

The Link

Borough Council of
Wellingborough



www.wellingborough.gov.uk

Summer 2014

Victoria Cross heroes of Wellingborough

Major Edward Corringham
'Mick' Mannock
VC DSO MC***

BRITAIN'S most successful fighter pilot during the First World War lived in Wellingborough. His job as a telephone engineer led him to lodge at 183 Mill Road prior to the war.

He joined the Royal Engineers in March 1916, where he was awarded a commission and became a second lieutenant.

In August 1916 he transferred to the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) and was sent to the Western Front in April 1917.

On 22 July 1917, Mannock was promoted to captain and he became a flight commander. He gave his men 15 rules about flying in combat, which became the bedrock not only for the RFC but also for the fighter pilots of the RAF of the future.

Mannock was a highly skilled pilot. On 16 August 1917, he shot down four German aeroplanes in one day.

The next day he shot down two other German aeroplanes.

On 20 July 1918, Mannock shot down his 58th 'kill', making him Britain's highest-scoring ace of the First World War.

On 26 July 1918, about 5am, Mannock, flying alongside Lieutenant Donald Inglis, made his final kill above Lestremme.

He made a couple of low passes over the wreckage, into a storm of small-gunfire from the German trenches.

As they zigzagged away from the scene, Inglis is reported to have seen a small bluish flame on his major's engine cowling. Then the left wing of Mannock's aircraft fell away and he plunged into a death spin.

To this day, exactly what happened to Mannock remains a mystery.

He is said to have been buried in an unmarked grave by a German soldier, who returned Mannock's identity discs, notebooks and personal effects to his family through the Red Cross. These were later given to Mannock's father along with



Major Mannock



Lt-Col The Rev Vann



his medals. They are now on display at the Imperial War Museum in London.

Edward Mannock was awarded the Military Cross (MC) twice, was one of the rare three-times winners of a Distinguished Service Order (DSO) and was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross.

**Denotes the number of bars awarded to the ribbon of the medal.*

Lieutenant Colonel
The Reverend Bernard
William Vann
VC MC and Bar

BORN in Rushden in 1887, Vann was a popular local boy who excelled at sport. He became a chaplain and assistant master at Wellingborough School in 1913.

At the outbreak of the First World War, he volunteered as an army chaplain and finally signed up to the infantry, becoming a lieutenant of the 1/18th Battalion Sherwood

Foresters in April 1915. He was awarded the Military Cross for his efforts in Kimmel when a small trench he occupied was blown up and, although wounded and half buried, he organised the defence and rescued buried men under heavy fire, refusing to leave his post until directly ordered to do so.

In 1916, Vann was awarded a bar to his Military Cross for "conspicuous gallantry in action". He led a daring raid against the enemy's trenches, himself taking five prisoners and displaying great courage and determination.

At the age of 31, and an acting lieutenant colonel, he led his battalion during an attack at Bellenglise and Lehaucourt on 29 September 1918.

Through thick fog and under heavy fire from field and machine guns, he skilfully led his soldiers across the Canal de Saint-Quentin.

He was posthumously awarded a Victoria Cross for his bravery in this battle.

Bernard Vann was killed near Ramicourt on 3 October 1918 when leading his battalion in attack. He is buried in Bellicourt British Cemetery.

Heritage trail

THERE are a number of key buildings that have a link with the town's effort during the war, including:

War memorials

Market Square, Broad Green (right), All Hallows Church Yard and the Market Square. At the end of the war, a temporary memorial was erected at the bottom of the Market Square (far right). It was made of wood, in imitation of white stonework.



Westlands and the Liberal Club, both in Oxford Street

The buildings were used by the army during the war years. Westlands was a brigade headquarters, while the Liberal Club (now Mobile Radio), along with large houses in Newcomen Road and Ranelagh Road, were used for storage purposes and housing for different units.

Wellingborough makes a proud contribution

MORE than 3,000 men from Wellingborough and an unknown number of women served in the First World War. The memorial on Broad Green (above) gives 677 names but the total number of dead connected to the town is certainly higher.

The average age of those who died was 26, with Frederick Rixon the youngest to fall, dying days before his 17th birthday.

The oldest person on the memorial is Nursing Sister Elizabeth Adams who was 53. The last casualty during hostilities in France and Flanders was Frank Thompson who died on the morning of Armistice Day – just 15 minutes before the First World War ended.

Taken from Wellingborough's contribution to the First World War by Stephen Swailes

Voluntary detachment hospital

AN auxiliary hospital was established in part of the gasworks on Senwick Road/Irthlingborough Road (right). It was run by volunteers and partly funded by local donations of money, furniture and food.

The hospital received its first patients in January 1915 and it treated 1,274 recovering patients before closing in March 1919.

Contributors

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- Wellingborough Museum
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- Northamptonshire Libraries and Information Service
- Stephen Swailes

Photos contributed by Wellingborough Museum

A number of local history books and publications were incredibly useful in putting to-

gether this supplement. Find out more by contacting Northamptonshire Libraries and Information Service: www.northamptonshire.gov.uk

Your souvenir issue has been funded by the Heritage Lottery Funded Townscape Heritage Initiative.



Young Irchester sailor goes down with HMS Hawke

MUCH regret is felt throughout the neighbourhood at the loss of the life of a noble young Irchester sailor who went down with the *Hawke*, which was sunk last week.

Well-known both in his native village and in Rushden, Alfred G B Watts joined the Navy in March 1913. He wrote frequently – even during the time of the war – and his bright spirit has always shone through in his letters.

