

Commemoration of World War One Fallen.

November 2018 Edition

During Late September /October we remembered.

30th September 2018

Wallace George Leicester YOUNG of Swaffham Parish, 40283, Private, 8th Battalion, Bedfordshire Regiment, formerly 5209, Norfolk Regiment. Killed in action in France & Flanders on 7th February 1917. Aged 26. Born and lived Swaffham. Enlisted Norwich. Son of Charles Valentine Young and Elizabeth Young, of Market Place, Swaffham, Norfolk. Buried in Vermelles British Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France. Plot V. Row D. Grave 38.

7th October 2018.

Arthur YOUNGS of Swaffham Parish. 290747 Private 11th Battalion, Norfolk Regiment. [SDGW gives 8th Battalion]. Died in France & Flanders on 1st July 1917. Aged 21. Born Swaffham. Enlisted Norwich. Son of Arthur and Emma Youngs, of Oak Lodge, Swaffham, Norfolk. Buried in Calais Southern Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France. Plot G. Row 5. Grave 7.

21st October 2018.

Harold Frederic Elwood BELL of Swaffham Parish.

To the Splendid Memory of Harold Fredrick Elwood Bell.

Killed by a Tiger May 26th 1916, while safeguarding some of the natives of his district. No Greater love hath no man than to lay down his life for his Friends.

Fredrick Percy ROLFE of Swaffham Parish. Lieutenant Western Division of the Southern Rhodesian Volunteer Force, Youngest son of the late William Tillett Rolfe, for many years organist of this Parish and Emily Jane Rolfe of this Parish. An associate of the Royal school of mines, and a member of the institute of mining and metallurgy, a justice of the Peace for the district of Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia. He died at Filibusu, Rhodesia 3rd November 1918, Aged 36 years. Thy will be done.

From The People's Memorial.

Private Wallace Young. 8th Bn Bedfordshire Regiment.

"He was educated at Hamonds Grammar School and afterwards went to St. John's College, Battersea, London. On leaving there he was a pupil teacher in the Swaffham Boys School, from there taking on a similar position in Harleston". Although this young

man's choice of career had obviously been teaching, he had, out of family duty, left to assist his father in his business. It was from this employment that he enlisted, and he was killed in action in Flanders, on the 7th February, 1917, aged 26yrs.

One of his comrades wrote to his parents to tell them the sad news of their son's death, but by a means not explained the press obtained it first and printed their version, which is shown here. George had then been in the army for just a year.

"Leicester had been killed at the front. It appears he was first shot in the shoulder, and on being lifted up was shot in the head. ... He was a young man of great promise and ability".

[T & W 24th February 1917].

Neither Harold Bell or Fredrick Rolfe are remembered on the Town or Church War Memorials, but on plaques in the Church. They are also not recognised by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, but as they have links to the Parish and were killed within the specified time span of the First World War it would appear churlish not to include them in our commemoration.

In detail we have remembered 112 men of Swaffham and Sporle with Palgrave Parishes, they fall into the following categories:-

- 91 On Swaffham War Memorial.
- 15 On Sporle War Memorial.
- 2 Australians with parental links to Swaffham.
- 2 Not on CWGC records but with links to Swaffham
- 1 South African, Member of the Royal flying Corps, buried in St Peter & St Paul Churchyard.
- 1 Swaffham Man recorded in the Baptist Book of Remembrance, but not recorded on Memorials.

Notable dates for November 1918.

11th Armistice concluded between Allies and Germany: hostilities cease in France and Flanders at 11am.

The armistice was signed at 5am, but did not come into effect until 11am. On the Western front alone, in the intervening six hours there were 10,944 casualties and 2,738 deaths.

14th Cruiser HMS "Cochrane" grounds in Mersey estuary; breaks up, no casualties.

I realise that over the course of the past four years, I have on many occasions commented on Naval losses, this is not to downplay the vast army losses, but Naval losses were more distinctive and easier to isolate from the continuous rolling battles, that the army were involved in.

Military historians estimate that around 850 million artillery shells were fired during the World War I. The killing in this mass war was industrialised: the hail of bullets and the fire of machine guns took the lives of up to 11 million soldiers. The warring nations conscripted a combined total of nearly 56 million recruits. On average 6,000 soldiers died each day of the war. In addition, over 21 million soldiers were wounded — they lost parts of their bodies, were paralyzed or bedridden, had to have amputations, or ended up blind or deaf.

We rightly think of our own casualties, but France who mobilised approximately the same number as the British Empire, had twice the number of casualties. Germany mobilised 11 million men and had over 7 million casualties. Austria-Hungary mobilised 7.9 million but had 7.02 million casualties. However with the benefit of hind sight you can understand why Russia is paranoid about being attacked, she mobilised 12 million and had 9,150,000 casualties. All these heart reaching figures pale, when considering the casualty figures of the Second World War, which started just 21 years later. One major difference was the effect on the civilian populations, the First World War's bombing of towns and cities caused panic and terror but had little serious effect, this was not so during WW2.

Recording the fallen, highlights to me that each one who fell had family left behind, mother, father, wife, fiancée, brother, sister, son, daughter, more distant relatives and of course friends. From the Parishes of Swaffham and Sporle, on average a man was killed every two weeks, a devastating impact on so many. Across the country, in spite of individual grief, those at home still took up the yoke, undertaking the jobs vacated by the men going off to war.

