

The Men of Thundridge, Wadesmill, High Cross and Colliers End who gave their lives in the First World War and the Second World War.

This pamphlet is a record of those people named on the War Memorial, standing in the driveway to St Mary's Church, Thundridge.

Young and old men, some probably never having left the villages before, fighting in foreign lands for King and Country.

WE SHALL REMEMBER THEM.



The War Memorial, at St Mary's Church, Thundridge – before being restored in 2006.



ALL YOU WHO PASS BY, NEVER FORCET THAT THESE MEN CAVE THEIR LIVES THAT YOU MICHT ENJOY YOUR HERITAGE.

I would like to offer thanks to the following -

Thundridge and High Cross Society (research)
Paul Andrews of Arcadian Stone (for carrying
out the restoration with expertise and dignity)

The Parish Council (for allowing us to clean and restore the memorial)

My wife Lorraine (research and putting up with me during this project)

And finally

John Charles Charge, my father, to whose memory and legacy this project was dedicated to and fully funded by.

War Memorials

Scattered across England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales there are more than 36,000 memorials dedicated to the First World War, and over 53,000 memorials dedicated to both world wars as well as the Boer conflict in south Africa, yet there is no official figure. In 1988 the national inventory of war memorials (niwm) began trying to log all memorials along with the names mentioned, but still memorials are being discovered.

Due to the Boer War, mass conscription of a sort was introduced, meaning that officially for the first time, "the man off the street" was now fighting alongside the regular soldier. For the folks back home this meant that the loss of a loved one seemed a bit harder to accept compared to the loss of a regular soldier, to whom fighting was his chosen occupation, hence the concept of a memorial to those who never returned. Ironically the memorial plaque on the side of Hertford Library is dedicated only to those men who RETURNED from South Africa, perhaps a legacy of the attitude of the times, which was reflected later, after the First World War, when the councillors of 5 towns and villages in England voted against a memorial of any kind, the nearest to us being St.Albans, (local factories and schools put up memorials to their own losses).

It is easy to imagine that some government body must have taken on the job of ensuring that the dead of each community were properly remembered on a suitable memorial. This was not the case. In fact each community had to go through the entire process alone – compiling the list of the dead, raising monies (no grants were available then), purchasing a suitable site, obtaining permission from the local councils, selecting stone masons, overseeing the construction and preparing for the unveiling. The options for memorials at home seemed endless, a work of art in the form of a statue, plaques or, if enough money was raised, a memorial hall or building for the community.

As early as 1915, one year after the start of the Great War "street shrines" started to spring up in villages, towns and cities as the carnage started to unravel. These were based on a simple cross and a photograph of the King, yet to the growing list of casualties placed on the cross, people would place photos and even letters from men on active service who were still very much alive. So popular became these shrines, as it gave everybody a place to either display their grief or pray for the safe return of a loved one, they started being produced commercially, retailing for 6s and 6d, selling in high street shops.

As losses were running from hundreds to even thousands on a daily basis, the government voted to bury our dead near to where they fell rather than the near impossible task of returning bodies. Back home in Britain, the absence of mortal remains to tend and to visit must have felt unbearable. Even when a family had been notified that a burial had taken place, a grave site in France just might as well have

been in Australia to the average family at the start of the 20th century, it was this void that memorials filled.

As you can read from the newspaper report, we here at Thundridge suffered 25% losses with 20 men perishing from the 80 that had enlisted. This did not include the villages of Wadesmill, Colliers End and High Cross (who had a small shrine on the end of a row of houses in North Drive but sadly was destroyed on the demolition of these houses). The names of their losses were added in 1997 along with the men who died in the Second World War, to which we are grateful to the members of a committee who got together to make sure that their names shall always be remembered and had them carved alongside those original 20 from Thundridge.

Community spirit still survives, even though, perhaps through rose tinted glasses, we feel it was stronger in the past, and the wars brought people together, so much so that "boys at the front" funds were being set up across the country during both wars. An example of a letter sent during 1944 shows that our villages were no exception.

THUNDRIDGE AND WADESMILL BOYS AT THE FRONT FUND

Hon. Sec. : C. Pritlove, "Etheldene," Thundridge, Ware, Herts.

December, 1944

Dear Friend,

On behalf of the committee I have pleasure in sending you 20/- with every good wish for Christmas and the New Year.

