

# **A Parish at War**

**A military record of three Oxfordshire villages**

**Deddington - Clifton - Hempton**

Michael Allbrook and Robert Forsyth

**This edition contains the original book (published November 2011)**

**and**

**a supplement (first published September 2012)**

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'Few understand the extraordinary emotional demands placed on a service family, whether in peacetime or wartime. Fewer still understand the terrible tragedy which befalls a family when a serviceman or woman dies while on duty, serving their country. We are tremendously indebted to you and to the courageous men and women who have served this country and made the ultimate sacrifice.'

HRH The Prince of Wales  
in an address to the War Widows' Association 9 June 2011

**Cover photograph**

**A troop of Deddington soldiers in 1914  
The Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry,  
(courtesy of Clive Sanders)**

'Michael Allbrook and Robert Forsyth are to be congratulated on the production of this excellent book. It is a true labour of love in which many hours of research have been spent collating information and details of parishioners who served our country during both world wars and after.

I was particularly interested to read of Robin Hall, who was killed in action serving with The King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry in Malaya in 1950, who is buried in 'God's Little Acre', Batu Gajah, Parak. I also served there, a few years later, and recall burying comrades in that same cemetery.

This book is a must for all who live in our villages of Clifton, Deddington and Hempton.'

Major David G Hood MC  
President, Deddington Branch,  
The Royal British Legion

We are immensely grateful to everyone who has contributed information for this project. If we were to list you all it would form a chapter in itself. It would be invidious to name some but not all so we would like to thank each and every one of you and, quite truthfully, say that this book would not have happened without you.

Michael Allbrook

Robert Forsyth

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## The Supplement

Follows on after page 192. It contains its own Contents list and page numbering.

## Preface

On 8 May 1918, in one of the tragedies of war, 20-year-old Ted Ambler was patrolling No-Man's-Land in northern France when he was shot by a nervous young sentry; both were from the same Company, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Scots Guards. Today, all his family is dead and his story almost forgotten. This made me decide to research War Memorials, to share more information about those who are commemorated.

Deddington War Memorial was my starting point; but then the story evolved as I looked more carefully and talked to people. WWI military records show the names of people who claimed Deddington, Clifton or Hempton as their birthplace or their residence. This revealed others who could be included on the Memorial. Then I was lent a Roll of Honour printed in the latter stages of WWI which is a comprehensive listing of all those serving at that time. This revealed a far broader picture of the Parish's contribution and clearly showed the very significant proportion of the community who were engaged in military duties not just on the Western Front but all round the world.

When Rob Forsyth uploaded all this War Memorial information onto Deddington OnLine, the village website, it stimulated considerable interest locally, nationally and internationally, and encouraged him to join me in this project to research WWII and the post-war period and also to undertake the onerous, but rewarding, task of bringing all of the material into publishable form.

*Michael Allbrook*

It has been my very great privilege to meet personally a large number of those who served or, sadly, their widows and families. I would like to say a very big thank you to everyone for their patience with my notebook and innumerable questions and, of course, for the many cups of tea. Several of my visits have been to those in their 80s, or even 90s and so I also must record how impressed I have been by their near total recall of the WWII years.

The average age of WWII servicemen was their early twenties - many were still teenagers - and most had not travelled much beyond their own county town when they suddenly found themselves variously flying over Germany, on the sands of North Africa, in the icy wastes of the arctic on convoy duty, wading ashore on D-day or in the monsoon heat of the Burmese jungle looking for crashed aircraft. Each and every one of them could write their own book; one has to read between the lines to understand just what the reality of serving really was for them.

My meetings also triggered a host of recollections of Deddington in the 1930s and 40s. We have restricted ourselves for reasons of space to military matters but are left with an overwhelming sense of how strong the ties were between families and friends during long periods in which they had little or no knowledge of where their loved ones were or what they were doing. We can only echo Prince Charles' own words as quoted on the title page.

*Rob Forsyth*