

Dorchester on Thames during the First World War

The pay of British soldiers tended to be lower than what the men would have earned in civilian life. Moreover, the loss of the main bread winner sometimes left families back home in a state of considerable hardship, obliging women to do additional, paid work, for example by taking in washing. Here is information about some of the women of the village, and the lives they led in the absence of their men.

Mrs Edith Atkins, Queen Street, Dorchester

Edith Atkins (née Flux) first came to Dorchester as upstairs maid to the Latham family at Bishop's Court. She married George Atkins of Dorchester in November 1913. George was wounded, was sent to Norfolk to convalesce, returned to the war and was then held prisoner. The war years were therefore very hard for Edith, although her experience was not unusual. She helped the extended family by working on the allotments ³, at that time a crucial source of food for the local community, and took in washing to make ends meet.

Mrs Agnes Cherrill, Malthouse Row, Dorchester

Agnes Titcombe was born in Knighton, Berkshire. She married Edward Cherrill, a Dorchester man, in 1910. She worked as a housemaid at Bishop's Court and the family lived in Malthouse Row. Edward Cherrill enlisted in 1916, into the OBLI. He served in Mesopotamia (now Iraq) and Southern Russia, contracting malaria, which would affect him for the rest of his life.

During the war, despite financial hardship with her husband away at war, Agnes managed to contribute to the care of a family of Belgian Refugees in the village with



Agnes Cherrill with her daughters, Edna, Dorothy, and Sybil, in a photograph sent to Edward while he was serving abroad.

gifts of vegetables, clothing, and money subscriptions. She was also a member of the Red Cross Society and made clothes for soldiers, including "pillows for wounded limbs made with rags cut up by the children." *Dorchester Parish Magazine, November 1914*

Miss Rosa Greenaway, The Plough, Dorchester

Rosa Violet Greenaway was the eldest child of Charles Edward Greenaway of Dorchester and Charlotte (née Gutteridge). The Greenaways lived in Martins Lane, Dorchester, before moving to The Plough, the pub at the junction of the High Street and the Abingdon road. Rosa was a cook, earning £24 per year. When a new voluntary service, the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC), was established in January 1917,

she enrolled and served as a cook in this country, but according to her family was prepared to go wherever she was sent, at home or abroad. As well as cooks, women served as clerks, telephonists, waitresses, and as instructors in the use of gas masks. Between January 1917 and the Armistice over 57,000 women served in the WAAC.



Rosa Greenaway in her WAAC uniform.

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Dorchester on Thames Oxfordshire



1918 Commemoration Trail

Names on the War Memorial From the First World War

131 men from Dorchester were called to the colours between 1914 and 1918 (out of a total population estimated at around 900, half of them male). Of those, 19 never came back. Here are some of their names, with details of where they lived and died.

Private Ernest George Bartlett, born c.1888, son of William Bartlett and Sophia, who at one time lived in Burcot. He enlisted in 1907 at Caversham with the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry (OBLI), and his Battalion was engaged in the attack on Bellewaarde Farm east of Ypres on 25 September 1915. He was one of the 179 soldiers killed in the attack, and is commemorated on the Ypres Menin Gate Memorial, panels 37-39.

Private Arthur Brain, born in Bridge End **4** on 26 May 1896, son of Reginald Brain, labourer, and Elizabeth. A farm labourer, he enlisted in 1910 with the OBLI, and fought at the battle of the Somme. He died near the village of Guillemont, and is buried in Mametz in 1916.

Private Harry Cherrill, born in the High Street on 11 April 1882, son of Charles Cherrill, 'engine man', and Ruth. He enlisted in 1899 in the Royal Berkshire Regiment. Seriously wounded in the battle of Neuve Chapelle in 1915, he was transferred to a military hospital near Boulogne, where he died shortly after. He is buried in the Boulogne Eastern Cemetery.

Private Joseph Alfred Gooding, married Mary Carter Sharp Godard of the Fleur de Lys in 1914 **2**. He enlisted in Oxford on 15 November 1914. In May 1917 his Battalion attacked the Hindenburg Line, and he was one of the men killed in action. He is buried in Hermies British Cemetery.

Private Fritz Green, born in October 1887, son of George Green, butcher, and Eliza, in business as a General Carrier. Fritz enlisted at Dorchester in a Territorial Battalion which after continuous service in France and Belgium was transferred to the Italian Front in 1917. He died in action only ten days before the armistice was signed, and is buried in Granezza British Cemetery on the Asagio Plateau.

Corporal Leslie James Green, born in the High Street on 26 January 1891, son of George Green, plumber and decorator, and Martha. Having enlisted with the Kensington Battalion, he took part in the Aubers Ridge attack in May 1915, which cost the lives of 13 officers and 423 other ranks of the Battalion, among them Leslie. His father was not notified until March 1916, as Leslie's body was never found and he was declared missing, presumed dead. He is commemorated on the Ploegsteert Memorial.

Private Frank Holliday, born on 2 June 1896, son of Joseph Holliday, bailiff to Sir John Willoughby at Field Farm, Dorchester, and Martha. The family later moved to 42, Queen Street. Frank enlisted at Abingdon in the Royal Berkshire Regiment, and after his training was transferred to the Machine Gun Corps. He was killed on 23 January 1917 when a shell pierced the roof of a dug-out which he and his fellow soldiers were occupying. He is buried in the Guards' Cemetery, Combles.

Private Horace King, born on 27 November 1896, son of Mertha Stacey of Overy Mill. He enlisted at Oxford in April 1915 with the OBLI. He was involved in the attack on Bellewaarde Farm and was posted missing on 25 September 1915. He is commemorated on the Ypres Menin Gate Memorial, panels 37-39.