The money has been raised by the villagers by Dances, Raffles and collections at the village Inns, and we hope to continue sending gifts at intervals.

Yours sincerely,

C. PRITLOVE,

Secretary.

At sermon time, while squire is in his pew,
He gives my gilded name a thoughtful stare;
For, though low down on the list I'm there;
"In proud and glorious memory"...that's my due.
Two bleeding years I fought in France, for squire
I suffered anguish that he's never guessed
Once I came home on leave: and then went west...
What greater glory could a man desire?

To that author and to all the men, who endured the horrors of war, I speak on behalf of the "future generations" by offering our eternal gratitude and thanks.

THUNDRIDGE WAR MEMORIAL.

UNVEILED BY BRIG.-GEN. H. PAGE CROFT, M.P., C.M.G.

THE REWARD OF THOSE WHO DIED.

There was a most solemn and impressive ceremony at St. Mary's Thundridge. on Sunday afternoon, when the war memorial cross, the magnificent tribute of a small parish to its dead heroes, was unveiled by Brig.-General H. Page Croft, M.P., C.M.G., whose earliest associations are with Fanhams Hall in the close vicinity of the village. The monument, which is an octagonal cross about 13½ feet high, composed of Portland stone, has been beautifully executed (from his own design. by Mr. C. Smith, of Ware, and stands conspicuously by the side of the main road, and at the top of the hill descending into Wadesmill village. It bears the inscription: "All you who pass by, never forgot that these men gave their lives that you might enjoy your heritage." The following is also inscribed: "To the glory or God and in grateful memory of the men of this parish who fell in the Great War, 1914-19; Lieut. N. W. R. King, 16th Lancers; Second-Lieut. O. Cook, 2nd Beds; Second-Lieut. S. Findlay, 19th Manchesters; Second-Lieut. A. Pratt, 2nd Beds; Corpt. W. Canfield, 1st Herts; Corpl. P. Winter, 1st Beds; Loe.-Corpl. W. Mountney, 5th Lancers; Pte. A. J. Aldridge, 1st Herts; Pte. J. A. Brett, 6th Beds; Pte. A. Outmore, K.O.R.L.; Pte. W. Day, 4th Beds; Pte. P. Everett; 1st Herts; Pte. J. Hardingham 4th Beds; Pte. T.

Harrison, 7th Beds; Trooper H. Hols, Herts Yeomanry; Pte. W. Martin, 5th Northants; Pte. W. E. Poole, 4th Beds; Pte. W. H. Taylor, 1st Herts; Seaman G. H. Wallace, H.M.S. Paxton." The men of the parish have regarded it as a labour of love to lay and mow the grass enclosure around the memorial.

The weather was beautifully bright for this great event in the annale of the village, and when the proceedings commenced there must have been 400 people present. Boy Scouts under Scoutmaster W. Masters, and Girl Guides under Capt. Miss Finch, formed a cordon around the monument and the floral offerings which had been placed around its base by parishioners who had lost their dear ones in the War.

Commencing from the neighbourhood of the mill at the bottom of the village, a procession of about fifty ex-service men, led by Sergt.-Major R. H. Gasstine (late of the Royal Dragoons) and the silver band of the Ware branch of the N.I.D.D.S.S. (under Bandmaster J. Beddell and Mr. R. C. Trundle), marched up the hill to the Memorial, where they came to the halt and formed two-deep in a very soldierly manner. Brig.-Gen. Page Croft passed around their ranks and had something to say to each of the men. Amongst the crowd surrounding the cross there was a good deal of mourning to be seen,

betokening the heavy loss sustained by so small a parish. In many faces, too, there were the

SIGNS OF WEEPING

almost inseparable from such a solemn occasion.

The ceremony commenced with the singing of the hymn "O God our help in ages past," which was followed by a suitable reading from the 3rd Chapter of the Book of Wisdom, and a prayer by the Rector of Thundridge (Rev. B. H. Tyrwhitt Drake).

The memorial was then unveiled by Brig.-General Page Croft, and the "Last Post" was blown by Sergt.-Drummer H. T. Nash (Hertfordshire Regt.) and Sergt. Carpenter (Grammar School O.T.O, Hertford). The Union Jack used in the unveiling had covered many dead soldiers at the Front.

