

Book chronicles the lives and Great War deaths of villagers



RESEARCH: By Wheatley war memorial is co-editor Bill Jackson with the book *They Were a Wall: Wheatley in a World at War 1914-19*, with others who contributed, from left, John Fox, Anne Ledwith and John Prest Picture: OX71060 Simon Williams



FLYING MACHINE: Above, soldiers with a captured German Fokker VII airplane at Nivelles, Belgium, 1918. Right, Private Walter Crick, who served with the Worcestershire Regiment and died on the first day of the Battle of the Aisne

Pictures: Crick collection, Wheatley Village Archive/Oxford Journal Illustrated, 1918



HEROES: Includes names not previously honoured

THE stories of Wheatley's First World War heroes - including some who have never before been documented - are told in a new book.

They Were a Wall: Wheatley in a World at War 1914-19 includes the stories of the 41 who died, the nearly 150 who returned and the role of village women.

About 170 free copies will be given to schools, libraries, museums and other public bodies.

The book - to be launched tomorrow - was the result of a year's work by members of Wheatley Royal British Legion and the Wheatley Society.

Co-editor Bill Jackson, 75, said: "It has been more work than we expected, particularly just nosying out the genealogical information.

"It is the family history of not just those who died but the nearly 150 who survived."

The retired United Nations volunteer manager, said: "One of the biggest problems was about two-thirds of the records of the First World War were destroyed in The Blitz."

Oliver Evans ..

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Genealogy websites, county archives and Woodstock's Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum - which opened this year - were vital aids, he said.

About 30 to 40 family members were also interviewed and he said: "There are some people of the same name in the village, there are plenty of descendants.

"I think we are probably surprised about how much people remember when you prompt them. They sometimes say 'oh yes there is an old photograph in the loft or the back bedroom'. The centenary year has been a very definite prompt."

Among those who were killed were brothers Walter Crick and Maurice Crick, both 20.

Private Maurice Crick was a member of the Machine Gun Corp and died on December 18, 1915 at Etretat, France and was buried in the village.

Private Walter Crick is

thought to have served with the 3rd Battalion of the Worcestershire Regiment.

He served in battles including St Quentin, Bapaume, Messines, Bailleul, Kemmel Ridge and the Aisne, where he was killed on its first day, May 27, 1918.

The book was partly funded with a £6,700 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

This has also funded a renovation of stones from the town's original war memorial - replaced in 1974 - which are now at St Mary the Virgin Church. Mr Jackson said: "This was a war where our people said 'we mustn't ever have wars like this again'. They made an enormous sacrifice."

The book will be launched in The Merry Bells hall, High Street at 7.30pm tomorrow with an exhibition there from 10am the next day to 4pm.

It will be priced £4.99 from the Wheatley Village Archive, The Merry Bells, High Street, Wheatley, OX33 1XP.

▲ Do you know more about the men named in the book? Contact Oliver Evans on 01865 425271