



Thame Remembers News

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No 41

They Think It's All Over !

Wow - we did it, and so much more ! This has been a project that has delivered beyond our wildest expectations and which has engaged the whole community in a common pursuit.

The initial aim was for people from Thame to visit cemeteries and memorials around the world to lay crosses and wreaths in memory of all those from Thame who gave their lives in conflict. That was achieved with 100% success but as the project evolved we achieved many other things. We reached out to more than 3000 pupils in school assemblies, and to hundreds of adults in other presentations. We took two coach tours to the Western Front, and others within the UK. There was a launch video, two theatre productions, an award winning BBC News feature series, 41 newsletters, press coverage within and beyond the UK and, of course, the book 'Thame Remembers - the Fallen' telling the story of the project and of the men.

The key to everything was the painstaking research which led us to discover thirty more names not remembered anywhere in Thame but which will be added to the War Memorial at a future date. Many current day descendants of the casualties contacted us from far and wide, in some cases to thank Thame Remembers for contributing to their knowledge and in other cases to add to our research with pictures, memories and artefacts. Those who delivered crosses often returned to report how humbling and emotional they had felt at the time, with words like honoured and privileged regularly expressed.

Thame is unique in its community spirit and we believe that it is only in Thame that such an ambitious challenge could achieve such success.

Thank you everybody - those of you who encouraged us from the start, those who assisted us in attracting funding, all who ventured far and wide to deliver crosses, and everyone who offered moral, practical and material support and simply believed in our undertaking. The whole of Thame deserve to take pride in this achievement.

Cross Deliveries 2014-2018

212
servicemen remembered

by 300
people of Thame

who travelled over

150,000 miles

and visited


5 Continents

23 Countries

31 Memorials

102 Cemeteries



 **Thame Remembers**
~ The Fallen ~
Compiled by David Brotherton and Allan Hickman



"Thame Remembers - the fallen"

Our legacy publication has been flying off the shelves ever since the launch at Thame Arts & Literature Festival in October. Both the number and speed of sales have far exceeded our expectations with more than 75% of the print run gone so, if you have not already done so, move quickly to secure your copy, available from Thame Museum and the Book House at £25.00.

Complimentary copies have also been presented to Thame Town Council, Oxford History Centre, the Imperial War Museum, the National Memorial Arboretum and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, and have been acknowledged with many words of appreciation.

Final Celebration



Our final celebration party at the Spread Eagle on 11th November was a huge success. A very convivial evening was enjoyed by over 100 guests. The Spread Eagle provided an excellent buffet supper and we had commissioned a celebration cake for each table.

Entertainment was provided by Thame Players with songs and poems from their recent production of "O what a lovely war" and Peter and Kate reprised their parts and song from "Ten Tommies."

Speeches were kept deliberately short but particular highlights were Rev Alan Garratt and BBC News Reporter Victoria Cook reading John McCrae's poem 'In Flanders Fields' and Moina Michael's response 'We Shall Keep the Faith', followed by Iain Biddle, Kristian Winslade and Nigel Champken-Woods recounting their own adventures and emotions when making cross deliveries.



New Names for the War Memorial

We have mentioned in previous newsletters that we have found additional names that we think should be present on the War Memorial and we have started the process towards achieving that. A special working group of Town Councillors has reviewed and verified our research and has agreed that another thirty men should be commemorated at a future date, though the how, when, and who pays have yet to be determined.

We shall shortly be meeting with the Town Council to consider the options and, as the War Memorial is a Grade 2 listed structure, to start obtaining the necessary permissions. As a target we are aiming to have the work completed to coincide with centenary of the original unveiling by David Lloyd George in 1921. Most of the work for repair and restoration will be funded by the Town Council but how to fund the new plaque or plaques cannot be finalised until the costs are known. Thame Remembers have some funds remaining so we hope to contribute in some way.



Rugby Juniors at Menin Gate

Inspired by the Thame Remembers project an under-16's team from Chinnor Rugby Club made a special point of paying their respects at the Menin Gate Memorial in Ypres as part of a match tour last December. Alex Bond who led the tour said *"We wanted to take the opportunity to visit Ypres to let the boys see this inspiring memorial and show our respects to the Thame men who are remembered there."*

Montesson Remembrance

Monsieur Jean Francois Bel, Mayor of Thame's twin town of Montesson near Paris, invited our twinning association to join in their Armistice Remembrance Service and ceremony on 11th November. Ex-Thame Mayor and current Councillor Don Butler answered their call and was joined by Dr W Linkens, Mayor of Montesson's other twin town of Baesweiler in Germany, so all three countries were represented at this special occasion. Don reported afterwards that "it was a privilege to lay a poppy wreath on behalf of Thame in remembrance of our own fallen, and also those of France and Germany, who never made it back home. It was a very poignant occasion and a great honour, united in our thanks to those who made the ultimate sacrifice for us all".



#Thame
museum

This newsletter is printed and published by Thame Museum Trust and distributed free to all

This paper is intended as a digest of news items about the Thame Remembers project to keep the people of Thame up to date with what is happening.

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Ten Tommies from Thame

Our stage production telling the story of ten men from Thame who joined up together in August 1914 played to full houses at Thame Players Theatre on both nights. Written and mostly performed by people involved with Thame Remembers, the play followed the stories of those men at war, some of whom returned whilst others didn't, leaving widows and children without fathers, and impacting on the whole town. The play had it all from high drama through to a love story and even elements of humour, and there was not a dry eye in the house at either performance.

Many thanks to all those involved, especially to Thame resident Bruce Alexander (TV and stage actor), and to the backstage production and technical teams at Thame Players Theatre.



The Poppy Project

We hope that everyone noticed, and enjoyed, the many poppies displayed in Thame during the week prior to

Remembrance Day. Thame Remembers research enabled us to compile a list of around 600 men from the town who served in WW1 and, when we realised that we had addresses for over half of them, another idea emerged which we were able to mount in partnership with Thame Town Council and local primary schools.

Thame based printers Windles kindly produced the blanks which were then cut out and coloured in by hundreds of schoolchildren, with a black centre signifying a man who had died and a white centre for a man who served and survived. Names and a few details were added and the poppies were delivered to the current residents of the appropriate addresses with a request that they be displayed in a front window. Nearly all were more than happy to take part and the resulting display around town was a dramatic reminder of the impact of war on our community a hundred years ago. Some houses displayed more than one poppy – father and sons, or brothers – and four addresses each saw five men leave Thame to serve their country. Especially poignant was one house with four poppies, three of which had black centres! It was especially rewarding to see families with children, and whole classes from schools, walking around town taking in the display and passing the meaning of Remembrance on to a new generation.



Is that it ?

So, it's all over and we can file everything away, archive the pictures and the memories and pat ourselves on the back for a job well done – or can we? Certainly, having achieved our objective and beyond, the pressure is now off but the interest in learning and experiencing yet more will remain. We hope that many Thame families will make a point of visiting CWGC cemeteries and memorials when abroad and some of the Thame Remembers team are already planning a visit to Verdun in the spring. We will keep the website up to date with anything new and, indeed, we are still being contacted from all over the world and accumulating yet more information and artefacts.

There is a temptation to continue research, as new data becomes available, to which we will undoubtedly yield as we are keen to find out what we can about some of those who served and survived. We also hope that future generations will pick up where we have left off, and there are many stories yet to be explored and shared, so this may not be the last Thame Remembers newsletter. Our communications may not be as prolific and regular as they have been but don't be surprised to find the occasional update dropping into your email inbox.

And finally - thank you, people of Thame, you've done us proud.