In the course of an appropriate address, Brig.-General Page Croft said considered it a very great honour to accept the invitation to unveil the memorial which the people of Thundridge had set up in memory of the heroes who had given their lives for all of us, and whom they desired for all time to honour. He felt he was there with the very greatest humility. One realized that in whatever walk of life one was called to, none of us could ever hope to do so fine a thing, to accomplish so great a work, as the lads of their village, whom they were there that afternoon to honour. When they looked back over the years of the War, their feeling ought to be one of extraordinary gratitude to the men of the Forces of the Crown, the Royal Navy, which they knew alone saved the country from destruction and slavery, and the Army which expanded from its very small beginnings to the whole man-power of the nation, and which, great as its

traditions in the past, had won the admiration of the whole of the civilized world, the envy and respect of those who were recently our enemies. It would be impossible in the very few minutes he had to speak to endeavour to pay any sort of tribute to the various armies and to the great regiments. He could only say that the cavalry were always ready when called upon to do the work of infantry soldiers. The artillery showed qualities of patience and endurance such as no one who had not been through modern war could possibly understand. Of the infantry, who had perhaps the major task of the War, it could only be said that they showed more and more as the War went on what

WONDERFUL QUALITIES

lay dormant in our people. No one could have conceived what the infantry soldier had to go through. It would be written of the British soldier that he was always a good comrade, his conduct in a foreign country was wonderful, because it was so immaculate, and that his valour, courage, and staying power had rarely, if ever, been equalled; it had certainly never been beaten in the history of the world. On all arms, the Navy, Army, and Air Force, we could pay the tribute that England, the British Isles and the Empire, expected them to do their duty, and they did it splendidly and magnificently. He would like to say a special word about the Bedfordshire Regt, to which thousands of men went from Hertfordshire. The regiment had a reputation second to none amongst all the fine regiments of the Army, and it covered itself with great glory. He would also say one word about the Hertfordshire Regt. not, however, because he wanted to claim for one moment that they in any way deserved

more recognition than any other battalion in the War. Eighteen to twenty years ago he used to come down to Thundridge when they were trying to raise men for that regiment. He made good friends amongst lads who afterwards went out with the regiment and proved their valour. He wanted to say how proud he was of that association with these men of the Hertfordshire Regt. who came from that village, and how proud he also was that he had once more been asked to command that Regiment. One of the principal reasons why he had accepted was because he wanted the history of that regiment, which had been made so great by the men of Thundridge and other men in the county, to last and be remembered amongst all of us, and so that its great deeds might not be forgotten. He also wished to say a word to those who had suffered, those who had lost in that parish. He thought probably that most soldiers would agree with him that when abroad they became more convinced than those at home of the

GREAT REWARD

of those who gave their lives for their country. What the men were doing out there, they were doing for those they loved at home. What man or women could doubt that a soldier, who after giving his service to his country, laid down his life for his friends - who could doubt that his sins were forgiven him, and that in his sacrifice he had earned great joy and triumph. He had merely discarded the earthy garb and assumed the raiment of immortality. We should not so much mourn to-day. Mourn we must, as individuals for our personal loss, but there ought to be more of rejoicing to-day, because those heroes had won so much fame and such a happy place. We should do all we could to honour them and their memory by trying to follow their example of sacrifice for the love of our friends. "I am confident," concluded Brig.-General Page Croft, "that you in this village, which sent eighty men, twenty of whom made the supreme sacrifice, when you pass this cross you will want to salute your heroes, and try to emulate them in your duty as citizens of this great country which has saved the world."

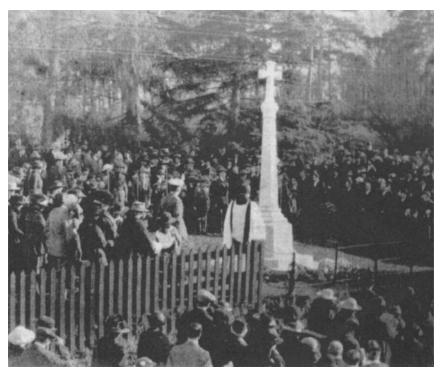
The unveiling ceremony was concluded with the sounding the "Reveille" by the buglers.

