

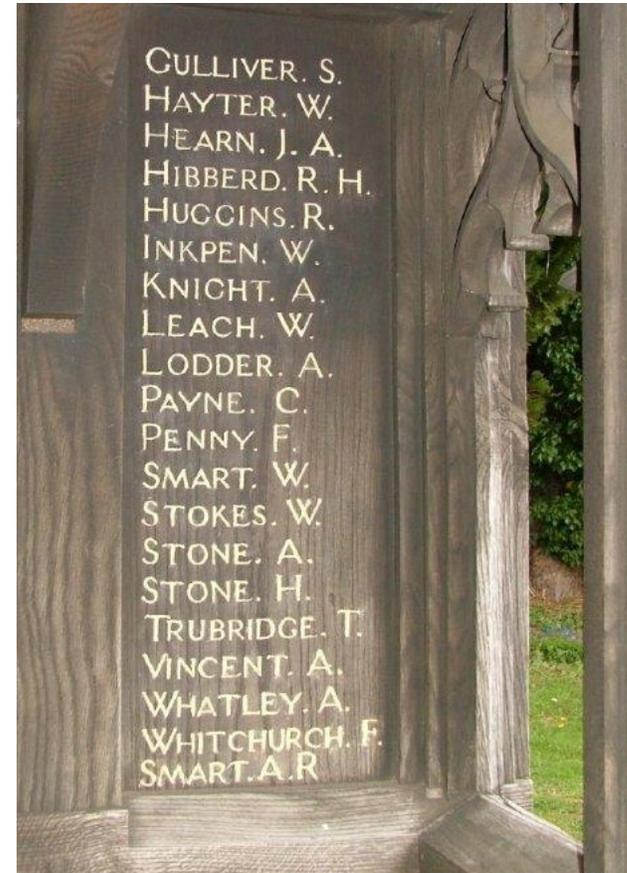
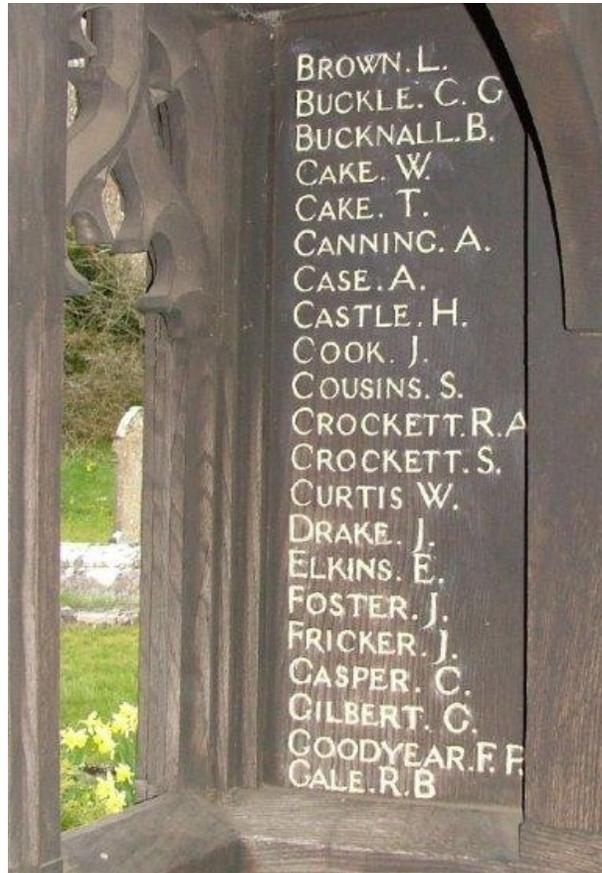
# The story of the lychgate at St John's Church



Marking the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the war memorial of Bemerton church parish, commemorating the war dead from the villages of Bemerton, Fugglestone and Quidhampton

Bea Tilbrook  
November 2021

# The names of the forty one men who died as a result of the First World War



The names are in alphabetical order of surname with one name added at the bottom on each side. Arthur Smart and Reginald Gale died in 1921, after the other names had been inscribed.

# Remembrance from the beginning : the roll of honour

From the very beginning of the first world war the desire for a public acknowledgement of the men who had left to serve their country was very strong.

