

DOWN MEMORY LANE

Continuing our series looking at Stewkley past and present

Centenary of Stewkley's Village Public War Memorial

Village war memorials are a feature of our country's landscape, and our Village Public War Memorial celebrates its centenary on 9 April 2022.

It takes the form of a granite obelisk surrounded by a lovingly kept garden, prominently located at the junction of the High Street with Soulbury Road. It is engraved with the names of 30 Stewkley Lads from WWI and 6 from WWII.



War Memorial Corner, Stewkley from south

The Memorial, originated following a public meeting held on 4 April 1921 and chaired by villager the Earl of Orkney was to decide, "whether Stewkley was to have a Public War Memorial or not." The proposition was carried by a huge majority and a War Memorial Committee of 16 village worthies was elected. A further 16 meetings took place to realise the scheme before its unveiling on 9 April 1922. The correspondence and minutes of the War



Unveiling of Stewkley War Memorial 9 April 1922

Memorial Committee meetings are conserved in the Buckinghamshire County Archive and are quoted in this article.

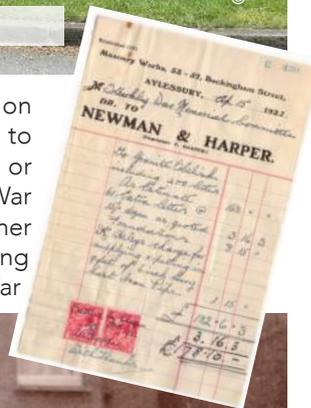
The form of the Memorial as an obelisk of granite was an early decision, not without controversy. The Vicar, Rev Archibald Moxon, felt that "it should be in the form of a cross similar to those on the graves of the fallen heroes in the cemeteries of France." His feelings were so strong that he sadly resigned from the committee as a matter of principle, "finding myself so entirely out of sympathy with the decision as to the form of the Memorial." Eventually a referendum was held amongst those parishioners pledged to subscribe to the target cost of £200. This confirmed the decision in favour of an obelisk by 145 votes to 39 for a cross.

The construction tender was awarded to Messrs Newman and Harper of Aylesbury for the price of £168 plus £10.5.0d for foundations. It is not known how or by whom the 30 names were chosen for the Roll of Honour. These were to be engraved in alphabetical order on the Memorial according to name, rank, and any gallantry award.

Research in 2009 revealed the names of a further 13 fallen Stewkley men missing from the Memorial. Some had married outside the village and moved away before the war, being remembered on memorials in other towns and villagers. With other names the explanation is less clear, and it seems we shall never be sure how they came to be omitted.

The obelisk was to read, "To our glorious dead. This obelisk is erected in honoured memory of the Stewkley men who fell in defence of their King and Country 1914-1918." The Memorial was to be unveiled at a village ceremony on 9 April 1922 by the Lord Lieutenant of Buckinghamshire, the Marquis of Lincolnshire. Ill health prevented his appearance, which explains photographic evidence of Lord Orkney taking his place at the unveiling.

The committee stood down on 10 May 1922, "investing the control and future care of the Public War Memorial in the Parish Council as it is a publicly elected body." The meeting closed, "members remarking that all had



worked together, and the Parish had erected a tribute to the memory of the Men of Stewkley who had given their lives for their King and the British Empire."

The names of the 6 Stewkley lads who gave their lives in WWII

were added to the Memorial following that conflict.

Every November during the Act of Remembrance at the War Memorial, the 13 missing names are read out and honoured alongside the names engraved on the Memorial.



1922 Unveiling of Stewkley War Memorial- Last Post

FROM THE GRAPEVINE 10 YEARS AGO...

From April 2012, at the AGM of the Village Hall Committee, chairman John Cornish was fêted for his 30 years in post, describing it humbly as 'being my hobby'...Harveys' café and delicatessen was closing on 28 April...Stewkley Singers announced their spring "Happy and Glorious" concert in Winslow church to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee...the full programme of village Diamond Jubilee events was published...the stonework conservation work to the north and south elevations of St Michael's Church was about to start...the Parish Council formally resolved to oppose the Dorcas Lane wind farm, as the anti-wind turbine campaign livened up...the village mourned the passing away of Richard Faulkner and Jenny King...Stewkley FC first team retained the Buckingham Junior Charity Cup...and teenager Owen Hearn's red kite image won the *Grapevine* best photo competition.



FROM THE GRAPEVINE 20 YEARS AGO...

From April 2002, it was hoped that a Post Office could be established in the village Library to restore a part-time service in Stewkley...St Michael's Church Tower conservation was complete with work to the West Front to begin that month...the Rec Committee bemoaned the lack of volunteers to man the Pavilion bar, without whose income the cost would increase for all sports using the Rec Grounds...the PC sought villagers' help in identifying the culprits of recent acts of vandalism...Methodist Minister, Rev Arthur Cowburn confessed that the biggest problem he had with the approaching Eastertide was that he knew the outcome of the story...Stewkley FC U-10s were champions of Division Four of the Rushden and Diamonds League...and Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition and Tory party leader, Rt Hon Iain Duncan-Smith was to open St Michael's School Fête and to judge the fancy dress parade.