A short service was afterwards held in the church, which was literally crowded to the doors. The hymns, "Fight the good fight" and "Soldiers of Christ arise," and the 46th Psalm were sung, and Brig.-General Page Croft read the lesson from Romans XII.

The Rector preached an appropriate sermon from text "What mean ye by these stones? These stones shall be a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever." He said it was about a year ago since a meeting was held to talk about a war memorial for the parish. To-day the work was brought, should he say, to the beginning of its end, because

THE END WOULD NEVER BE

as long as that cross should stand to remind the people of Thundridge of those brave men who gave their lives for their country. The response to the appeal for funds that was made had been nothing short of marvellous. Practically every house in the parish contributed willingly and largely, and the result was that they had been able to erect the cross to mark their appreciation of the sacrifice that had been made for them. He would ask his congregation to notice the shape of the



Thundridge War Memorial Unveiling

memorial they had erected. There, standing on the top, was the cross of Jesus Christ. As they had heard outside, it was to commemorate the sacrifice of men's lives, the sacrifice that could never be without avail, and that brought its own reward to those who made it. Those who had died were not to be pitied because their sacrifice had lifted them up. If it brought reward to them, what does it bring to us? What mean we by these stones? We mean that alone and unaided. man, even the manhood of England, could never have won the War. He was fully convinced that it was God who carried us through enormous difficulties and dangers to the successful completion of the Great War. There were times when our military strength seemed to fail, and then it was that God wrought in a wondrous way to save the cause of Justice and Right. Whilst we gave the full tribute and merit to the manhood of England that stood firm, that did its duty and more than its duty, we must never forget what we owed to Almighty God for carrying us through those times that were impossible for us to cope with in our own strength.

At the close of the service the hymn "Lead, kindly Light" was sung and before the congregation dispersed the band played the "Dead March" in Saul.

This article was reproduced with kind permission 'Herts and Essex Newspapers'

A story of one battle...

"I need hardly say what it was like... if hell is like a battlefield, then god help the sinner"

By July 1917 the 1st Battalion of the 1st Hertfordshire Regiment, a Territorial unit, had earned a nickname, 'The Herts Guards'...' have been trusted to hold positions that only the Guards would have taken' wrote a Guardsman.

Sent to France soon after the outbreak of the first World War, the Battalion was deployed to play a crucial role in the planned outbreak from the Ypres Salient to the Belgian coast on 31 July 1917. Their part was to be an attack from the front-line trenches across some 3000 yards of slowly rising ground to and beyond the remains of the village of St Julien.

But it rained, and continued to rain, as it would for the rest of the summer. The fragile, centuries-old field drainage systems with their streams and ditches, smashed by three years of barrage and counter-barrage, could not cope. What 1914 had been, and is now, green countryside much like that of their own Hertfordshire, became for the Territorials a morass of mud and water, stinking of remnant gas, decomposing corpses and more, in which men and animals could, and did, drown.

As the Herts Guards went forward through the mud, wire, and enemy rifle, machine-gun and artillery fire, the four early tanks allocated to support them became bogged down, two of them permanently. The fast-firing British field guns, intended to follow behind their advance, could not be dug or dragged out of their water-logged positions and soon the Herts were beyond their range. The German guns, still in fixed positions, put down a barrage behind the forward British troops, which prevented them from retiring and reinforcements from coming forward. The Hertfordshires reached the devastated ruins of St Julien, but without support could go little farther.

It was reported to the Hertfordshire Mercury, 'one of the greatest and least costly victories of the whole war'.

It was neither, and for the Hertfordshires it was a bloody disaster. By the afternoon of 31 July, records the Official History, 'the leading Companies [of the Herts, Nos 1 and 2] had practically ceased to exist'. 'I have heard no more splendid or moving tale of gallant men going to death and glory since the war began' wrote a war correspondent, but by the morning of 1 August, of some 600 officers and men of the Battalion, only 130 were fit for duty, commanded by the Padre and the Regimental Sergeant-Major. 'As a fighting unit', the Official History continues, 'the 1st Herts ceased to exist.'

In Hertford, said the Mercury, 'the news came through on Sunday morning... by evening the whole town seemed to be in mourning... many officers and men killed and a large number wounded'.