**A roll of honour** was published in the parish magazine in October 1914 and hung in the church porch. There were 68 names. In November there were 78. In December 1916 there were 149.  
*The earliest lists were of volunteers and did not include men who had enlisted before the war but the deaths of three of those regular servicemen were reported in the first two months.*

Only two men came forward at a recruiting meeting in January 1915 because “Bemerton parish has already sent most of the eligible ones.”

**The roll of honour remained** in the church porch until April 1918, the names nearly obliterated by sun, wind and rain. It was then re-written and put into six frames fixed to the screen of the vestry at the east end of the north aisle with a cross hung above them. The front pew was closed off with vases of flowers on the book rail.

# Bemerton Parish Magazine.



## Clergy.

### Rector:

Rev. Canon Warre,  
B.A.,  
THE RECTORY.

### Assistant Curate:

Rev. E. R. Z. Walker  
B.A.,  
ANSGAR,  
ROMAN ROAD.

## Churchwardens.

Fugglestone.  
Mr. J. CHALLIS.

### Bemerton.

Mr. N. P. SQUAREY.  
Mr. W. B. CANNING.

## Sidesmen.

MAJOR FISHER.  
MR. O. SHUTTLE.  
MR. G. TAYLOR.  
MR. C. WHITE.

## Parish Clerk.

MR. T. FORD,  
2, Rectory Cottages.

## District Visitors.

Bemerton—Church Lane, New Buildings—Miss Watts.  
S. Andrew's Road—Miss Wilks.  
Ema Terrace, Rosebery Cottages & Brickfield Lane—  
Miss Lipscomb and Miss Canning.  
Sidney Cottages—Vacant.  
New Road—Vacant.  
Cherry Orchard Lane & Orchard Road—Miss Stockmar.  
Gorringe Road and Gramshaw Road—Mrs. Squarey.

Wilton Road—Miss Warre.  
The Pembroke Park Estate—Mrs. Walker.  
Devizes Road—Miss Stockmar.  
Railway Terrace, Cecil Terrace, Kew Villas, Wilson  
Terrace and Hill View Terrace.—Vacant.  
Quidhampton—Miss Watts.  
Fugglestone—Miss Clutterbuck.

## Church Services.

S. ANDREW'S CHURCH.—Sundays—Holy Communion at 8 a.m., except on first Sunday in the month.  
Daily—Matins at 10 a.m.; Evensong at 6 p.m.

S. JOHN'S CHURCH.—Sundays—Matins at 11 a.m.; Evensong at 6.30 p.m. On the 1st Sunday in the  
month, Celebration of the Holy Communion at 8 a.m. and after Matins (no Sermon). Children's  
Service, 1st, 3rd and 5th Sundays at 2.30 p.m. Men's Service, 4th Sunday, at 3.15 p.m. (during  
winter months).

FUGGLESTONE S. PETER.—Evensong every Sunday at 2.30, except the last Sunday in the month, when  
Matins, Holy Communion and Sermon at 10.30 a.m.

QUIDHAMPTON MISSION ROOM.—Sunday, at 3 p.m., Mission Service and Address.

NOTICE.—HOLY BAPTISM at Children's Service, and at other times by arrangement.

CHURCHINGS.—At any Service by notice.

Notice of Baptisms, Banns, Weddings or Funerals *must* be sent to the Clerk (Mr. Ford).

**C. Moody & Sons,** Complete House Furnishers,  
Opposite the Infirmary, **SALISBURY.**

We invite inspection of our large Stock of Carpets, Hearthrugs and Linoleums.

We are very lucky indeed to have copies of the parish magazine from 1894. The cover design was the same for decades.

