

OVERTON HONOURS ITS DEAD

MEMORIAL TO MEN KILLED IN THE GREAT WAR

With impressive ceremony the memorial to the men of Fyfield, Lockeridge and Overton who lost their lives in the Great War was unveiled on Sunday afternoon last, by Col. R.M.T. Gillson, D.S.O., Wilts Regt. The memorial is a cross of Chilmark stone, placed on a square base of the same material, and is situated in the Churchyard, just opposite the south door of the church. On the cross is carved an unsheathed sword, hanging point downwards. On the northern face of the base is the inscription "In loving and grateful memory of the men of Fyfield, Lockeridge and Overton, who gave their lives for their country in the Great War, 1914 – 1918.

*"In sacred sleep they rest,
Say not of brave men that they die."*

Also on the base are carved the names of the twenty-four men of the parish who gave their lives. They are as follows: - Sergt. Henry James Bowsher, 2nd Wilts; Pte. Algernon Alfred Nicholas Bull, 2nd Wilts; Pte. Gerald George Bull, 7th Wilts; Pte. John Dobson, 2nd Wilts; Pte. Frederick Elliot, 2nd Wilts; Major Edmond Hamilton Giffard, R.F.A.; Capt. Robert Giffard, R.F.A.; Lieut. Sydney Giffard, R.F.A.; Sergt. Thomas Hilliard, R.Berks; L.-Cpl. Frederick Hilliard, 2nd Wilts; Pte. William Charles Hilliard, R.Berks; Pte. Francis John North, Wilts; Pte. Albert Payne, 1st Wilts; Pte. Albert Edward Payne, 1st Wilts; L.-Cpl. Frederick Charles Payne, 13th East Surreys; L.-Sergt. Robert William Penney, 5th Wilts; L.-Cpl. George Raisey, Dorsets; L.-Cpl. Henry Richard Smith, 2nd Wilts; Herbert Leslie Waite, Royal Navy Reserve; Pte. James Kimmer, Suffolk Regt; Pte. Enos George Pennell, 7th Wilts; Pte. Walter Edward Middleton, Labour Corps; Pte. Edward Albert Watts, R. Berks.

About 140 men went from the parish to serve their King and country, and it is a proud record that of these twenty-four should have made the supreme sacrifice. Another memorial, a lych-gate, erected at the church at Fyfield was unveiled in March last. The reason for the delay in the erection of the cross at Overton has been the difficulty of obtaining labour. The cross was designed by Mr. C.E. Ponting, F.S.A., and executed at the Chilmark Quarries by Mr. Getting.

Before the appointed time the Parish Church at Overton was crowded with relatives and friends of the fallen men, and the parishioners. The local company of Girl Guides under their leaders marched into the church and then, under the command of Miss Giffard, came the Boy Scouts who formed a guard of honour up the centre aisle. Before the service commenced the organist (Mr. Percy Lawes) played Chopin's Funeral March.

The service began with a verse of the National Anthem, after which the Vicar (the Rev.T.G. Morres) read the sentences from the Burial Office. Psalm cxxx was chanted and then followed the lesson, taken from St.Paul's first epistle to the Thessalonians. Hymn 499 "On the resurrection morning" was sung and then the Vicar read the names of the twenty-four men of the parish who fell in the war, prefacing with it the words, "Let us remember the brave and true who have departed into Paradise, especially the men from Overton, Lockeridge and Fyfield who fell in the war." Then followed a period of silent prayer, after which hymn 428, "The saints of God" was sung.

Col Gillson then gave an address. That day, he said, was the day on which they were going to unveil the cross in memory of the men of the three villages of Overton, Lockeridge and Fyfield, who laid down their lives for all that people held most dear, for King and country, liberty, and for wives and families. "I believe," said the speaker, "that these memorials which are being erected everywhere in our villages and towns will be invaluable in the years to come, to remind us, not only of those who died, but that men and women proved themselves willing to sacrifice all at the call of duty when their country was passing through the greatest crisis she had ever gone through." The example of those people would help others to do the same. Col. Gillson said that some of the names that had been read over were familiar to him, they having served in the county regiment which he commanded. All those whose names were recorded there would for ever be remembered, mourned and missed in the neighbourhood. But those who mourned could find comfort in the certainty that those whose sacrifice was a willing sacrifice were resting in peace.

A procession was then formed consisting of the Boy Scouts, Girl Guides and the choir, and led by the two church wardens (Messrs. J.H.Poole and L. Swanton) marched to the cross, singing, "O God, our help in ages past." On arriving at the cross Col Gillson pulled aside the Union Jack which covered it and said "I unveil this cross in memory of those of the three parishes who gave their lives in the Great War." The Vicar then read the dedication prayers and Hymn 108 "When I survey the wondrous cross." was sung unaccompanied. At the conclusion the Vicar pronounced the Blessing and then the echoing notes of the "Last Post", sounded by Bugler Peck, rang out.

After the service many beautiful wreaths were laid at the base of the cross by relatives and friends of the fallen men.

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