

Press release

The extraordinary untold story of one English village's military service for our country over two centuries

After 4 years of research by two amateur historians in a small Cotswold village the lost names of 25 men will be finally added to a new war memorial - giving belated recognition for their service to our country - at a special dedication ceremony on Sunday June 16th by the Bishop of Dorchester in Deddington, Oxfordshire.

Commander Robert Forsyth and Mr Michael Allbrook researched the stories of some 700 men and women who served their country from Waterloo to World War II. Their book, *A Parish at War - A military record of three Oxfordshire villages - Deddington - Clifton - Hempton* gives a unique insight into the contribution one village has made to our history and how war impacts on a small village.

During the four years of research for the book it was found that 21 men from WWI - including two sailors killed in the ill-fated Dardanelles expedition - and two men from WWII, who had died for their country, were not recorded on the present War Memorial. Nor was there any memorial to the two men who died in The Boer War.

The two authors decided that the income from sales of the book would be devoted to erecting a new memorial that would record all the names in one place for the first time. This is the memorial that will be dedicated on 16 June by The Right Reverend Colin Fletcher OBE MA, Bishop of Dorchester at a service commencing at 12.00. Sir Tony Baldry MP and Mr Drummond-Hay for The Soldiers of Oxfordshire Trust will attend. The British Legion Standard will be paraded and a 2 minute silence will be observed.

The process of research has brought families and generations together. Some 150 of them – many of whom served in WWII - will attend the service and reception afterwards. Notably present in the congregation will be the family and relatives of two men whose names were previously missing from the War Memorial. Sergeant Ken Harris DFM RAF ([see story with pics attached](#)) was the son of the eldest daughter of 12 siblings; only recently, as a consequence of the research, have all 12 families of the siblings regained contact with each other. The sons of Major Tom van Oss, will also be present. The van Oss family had moved away from Deddington and contact has only been re-established through the book research. This has also led to the son of their nanny also regaining contact with the village he grew up in.

A school girl evacuated from Campbell School, Dagenham, Essex – Pat Ellmore - will meet an old school friend from Deddington at the service for the first time since the war.

National Serviceman Private Robin Hall was killed in Malaya in 1950. His sister will attend wearing the Elizabeth Cross she was presented with on the 50th anniversary of his death. George Harris, a childhood friend of Robin and a National Serviceman at the same time, will watch the internet service streamed online from his home in Australia. (www.deddingtonchurch.org then click on "Church TV" icon).

More Information

- The research for the book not only uncovered the names of all the soldiers, sailors and airmen from the parish who served - 85 of whom died -but also provides a complete record of the Home Guard and the women who served in the Land Army, Timber Service, Narrow Boats, WVS and Fire Service in WWII; the book gives a unique insight into the impact on the families of those who went off to war. It can be purchased on Amazon via <http://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/product/1870677048>
- The Hawkins family lost four men and the Hancox parents lost three sons in WWI - their names are carved by their father into a moving memorial of its own; several families lost two or three men and, of course, the losses were multiplied in a small community in which many families were related. Their names are still familiar in the village.
- The new Memorial ([see pic attached](#)) is on the North Wall of the church amongst eight original grave markers recovered from WWI battlefields. ([see pic attached](#)).

Notes for Editors:

The Dedication Service at 12.00 will follow normal Sunday Service concluding at 11.40 approx.

For further information or an interview: Please contact Commander R Forsyth RN (Ret'd), The Stile House, New Street, Deddington, OX15 0SR

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Biographies of Robert Forsyth and Michael Allbrook are attached

More information and photographs on the following are available on request:

- Sergeant Ken Harris, Major Tom van Oss, Private Robin Hall, schoolgirl evacuee Pat Ellmore.
- List of notable guests
- The Dedication Order of Service

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The service will be streamed live on the internet via www.deddingtonchurch.org

On that page you will see a "Church TV" icon, please click on that