

The Church War Memorial

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We have often been asked when the war memorial in the church was erected and how it was funded. Thanks to Bob Allan one of the questions can be answered. Bob scanned to the Archive a newspaper report from the Berks & Oxon Advertiser on the unveiling of the war memorial on Friday 23rd September 1921 by Major General Sir George Kemball, a village resident. The report does not indicate how the money was raised.

The Berks & Oxon Advertiser – Friday, September 23rd, 1921 Ewelme war Memorial Unveiling by Sir George Kemball

The fine old church at Ewelme, rich in memories of the past, and filled with historic associations of heroic deeds, was the scene on Sunday afternoon last of another chapter in its famous history. Like every other village in the land, Ewelme, peaceful, isolated, sheltered, sent forth its sons to fight and before a large number of parishioners and friends who filled the ancient church Major General Sir George Kemball KCMG. CB. DSO., a resident of the village, unveiled the tablets commemoration the heroic sacrifice of the men who went forth in defence of the Homeland and will return no more.

The memorial designed by Professor Selwyn Image, and executed by Messrs Burke and Co., consists of three tablets of Hopton Wood stone. On the uppermost, which is surmounted by a gilded cross, is the following inscription:

“In abiding memory of the men of this parish who gave their lives for their country on land and sea during the Great War, 1914 1918”



On the two lower tablets are the names of the men who died.

Girl Guides, Brownies, Boy Scouts and Wolf Cubs, were amongst the large congregation, their bright uniforms adding effect to the gathering, which was composed, in the main, of old folk and young people, with a sprinkling of ex-service men of the village. Thus had the war exacted its toll of a small village! The service was conducted by the Rector (the Rev J.A. Dodd MA) and commenced with the singing of 'Oh God our help in ages past'. After the hymn came the prayers and the lesson from Hebrews 11 v 33 and 12 v 1-2.

Sir George Kemball, standing by the beflagged tablets, then said '*As the senior member of his majesty forces, is now resident in this parish, I have the honour to unveil this memorial*'. The flags fell on one side. and in a deep silence the names were read. Harry Jessup died of wounds; John Edward Orwood killed in action; William Long killed in action; Arthur Thomas Shepherd lost in HMS 'defence' at the Battle of Jutland; Herbert Winfield killed in action; Adonijah Smith killed in action; Walter Ernest Monday killed in action; Albert Cook killed in action; Thomas Orr killed in action; Charles Henry champion accidentally killed; James Orr killed in action; Alfred Thomas Cripps killed in action; Charles Henry Aves missing presumed killed; Henry Augustus Kent died of wounds; Albert George H Monday killed in action; Arthur Benning lost at sea; Francis George Keen killed in action; Thomas William Busby killed in action; John Godden died of disease; William Lansley died of disease.

After the singing of 'Father of all before they footstool bending' and speaking from the lectern sir George said that it was seven years ago since England was suddenly faced with a great crisis, a crisis which was probably the most serious in all her history. In that emergency England had to call on her sons to aid the army and navy. In answer to that call the flower of the manhood of the Empire flocked to aid their King & Country. Armies sprung up by thousands, men joining who had never before known war. Our great navy was reinforced by merchant seamen and by thousands of fishermen who plied their trade in times of peace along the coast. It would be remembered how the men of the army and navy faced death and danger, and how like a dark cloud, death and destruction hung up about us until the final victory came with the help of the allies. But before that victory came more and more men were required to feed the fighting forces in the great struggle. Men who were unfit for active service joined up for other services, thousands of women came forward to take the places of the men who were fighting in the field. Our losses were appalling. Could they ever forget the long casualty lists! But Englishmen bore their part, and more than their part, in proportion to their strength along with men from other parts of our great Empire. It would be remembered that nearly a generation was wiped out during the war. Many of those who survived came back crippled in mind, body and estate Many gave up all they had in answer to their country's call and had not found places waiting for them on return. The gratitude of the country was due to all those who, by devoting themselves to their country and it's time of peril, risked their all. But for them not only England, but civilisation, indeed the whole of humanity, would now be under a brutal domination which would have taken generations yet to come to overthrow.

Today, they were there specially to honour the names of those Ewelme men who gave their lives in that great struggle. It must be sad for many in that church who had lost dear ones - sad for them to think of their departed - but they had this consolation, that these men of Ewelme did their duty, and that their names would be held in honour long after those present in that church had passed away. What, indeed, was more fitting than that the names of these, your own men should be inscribed on the walls of that old church, rich in memories of great victories in days past, and wherein lay the bones of those who fell in great battles. With the men of old their names would live forever more.

It should not be imagined that because an Englishman went to his death cheerfully and bravely that he did not have deep feelings of patriotism. The Germans were taught to go into battle chanting their own patriotic songs. The French sang of military glory and love of their country's flag. The English were not taught these things but nevertheless, speaking for a great many he had known, they went cheerfully and courageously to their deaths because they knew it was their duty, and there was no doubt that Englishmen, as a race, possessed a deep sense of duty, facing danger and destruction with smiling faces, and that these qualities showed they were inspired by

higher things. Moreover, he knew from personal experience in different regiments, that a large number were inspired by their trust in God. The Englishman not only possessed an indomitable spirit, but he could endure to the end, endure difficulties and hardships; he was kind to the weak and to his enemies. It was marvellous how the wounded bore their sufferings.

In concluding, Sir George referred to a few words used by a statesman in unveiling a memorial in which he said: *Honour to those who are dead, for from the grave they will not return. We shall not see their faces again in the service of their Sovereign and Country. They have undergone the darkness of death and now sleep in a foreign land across the sea. Their places and their comrades will know them no more, for they will never return as we knew them. But they will return to us with an inspiration and as an example of courage and patriotism stop Let us therefore honour their memory.*

With subdued feelings the congregation sang the lovely hymn 'For all the Saints who from their labours rest,' followed by the Blessing and the National Anthem, after which the last post was sounded by J H Boulter, an ex-serviceman of the village. Many wreaths were laid at the foot of the memorial by sorrowing relatives and friends.