The battle of 31 July 1917 is known in the Hertfordshire Regiment as the Battle of Pilckem Ridge, or the battle of St Julien. To later generations, that last day in July is remembered as the first day of Passchendaele, a battle of attrition in a slough of mud and slime and death and destruction that was to go on for four months, a name that stands for all the horrors of trench warfare in Flanders in the First World War

Remembering those who gave their lives...

First World War

Lieutenant Thomas Darwin Overton. 6th Battalion Lincolnshire Regiment.

Died: 30/07/1915 aged 21.

Cemetery: Redoubt Cemetery, Helles, Turkey.

Corporal William James Jones. (Shoeing Smith) 11th Veterinary Hospital, Army Veterinary Corps.

Died: 19/02/1916.

Cemetery: Alexandria (Chatby) Military and War Memorial Cemetery, Egypt.

1st Corporal Petty Officer Thomas Hunt RN. HMS Paxton (see Able Seaman Wallace)

Died: 26/05/1918 aboard HMS Swift.

Cemetery: Not known.

Lance Corporal William Hipgrave. 5th Battalion Royal Berkshire Regiment.

Died: 20/11/1917.

Named on: Cambrai Memorial, Louverval, Northern France.

Private David John Cutmore. 14th Battalion Welsh Regiment.

Died: 08/10/1918.

Cemetery: Bois-des-Angles British Cemetery, Crevecoeur-sur-L'escaut, Northern France.

Private Alfred Hill. 4th Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment.

Died: 23/04/1917.

Named on: Arras Memorial, Faubourg-d'Amiens Cemetery, Western Arras, France.

Private Ernest Hutchinson. 1st /5th Battalion Sherwood Foresters.

(Nottinghamshire and Derby Regiment).

Died: 22/04/1916.

Cemetery: Aubigny Communal Cemetery Extension, France.

Private David Ives. 10th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers.

Died: 01/09/1918 aged 37.

Cemetery: Bancourt British Cemetery, France.

Private Frank Marshall. 11th Battalion The Queen's. (Royal West Surrey Regiment).

Died: 30/09/1918 aged 19.

Named on: Tyne Cot Memorial, Belgium.

Private Frederick James Martin. 9th Battalion King's Own. (Yorkshire Light Infantry).

Died: 23/10/1918. Cemetery: France.

Private Charles Petts. 1st Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment.

Died: 22/10/1914 aged 29.

Named on: Le Touret Memorial, Le Touret Military Cemetery, Richebourg-l'Avoue, France.

Private Charles Henry Plumb. 2nd/6th Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment.

Died: 08/12/1917 aged 20.

Cemetery: Etaples Military Cemetery, France.

Private Frederick Leonard Rogers. 2nd Battalion Cheshire Regiment.

Died: 07/05/1915 aged 25.

Named on: Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial, Belgium.

Private William J Searle. 75th Battalion Canadian Infantry (Central Ontario Regiment).

Died: 08/06/1917.

Cemetery: Canadian Cemetery no.2, Neuville-St.Vaast, France.

Private John James Sibley. 2nd Battalion Alexandra, Princess of Wale's Own

(Yorkshire Regiment). Died 04/07/1916.

Cemetery: Daours Communal Cemetery Extension, Somme, France.

Private Alfred Smith. 1st Battalion Hertfordshire Regiment. Secondary Unit/Regiment:

254th Tunneling Coy. Royal Engineers.

Died: 19/06/1916.

Cemetery: Gorre British and Indian Cemetery, France.

Gunner Alfred Charles Smith MM. Z/34th Trench Mortar Bty.

Died 23/10/1916 aged 20.

Cemetery: Ration Farm Military Cemetery, La Chapelle D'Armentieres, France.

Awarded MM in 1916.

Private Thomas Smith. 1st Battalion Devonshire Regiment.

Died: 07/05/1915 aged 53.

Cemetery: Boulogne Eastern Cemetery, France.

Private Albert Edward Taylor. 1st Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment.

Died: 20/07/1918. Cemetery: France.

Private George Victor Taylor. 1st Hertfordshire Regiment.

Died 03/01/1918.

Cemetery: Not available.

Private William Charles White. 2nd Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment.

Died: 23/08/1918.

Cemetery: Albert Communal Cemetery Extension, France.

Private Alfred Wren. 8th Battalion Lincolnshire Regiment.

Died 09/04/1918 aged 39.

Cemetery: Wimereux Communal Cemetery, France.

