

Foreword

Between 1914 and 1918, over 44,000 men from Buckinghamshire served in the armed forces - at least 1,500 of them in the Royal Navy - and over 8,000 died as a result of that wartime service. In addition to the locally raised Territorial units - the Bucks Battalions and the Royal Bucks Hussars - and the wartime service battalions of the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, the names recorded on the county's war memorials represent every conceivable military unit, and every theatre of war. Many men, indeed, had emigrated prior to 1914 and served in dominion formations such as the Australian and Canadian Corps, but their connection to Buckinghamshire remained sufficiently strong for their sacrifice to be commemorated in their original town and village communities.

Through the ready availability of service, medal and pension records, as well as other national military records, the resources of national and local museums, the collections of the Centre for Bucks Studies, and the local press, there is so much that can now be found out about wartime servicemen and their experiences. It remains, however, an often frustrating exercise because the records are frequently incomplete. It requires, therefore, a great deal of effort to recover lost lives when all those who fought in the Great War have passed away, and the living links with that generation are also diminishing.

Consequently, the work being undertaken by groups such as the Chiltern U3A Family History Groups to study the names on war memorials and rolls of honour is invaluable. In the case of Amersham, it has meant tracing the stories of 98 servicemen. As always with this research, there have been details of the poignant and heavy sacrifice paid by some families, of the gallantry medals won, of those who died without ever reaching the front, of the sheer oddities in the record, and so on. It has resulted in a substantial historical contribution of lasting value and a worthy tribute to those from Amersham who lost their lives for King and Country.

For younger generations even the Second World War is a distant world, let alone that of the Great War. British society was utterly different in 1914 and, like other similar projects in the county, the centenary gives us a unique opportunity to revisit the actuality of the war in all its aspects and, in particular, enables us to cultivate a real understanding of the significance of what took place between 1914 and 1918.

I am delighted to be able to welcome the publication of the work of the Amersham World War One Memorial project.

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