The horrors of the war were not only confined to men, animals also played their part, it is estimated that eight million horses and countless mules and donkeys died. After the war ended many were sold for horsemeat to feed prisoners of war, and the starving local population. Only 60,000 made it back to Britain. Six black horses that survived the war, as a team would pull the body of the Unknown Warrior to its last resting place in Westminster Abbey.

Other animals were also enlisted, whilst visiting the Staffordshire Regiment's Museum I came across this story.

October 1918, Trapped behind enemy lines in Charlevaux, France, and surrounded by hundreds of German troops, the few hundred surviving members of the Lost Battalion were facing deadly fire. With his men rapidly succumbing to the onslaught and with two birds having already been shot down, Major Charles Whittlesay dispatched a frantic message by way of their last surviving homing pigeon, Cher Ami.

It took her 65 minutes to reach loft headquarters, just 25 miles away. She had been shot in the leg, breast and eye, but thanks to her efforts 194 members of the battalion were subsequently rescued.

Medics worked hard to save her life, but were unable to save her leg. They did however, fashion her a wooden leg!

Cher Ami died 6 months later from her injuries on Friday 13th June 1919, but not before being awarded the Croix de Guerre for her heroic service.

At St Peter and St. Paul Church we are remembering the sacrifice of our 112 men in several ways. We have a Prayer / Remembrance net where the names of our fallen are placed, and we hope others will add their thoughts and prayers. The Remembrance cards will be offered up in prayer, during the Morning Service on the 18th, when the newly appointed Archdeacon of Lynn, the Venerable Ian Bentley will be preaching. We are appreciative to "Swaffham Lions" for obtaining the net. Near the War Memorial Chapel, my research material relating to our men is on display, also included are details of the Vicars of Swaffham and Sporle who were in post during the war years. Spread among the pews there are plaques giving details of all 112, these are based on the Royal British Legion's theme of "There but not There". Two life size "tommies" stand sentry on our War Memorial steps.



Ringling Bells Across Europe

On 21 September 2018, International Day of Peace, bells from across Europe were called to be rung, from 18:00 to 18:15 to create a wonderful experience of SHARING HERITAGE!

In Europe, for more than a thousand years the ringing of bells has marked the time for work, for rest and for prayer. Ringing bells gave an audible structure to religious and secular life. Bells in the towers of churches and city halls, in the belfries of cemeteries and memorial sites uniquely represent core European values in a way which can be both seen and heard. Many Europeans love the sound of bells, music without words brought forth from a centuries-old craft tradition.

This sound has existed for five millennia, going back well before the founding of Christianity. It is intercultural. In 2018, we remember the end of World War I, a century ago, the start of the Thirty Years' War in 1618 and its end in 1648, in order not to forget how precious peace is for us all.

I have previously mentioned the bells in Cortina, which escaped the Italian decree "that all the bells should be confiscated and turned into canons" they were only saved by the direct intervention of Emperor Charles 1 who visited the town. Around 44 percent of German church bells were similarly removed and melted down. In the UK, I do not know of any similar instruction, which is why we still have the full peel of eight bells in St. Peter and St Paul, enabling us, at 7.05 on the evening of the 11th to take part in "Battle's Over", a Nation's Tribute, with the Church bells "Ringling out for Peace". Our most grateful thanks to the bell ringing team.

Four years ago when I started to recall and remember all of our Parishes who made the final sacrifice, I did not envisage what a time consuming and enthralling task it would be. I have visited numerous cemeteries and memorials, and where they have included our men our respects have been made. One of the most memorable was to the Menin Gate in Ypres, on the evening of the Centenary of Edith Cavell's death, to be miles from home and yet hear so much of Norfolk. The visit to Tyne Cott where four of our men are remembered, and the rows and rows of headstones, but knowing they are only a small number compared with the ones remembered on the memorial that have no grave. I wish to give thanks, to all who have provided information, either directly about a relative, the gift or loan of books that have enabled a deeper insight to an event, those who have involved me in conversation about some aspect I have highlighted. Most of all my thanks go to my wife Gloria who has helped tremendously, proof reading my articles, putting up with the time spent, trudging round often cold and wet cemeteries, and of course for the support she has shown.

THE INQUISITIVE MIND OF A CHILD

A Poem for Remembrance Day,
Author unknown

Why are they selling poppies, Mummy?
Selling poppies in town today.
The poppies, child, are flowers of love.
For the men who marched away.

But why have they chosen a poppy, Mummy?
Why not a beautiful rose?
Because my child, men fought and died
In the fields where the poppies grow.

But why are the poppies so red, Mummy?
Why are the poppies so red?
Red is the colour of blood, my child.
The blood that our soldiers shed.

The heart of the poppy is black, Mummy.
Why does it have to be black?
Black, my child, is the symbol of grief.
For the men who never came back.

But why, Mummy are you crying so?
Your tears are giving you pain.
My tears are my fears for you my child.
For the world is forgetting again.

I acknowledge the websites of the Royal British Legion and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, to give each man his due.

We Will Remember Them.