Private George Wren. 3rd Battalion London Regiment (Royal Fusiliers).

Died: Between 24/08/1918 and 28/08/1918.

Cemetery: Bronfay Farm Military Cemetery, Bray-Sur-Somme, France.

Private Walter Wright. 6th Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment.

Died: 12/04/1917 aged 38.

Named on: Arras Memorial, Faubourg-d'Amiens Cemetery, Western Arras, France.

Lieutenant Nathaniel Walter Ryder King. 16th (The Queen's) Lancers.

Died 21/02/1915 aged 27.

Cemetery Ypres Town Cemetery, Belgium.

Second Lieutenant C Cook. 2nd Bedfordshire Regiment.

No details available.

Second Lieutenant Scott Findlay. 19th Battalion Manchester Regiment.

Died: 08/05/1918.

Named on: Tyne Cot Memorial, Belgium, and family grave in St. Mary's Churchyard,

Thundridge.

Second Lieutenant Arthur Pratt. 2nd Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment. Secondary unit /

Regiment: 6th Battalion Northamptonshire Regiment.

Died: 02/07/1918 aged 25.

Cemetery: Bouzincourt Ridge Cemetery, Albert, France.

Corporal William Canfield. Bedfordshire Regiment.

Died: 25/11/1918 aged 24.

Cemetery: St. Mary's Churchyard, Thundridge.

Corporal Percy Winter. 1st Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment.

Died: 15/11/1917. Cemetery: France.

Lance Corporal W Mountney. 5th Lancers.

No details available.

Private Arthur J Aldridge. 6th Battalion Princess Charlotte of Wale's (Royal Berkshire Regiment).

Died 17/02/1917. Cemetery: France

Private Jonus A Brett. 6th Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment.

Died: 12/04/1917.

Named on: Arras Memorial, Faubourg-d'Amiens Cemetery, Western Arras, France.

Private Arthur Cutmore. King's Own (Royal Lancaster Regiment).

Died: 25/06/1918 aged 35.

Cemetery: Karasouli Military Cemetery, Greece.

Private W Day. 4th Bedfordshire Regiment.

No details available.

Private P Everett. 1st Hertfordshire Regiment.

No details available.

Private J Hardingham. 4th Bedfordshire Regiment.

No details available.

Private T Harrison. 7th Bedfordshire Regiment.

No details available.

Trooper H Hills. Herts Yeomanry.

No details available.

Private W Martin. 5th North.

No details available.

Private William E Poole. 4th Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment.

Died 30/10/1917.

Named on: Tyne Cot Memorial, Belgium.

Private William H Taylor. 1st Hertfordshire Regiment.

Died: 23/07/1916.

Named on: Loos Memorial, France.

Able Seaman George Henry Wallace RN. HMS Paxton.

Died 20/05/1917 aged 21.

Cemetery: Portsmouth Naval Memorial.

HMS Paxton was a British Special Service or Q ship, used as a decoy to trap German U-boats targeting merchant shipping. It was sunk in one of these attacks on 20/05/1917.

Sergeant Joseph Willliam Gladding. DCM. 7th Battalion Hertfordshire Regiment.

Died: 31/07/1917 aged 34.

Named on: Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial, Belgium. Awarded DCM. 1915. (Killed in battle of St Julien).

Second World War

Lieutenant Marcus Reginald Cholmeley Overton. 48 A.A. Regiment Royal Artillery.

Died: 07/06/1940 aged 39.

Cemetery: St. John the Evangelist, High Cross.

The Rev. Harry Battye. Chaplain 4th Class Royal Army Chaplains' Department.

Died: 20/07/1945 aged 51. Cemetery: St Mary, Thundridge.

Leading Aircraftman T Goodsell, RAF.

No details available

Leading Aircraftman Harold Wright. RAF Volunteer Reserve.

Died: 21/09/1944 aged 22.

Cemetery: Kirkee War Cemetery, India.

Lieutenant Frederick James Wood. RN. H.M.A.S. Cerberus II.

Died: 16/01/1941 aged 48.

Cemetery: Portsmouth Naval Memorial.

Private Arthur Hyde. Royal Army Service Corps.

Died: 11/07/1941 aged 29.

Cemetery: Suda Bay War Cemetery, Crete, Greece.

IN MEMORY OF



John Charles Charge 1926 – 2005