## *The parish magazine*

*All quotations are from the parish magazine which at first published regular news of men who were wounded or on leave and letters from men serving in faraway places, as well as obituaries of those who died. Then, in mid-1915, the curate who acted as editor left the parish and at the same time there was an official reluctance to report more death and injury because of the effect on morale. After that there is much less local news about the war.*

*Fifteen of the forty one men on the memorial died in 1917.*

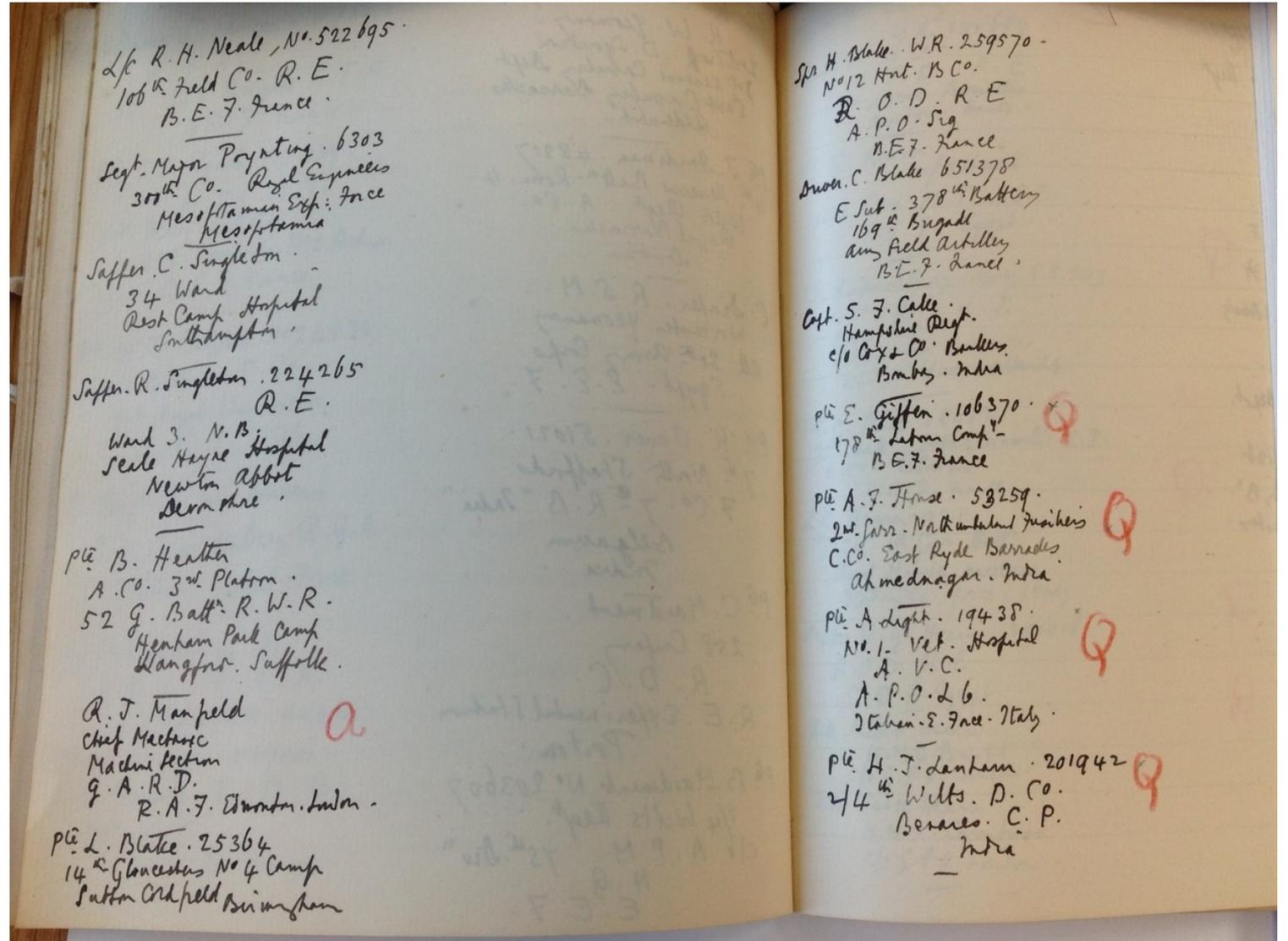
# The Rector's notebook

Rev Montague Alderson was inducted as rector on 30 June 1918 and immediately started to draw up an accurate list of the dead, the missing and the prisoners of war.

In the back of his notebook is a list of the 85 men then on active service and their addresses – another treasure for local historians.

*The red 'Q' shows the man came from Quidhampton.*

The rector's notebook is kept at the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre at Chippenham.



