st November 1915, but was transferred to the 8th Battalion. He was killed in action with that battalion on the 28th March 1918.

When Poole was killed, the 8th Battalion was fighting in the Doignes area and were in several rearguard actions as the British withdrew in the face of a strong German push in that area. They quickly passed through Velu Wood, Bancourt and then held the line of the Bapume - Cambrai Road for a very short time before retiring once more (on the 26th March) to Hebuterne, Bucquoy and then to Fonquevillers on the 28th March. The Battalion suffered numerous casualties during these retreats, among whom Poole has to be numbered.

The Arras Memorial is in the Faubourg-d'Amiens Cemetery, which is in the Boulevard du General de Gaulle in the western part of the town of Arras. The Memorial commemorates almost 35,000 casualties of the British, New Zealand and South African Forces who died between Spring 1916 and 7th August 1918, excluding casualties of the Battle of Cambrai in 1917, and who have no known grave. The design, by Sir Edward Lutyens, consists of a cloister built upon Doric columns and faces west. In the broader part of the site the colonnade returns to form a recessed and open court, terminated by an apse in front of which is the Arras Flying Services Memorial. The names of the casualties are carved on stone panels which are fixed to the cloister walls.



Frank Albert Charles Harris

Surname	Christian Names		Service Number	Rank	Regiment
Harris	Frank Albert Charles		545284	Sgt	427 (R.C.A.F.), Royal Air Force
Born	Age	Enlisted at	Address		
	23				
Date of Death	Where killed		Cause of Death		
21 Feb 1944			Killed		
Cemetery	Plot		Country		
West Kington (St Mary) Churchyard			England		
Next of Kin	Next of kin address		Town		
Frank and Ida Harris			West Kington		
Notes					
<p>Sgt Harris was serving with 427 Sqn based at RAF Leeming, flying Halifax III bombers. He was killed on the 21 February 1944 on a bombing mission to Stuttgart. The Halifax ZL-Y LV836 with a crew of 3 Canadians and 4 British, took off from Leeming at 0015 but crashed approximately nine minutes later in a cultivated field 1mile north west of Northallerton, Yorkshire and burst into flames. The Canadians are buried in Harrowgate (Stonefall) Cemetery; the others were taken to their hometowns. The other crew members were:</p> <p>F/0 R K Laut RCAF Sgt E J Rove F/0 W N Hegy RCAF P/0 R W Moody RCAF Sgt G H Jones</p> <p>Sgt A F Fitton</p>					
					

References

Sassoon, Siegfried. *Collected Poems*. New York: The Viking Press, 1949.

Commonwealth War Graves Commission Web site [online] available at
<http://www.cwgc.org/cwgcinternet/search.aspx>

Soldiers Died in the Great War CD-ROM published by The Naval and Military Press
(<http://www.great-war-casualties.com/>)

Wiltshire Regiment War Diaries [online] available at
<http://www.thewardrobe.org.uk/wardiary.php3>