Mr Watts wired the Admiralty for official news of the occurrence and whether his son was killed or not and a reply was received on Monday as follows: "Regret Watts not on list of saved received."

While we feel proud of Irchester's brave young son, we offer our sincerest sympathies to the parents in their bereavement. We have no doubt that he died doing his duty. His fiancée was Miss Brudenall, of Windmill Road, Rushden.

Taken from the Rushden Echo, 23 October 1914.

How we're commemorating the First World War today

THE Sywell Great War Airshow returns on 17 August 2014 in aid of the Warwickshire and Northamptonshire Air Ambulance. It will feature the largest First World War dogfight in the Northern Hemisphere.

www.sywellairshow.co.uk

WELLINGBOROUGH Museum has re-created a First World War trench and dugout, which will be open to the public on selected days throughout the summer.

www.wellingboroughmuseum.co.uk

WELLINGBOROUGH Norse has sown poppies at the entrance to London Road cemetery and surrounding The Lodge in Doddington Road cemetery.

Fundraising efforts

August 1916: A FANCY fair and sale of goods was held in the Market Square to raise funds for the Red Cross.

It was attended by Earl Spencer, Lord Lieutenant of the County, who said: "I have come here to thank you for the admirable effort that you've made and which I hear will be productive of a large amount of money to help those in need."

"Who could have imagined that in this peaceful Midland county, there would be hundreds of soldiers suffering, maimed, wounded and disabled, demanding help that you in Wellingborough are most generously inclined to give."

Dead Man's Penny memorial

THESE memorial plaques were issued to the next-of-kin of all British and Empire service personnel who were killed as a result of the war. The plaques were made of bronze and popularly known as the Dead Man's Penny.

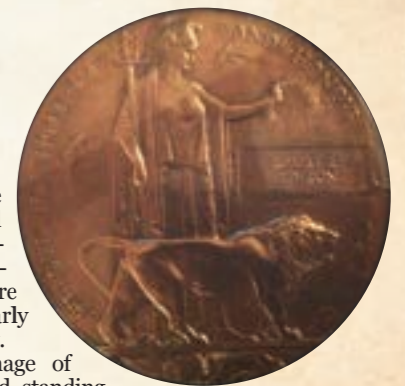
The plaque includes an image of Britannia holding a trident and standing with a lion. In her left hand, Britannia holds an oak wreath above the rectangular tablet bearing the deceased's name in raised letters.

Two dolphins swim around Britannia, symbolising Britain's sea power and at the bottom a second lion is tearing apart the German eagle.

Around the picture the legend reads *He died for freedom and honour*, or for the 600 plaques issued to commemorate women, *She died for freedom and honour*.

The plaque shown here was issued to the family of 20981 Private Robert Richard Elderkin, 7th Battalion The Northamptonshire Regiment. He was killed in action on 8 April 1916, aged 21, and lived at 14 Newtown Road, Little Irchester.

Image supplied by Cllr Jon-Paul Carr



Village efforts in the war



Finedon

Above: A COLUMN of drenched soldiers from the Northamptonshire Regiment in Laws Lane, Finedon, during the First World War. It is possible they were heading for Finedon Station. But was it a recruitment march, a movement of troops during the war, or a victory parade?

Right: A PARADE float in Finedon Tainty shortly after the end of the First World War. It is manned by ex-soldiers still in their uniforms.

Left to right: ?, Reg Betts (with moustache – he lost a leg), Albert Stanley, ?, Bernard York (he lost an eye and a leg), Arthur Minney (he lost a leg), Fred Mallard (severe facial injuries) and Bill Stanley.



Ecton

THE family at Ecton Hall played a huge part as officers in the First World War.

Lieutenant Colonel Herbert George Sotheby fought at the battles of Longueval, Bapaume and on the Somme. He finally returned home in 1923 and married Marjorie Thompson.

Ecton Hall should have passed to his nephew Lionel, who sadly died in the Battle of Loos in 1915.

Lionel's younger brother, Nigel, was bequeathed the hall but never lived there. Due to heavy death duties he had to sell the contents of Ecton Hall, which marked the end of employment in the village provided by the Sotheby family.

Earls Barton

DURING the war, Earls Barton's boot and shoe factories were busy supplying footwear for the armed forces.

A Barker and Sons made footwear with a wooden sole that could bend, W J Brookes' factory made high-leg sea boots, White and Co produced special army boots and Charles Dunkley and Sons also had government contracts.

More than 200 men from the village went to fight and more than 80 never returned.

Sywell

THIRTY-TWO men from Sywell went to war and eight didn't return. The parish commemorated the fallen by raising money for a memorial window that sits in the north wall of the parish church.



Village memorials

Private 5319 Arthur Barnes
10th Battalion The Royal Fusiliers
Killed in action: Tuesday 10 April 1917,
aged 23
Son of Charles and Elizabeth Barnes of
Wollaston

THE Battle of Arras started in the snowstorm on 9 April 1917 and by the time it petered out our total casualties, killed, wounded and missing, amounted to more than 158,000. Private Barnes was one of these. He still lies in those village fields, together with so many of his comrades.

Company Sergeant Major Abraham Drage
8140 2nd Battalion The Northamptonshire
Regiment
Died from wounds: 5 July 1917, aged 31
Son of Abraham and Caroline Drage
of Bozeat

ABRAHAM had been in the army for 13 years, wounded twice, and on 8 July 1917 was expected home for a few days' leave.

Sadly he died on 5 July.
 He is buried with honour at the Belgian Battery Corner Cemetery in Ypres (**pictured left**).