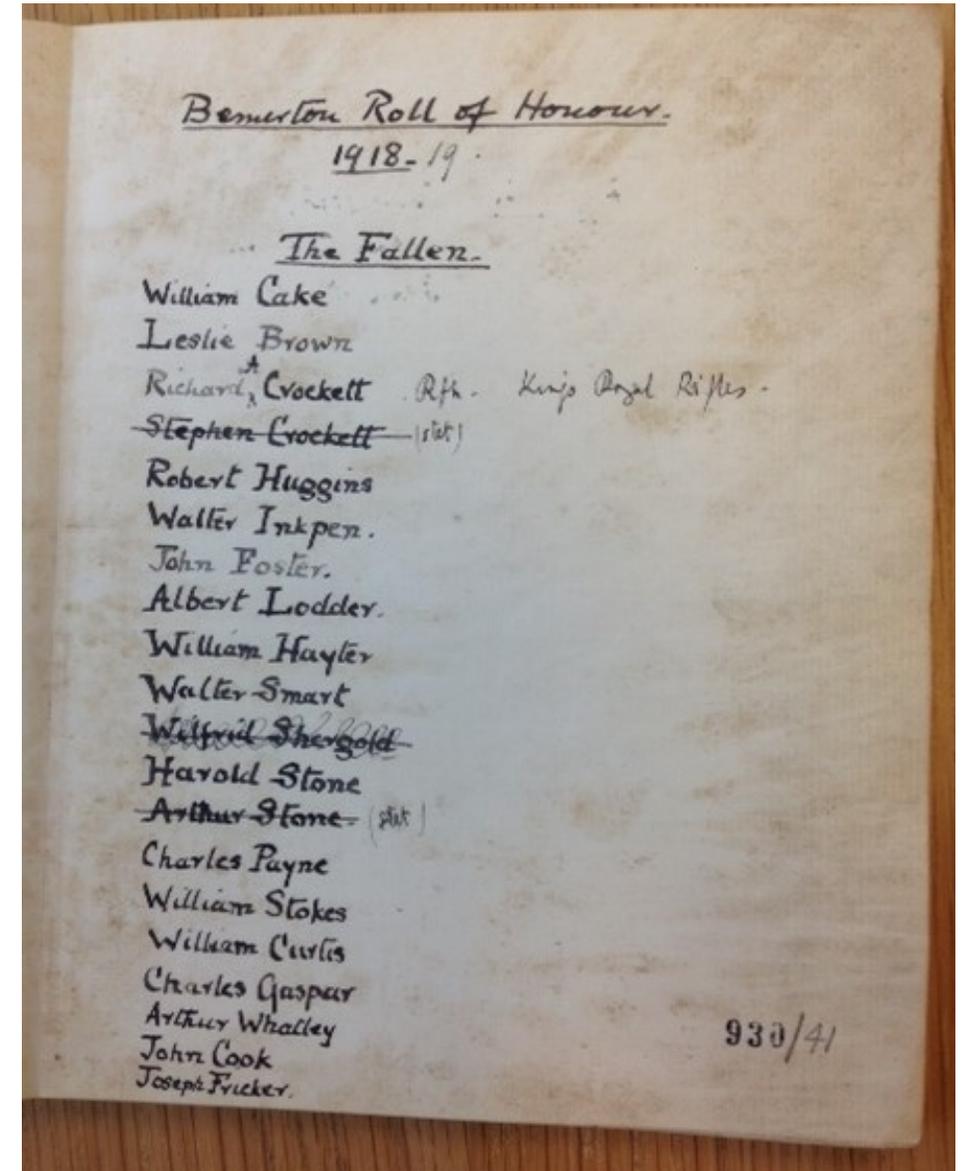
# Getting the facts right and how a simple list can tell a story

Making an accurate list was not easy as this first page of his notebook shows. The list of The Fallen was begun in July 1918.

**Arthur Stone** was reported missing in October 1917 but his family did not want his name on this list and it is crossed out.

**Stephen Crockett** was a regular soldier reported missing in the third month of the war but his mother still did not want his name here. Not only did she get the rector to cross it out but she made sure he recorded that her youngest son, **Richard**, was in the prestigious Kings Royal Rifles, the only name annotated in this way. Her husband drifted between jobs, and did not learn to write his name until after the war. Her sons did well and her pride in Richard's achievement is now forever on this page.

Their families eventually accepted that Arthur Stone and Stephen Crockett were dead but the inclusion of **Wilfrid Shergold** – emphatically crossed out – was a glorious mistake. His death had been reported in error and he was alive and survived the war.



# The permanent memorial

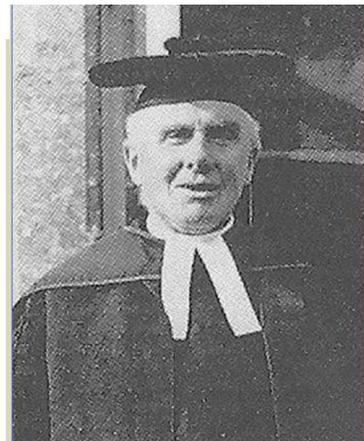
That there should be a permanent memorial was never questioned. More than half the men who died from the parish have no known grave. In June 1919, as the peace treaty was finally about to be signed, the rector wrote:

**“Our permanent memorial must be eternal gratitude expressed in visible shape or form.”**

He was against some of the popular ideas of the time but he welcomed the idea of a lychgate which seemed to meet with everyone’s approval.

I think all purely utilitarian objects should be rigorously eliminated. It is eminently selfish to trade on another’s patriotism. Because we have not got recreation grounds, swimming baths, or public hall (things most necessary for any parish) we ought not to take this opportunity of obtaining them, and then call them our war memorial.

Rev Montague Alderson,  
rector of Bemerton  
1918 – 1947



we cordially and whole-heartedly welcome the proposal of the Parochial Committee which recommends that a *lych-gate* should be placed in S. John’s Churchyard, bearing all the names of those who have served in his Majesty’s Forces. These reasons weigh much in its favour: It will be in a good central position, seen by all men, and accessible at all times; it will be free from any sectarian bias; and if built of good material will remind our children for many a generation to come how the Parish played no unworthy part in the Great War of 1914-1918.

# The organising committee

As in most parishes a local committee was formed. No records of their meetings survive but we do know who the members were. None of them had lost sons in the war but the younger brother of Miss Alderson was in the RAF and died the day before the induction of her other brother, the rector.

**Newell P Squarey**, age 56, long term resident of Belvedere House, churchwarden, land agent

**William Rogers, 45**, Quidhampton, whitening manufacturer, school manager, parish councillor

**James Tabor, 61** Quidhampton, builder, undertaker, blacksmith, parish councillor

**Edward Taunton, 44**, farmer, lived in Tower House, church sidesman, born Bemerton

**Arthur Fisher, 77**, retired to The Hermitage in the 1880's, churchwarden, parish councillor, organiser of Prisoner of War fund.

**Eda (Edith) Alderson, 53**, sister of the new rector. Sunday school teacher, began a District Nurse association

**Anne Watts, 81**, moved to the Red House in 1902 with brother. Prominent in many parish activities, district visitor for Church Lane.

**Nora Holmes, 42**, moved from Ireland to Bemerton House with her brother after the war, very active in parish work, a district visitor for Quidhampton

**John Vincent, 45, secretary**, son of a Quidhampton farm labourer, headteacher of St John's school in 1920, parish council clerk, organist and choirmaster at Fugglestone

**Tom Ford, 65, treasurer**, retired from Metropolitan Police to 2 Church Cottages in 1901, sidesman and then parish clerk, organised the Freewill Offering scheme and much else.

# Making decisions: collecting the names

**No rules:** parishes made their own decisions about who should be commemorated on their memorials. There was no set of national rules nor any central list of servicemen.

It is clear that Bemerton parish made decisions on compassionate as well as geographical grounds, recognising the need of families to have their men remembered in the place where the family lived after the war.

## Who were the forty one men?

**Where did they come from?** Only eight were born in the parish: five in Quidhampton, one in Fugglestone, and two in Bemerton. Fifteen were born within a few miles and 25% were born outside Wiltshire.



Sgt William Cake's family moved to Bemerton in 1906 but he left in 1907 to join the army though he was two years underage. He died in Belgium in August 1914, aged 23, the first death from the parish.

**How long had they lived here?** Apart from the eight men born here only four lived in the parish before 1900, and eleven moved here in 1910 or later. 25% of the men lived here for only one or two years.

Remarkably after the war only six of the thirty seven families moved away. (The 41 men included 4 sets of brothers so there were 37 families)



Charles Payne, railway fireman, born Quidhampton, died of wounds in Mesopotamia 1915, age 21

# More statistics and compassionate decisions

## Three men never lived in the parish

**Walter Smart** remained with his grandparents in Gillingham when the rest of the family settled in Church Lane, Bemerton in 1911

**Reginald Hibberd**, born in Burcombe, left to enlist in 1911. His family moved to Gorringer Road during the war.

**Christopher Buckle**, born in Westmorland was a Lieutenant Colonel. His mother rented Bemerton House for two years at the end of the war and he visited her when on extended leave at Christmas. It was while she was here that she heard of his death.

## Four men left the parish in 1907 to live and work elsewhere

**William Cake** enlisted with the Dorset regiment, married and lived in Dorchester

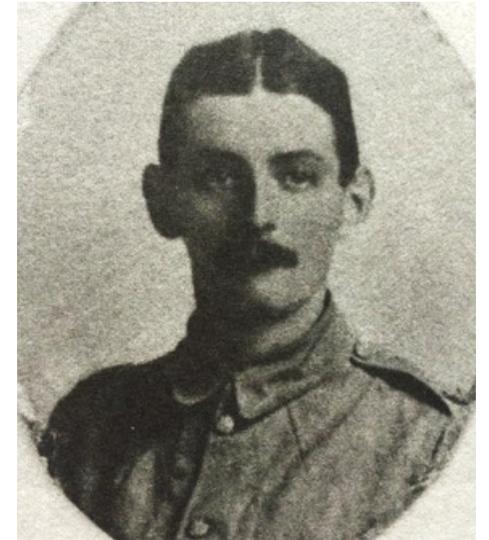
**Sidney Cousins** became a groom at Edmondsham House

**William Curtis** joined the Metropolitan Police and lived in Chelsea

**Billy Leach** trained as a teacher and taught in Winchester

*All seven of these men are also commemorated on memorials elsewhere.*

*With the exception of Christopher Buckle their families lived in Bemerton Parish for the rest of their lives.*



Billy Leach was on active service from 1914 with the Hampshire Territorials. He became Regimental Sergeant Major and is regarded as a hero for the work he did with prisoners of war after the army's defeat at the siege of Kut, although he was offered the chance to leave with the officers. He died of typhus in a POW camp in 1918, aged 30.

# Final decisions: officially died as a result of the war?

Sometimes a man who died was not considered to have had an official war death as defined by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC). The lychgate committee, however, was more generous in its recognition.

**Herbert Castle** was invalided out of the navy with tuberculosis in May 1916. He died a year later aged 37. Herbert had joined the navy in 1895 when he was sixteen and served for ten years. He then joined the reserves, was called up in August 1914 and spent over a year patrolling the North Sea. There was no acknowledgement that that harsh service led to his illness so he is remembered as a victim of the war only on the lychgate memorial. An anchor is carved on his gravestone in Devizes Road cemetery celebrating his love of the sea.

**Arthur Case** of Quidhampton also died of TB. He enlisted as a gunner in 1915 and was discharged as unfit a year later with the ruling that he already had TB and it had not been worsened by his service in France. His mother challenged this and was eventually given the benefit of the doubt and a small pension but there was no official recognition. Arthur died in October 1917, aged 22, before the final decision and is buried at Fugglestone in an unmarked grave.

**Died too late?** The death certificate of **Reginald Gale** age 27 states cause of death as a three year old gunshot wound and the hernia it caused but he died at the end of September 1921, one month after the cut off date imposed by the government. No deaths after August 1921 were to count as war deaths. The lychgate committee thought differently and even though the memorial was complete his name was added.

# Finding the money

This was also the committee's responsibility. Projects such as this were funded by donations and events. There was no welfare state or grants as there are today. At this time a portion of the church collection was always set aside for 'the poor.'

There were many direct calls on a benevolent parishioner's money. The district nurse and Salisbury Infirmary, for example, depended on donations, as did many smaller but important things such as the annual outings and Christmas parties for the choir and schoolchildren and extras such as their prizes for achievement and attendance. Donors were usually named in the parish magazine.

During the war people had been expected to give regular contributions to the **Wiltshire POW fund** and in February 1919 **an assistant curate's fund** was set up. Regular house to house collections were organised for these and the results from each road printed in the parish magazine. Also in 1919 a **churchyard improvement fund** was set up by the rector; everyone with a family member buried at St John's was expected to contribute.

In addition, Bemerton villagers had been raising money for a village hall (The Hut) and there had been a collection to fund the July 1919 peace celebrations which raised £81 from the three villages.

# Where did the money come from?

After an initial appeal people gave freely but the actual amount raised “fell far behind” what was needed for a memorial like the lychgate.

## **An amazing fete**

Two Quidhampton members of the committee, John Vincent and William Rogers, organised a village fete on 27 August 1919. It was probably bigger than any held in Quidhampton before or since. A morning service at St John’s was followed by a procession to Quidhampton via Cherry Orchard Lane and Wilton Road led by the Quidhampton Jazz Band. After a full programme of events including dinner and tea the fete ended in the evening with a lantern tattoo by the village children (see magazine extract). Those attending included Lord and Lady Pembroke. One of the sporting events (all winners were named in the magazine) was “Mixed couples’ whistling and singing race”. Sadly no further description of that race is given!

Once entertainment tax was reclaimed the amount raised for the memorial fund was £60\*.

Underlying the report of the fete is surprise that this could happen in Quidhampton. The village had lost eleven men in the war from a population of about 320, and five were from old village families. Six of the men were under twenty five years old. The need for a memorial was strongly felt.

*\* An entertainment tax of 2 pence in the shilling was imposed during the war to fund the war effort. It was amended but not abolished until 1960.*

# The Lantern Tattoo: an interesting aside

Soon after the prize distribution, and to wind up the day's programme, a lantern tattoo took place, when again the village children gave a good account of themselves. It may be of interest to remark here that the lanterns used were of German manufacture, and that these had been made in readiness for celebrating a German victory. They had been, however, captured by our boys, and thus we were able, in little Quidhampton, to have a share in the use of these victory lamps—not the victory, however, for which they were intended.

Another part of the report of Quidhampton's fete in the parish magazine.

**William Stokes** of Quidhampton was killed in September 1917 one month after his 19<sup>th</sup> birthday, and only one month after he joined his battalion in France.

**A very long standing tradition:** William's mother put a poppy by his name on the lychgate every year until her death when his sister Dorothy, born 1915, took over. She continued the tradition until her death in 2020, aged 104.

Four generations of the Stokes family in four households live in Quidhampton today.



## Slow progress with the lychgate memorial

No other fund raising events were reported but increasing frustration was mentioned in the parish magazine.

**April 1920** total costs were estimated at £400. Only £210 had been collected.

Drawings had been hung in the church porch and a plan would soon be displayed there too, with a collections box. The architect was Mr Ponting and the builder Mr Sainsbury of Lavington.

**August 1920** no visible progress. The builder wanted to increase costs and Hoskins of Newbury were appointed instead.

The architect said, "Your committee hardly realises the congested state of building firms owing to enormous demand and scarcity of labour and materials."

The builders said, "Oak work cannot be hurried if it is to stand against time etc. We cannot say when we will commence on site as there is so much work to do in the shop. We assure you we are doing our best."

Costs rose to £440. A fresh appeal was made:

*"Everyone who has a spark of patriotism and gratitude within them cannot but feel they owe their very salvation - humanly speaking - to these brave heroes."*

**October 1920** "A friend in the area" visited Hoskins in Newbury and saw the oak timbers cut and ready though no carving had begun. The Chilmark stone could be laid at once.

# Completion and Dedication

**The service of dedication took place on Easter Eve 26 March 1921**, further delays being caused by “unforeseen mistakes in measurement.”

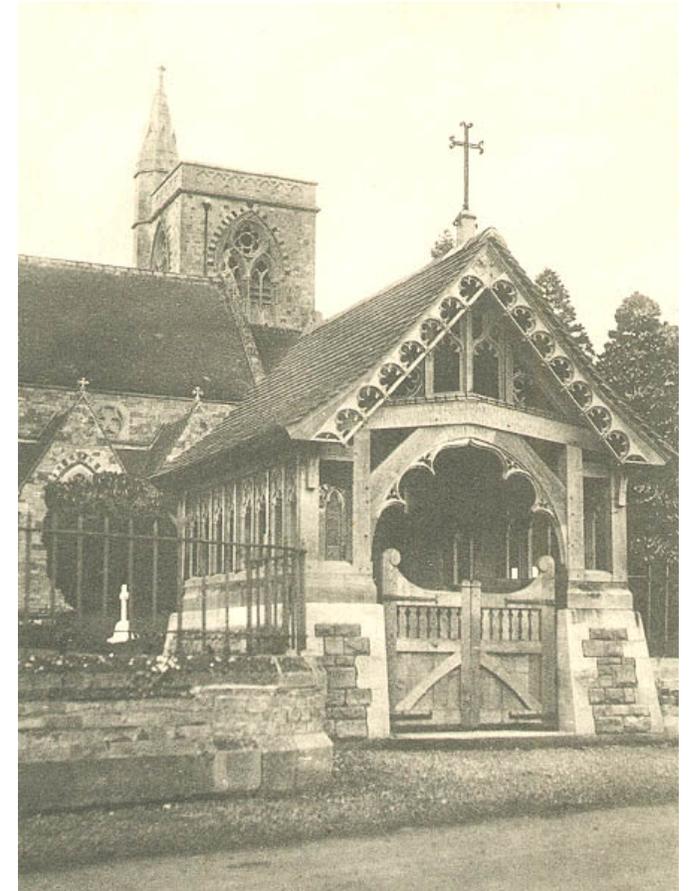
Brigadier General A Gibbon C.M.G. of the Royal Engineers performed the unveiling and read out the names. The Archdeacon of Sarum led prayers. The singing of the national anthem concluded the ceremony after which buglers sounded the Last Post and Reveille.

A shortened evensong service was held on the Sunday nearest 11 November before processing to the lychgate for prayers and commemoration. Many of the bereaved families brought floral tributes which they laid on the bench inside the lych gate. Later there was a collection among the ex-servicemen to provide permanent flower holders.

The parish magazine noted that in the following years more families were attending the annual service. It is easy to forget that all this was new. Let us hope that over time the regular act of remembrance brought some comfort to the bereaved.

The lychgate has now stood for 100 years, a reminder to us of that most dreadful of wars, a reminder to be thoughtful and thankful.

*The lychgate was - and is - universally admired as a beautiful and fitting memorial. This, the earliest photo we have, shows it originally had gates.*





## Afterword 2: not perfect



### **They lie not here but far away where they fell**

These beautiful words paint a poignant but inaccurate picture that has misled several local people. Seven of the men returned home to die and are buried locally.

Already mentioned are **Herbert Castle** and **Arthur Case** who died of TB and **Reginald Gale** who died of a three year old gunshot wound. **Leslie Brown**, aged 18, died in 1914 as the result of a chill caught during training. Their graves are elsewhere or unmarked\* but **Sidney Gulliver** was buried in St John's in 1920 in an officially recognised war grave after dying of TB contracted in a POW camp. And **George Gilbert** who also died of illness while training in 1918 is buried two graves away from the lychgate with a private headstone (his wife refused the military one). **Frank Goodyear** died in the Infirmary in 1919 while home on leave and is buried in Devizes Road cemetery. Pneumonia was the official cause but his descendants believe it was Spanish flu.

\*To mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the First World War CWGC erected memorial stones or tablets where a man is buried in an unmarked grave. There is now a memorial to Leslie Brown by his great grandparents' grave next to the path to the church. The CWGC representative said they could not do the same for Reginald Gale; the rule about his death being too late still holds.

## A postscript

The rector said “all purely utilitarian objects should be eliminated” from the choice of war memorial.

A group of ex-servicemen, however, wanted to do something utilitarian, something that would add to the life of the parish in a practical way. They asked the parish council to help them negotiate for the use of the field behind the school as a children’s playground and organised fund raising events to buy the equipment.

The recreation ground opened on 24 May 1922 with swings and a bathing tent. And of course, like the lychgate, it is still there today, having since been used by generations of children.