Private William Richard McGrath, born on 18 July 1895, son of Joseph Robert McGrath, coal-porter resident in London, and Matilda (daughter of Richard and Emily Cobb of Dorchester, with whom William lived at the time of the census in 1901). He enlisted at Wallingford in November 1914 with the Royal Berkshire Regiment. He went missing in action at Fromelles, and is commemorated on the Ploegsteert Memorial.

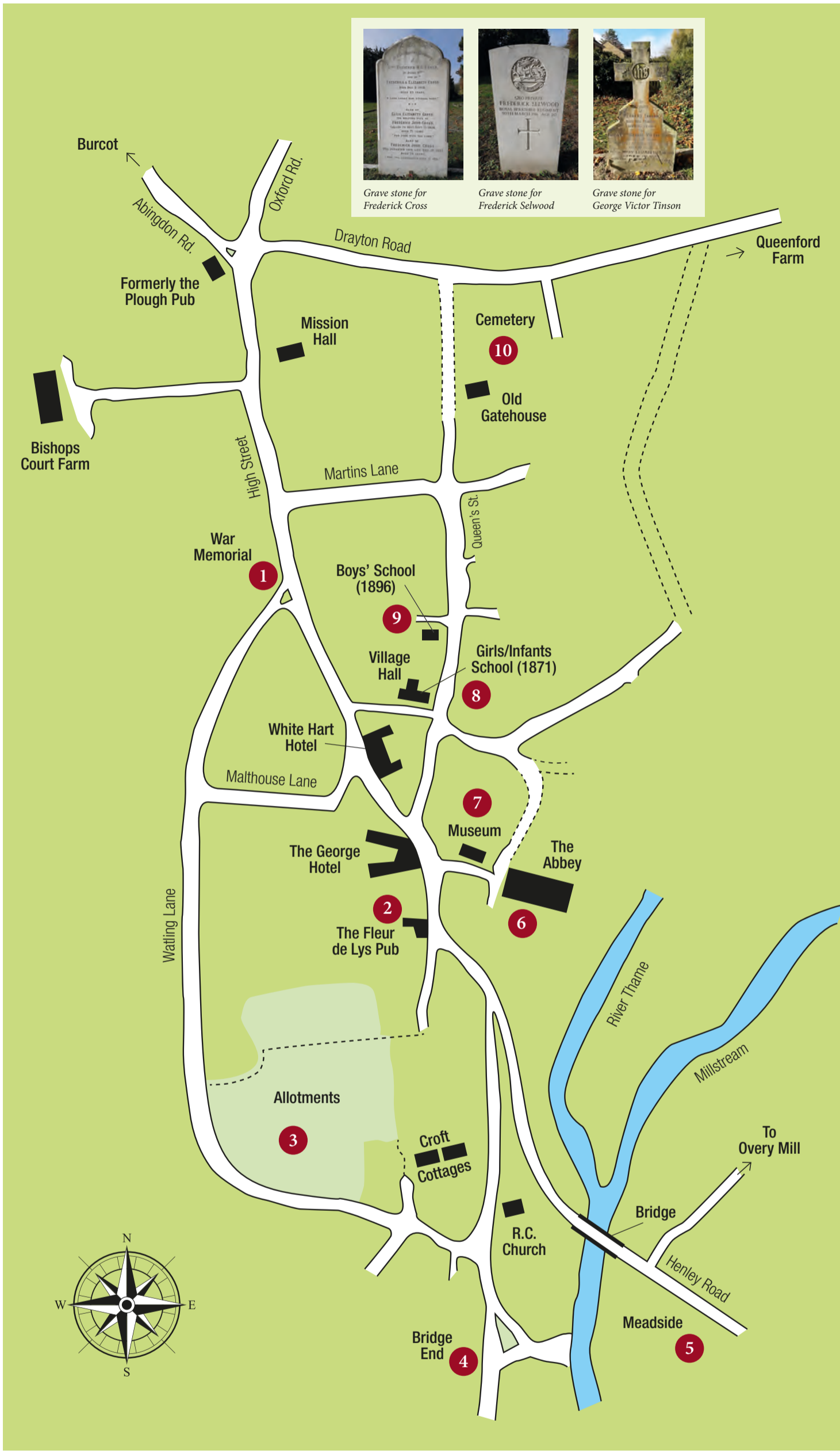
Private Herbert Harris Pill, date and place of birth unknown. He was a resident of Hammersmith at the time of his enlistment with the Royal Fusiliers. He was among those killed on 30 September 1915 during the attempt to capture the German-held Hohenzollern Redoubt in what became known as the battle of Loos. His body was never found, and he is commemorated on the Loos Memorial.

2nd Lieutenant Ronald Charles Nudds, born in 1892 at Monks Leigh, Suffolk, son of Horace Nudds, Headmaster of Dorchester-on-Thames school from 1905 until 1922, and Martha **9**. After gaining an apprenticeship with British Westinghouse, Manchester, Ronald enlisted on 8 September 1914 with the 20th Service Battalion, Royal Fusiliers. He died of wounds at Passchendaele on 30 November 1917. He is buried in Nine Elms British Cemetery, Poperinghe.

Private Owen Whiting, born in Bridge End **4** on 21 September 1886, son of Joseph Whiting, farm labourer, and Emma. He enlisted at Oxford in September 1914 as a member of a Territorial Battalion, which went to France in 1915. He died at Passchendaele on 27 August 1917. His body was never recovered, and he is commemorated on the Tyne Cot Memorial, Zonnebeke.

Rifleman Sidney Arthur Williams, born in Malthouse Lane on 1 March 1898, son of Alfred Williams, house painter, and Emily. He enlisted at Salisbury in 1916 with the Wiltshire Regiment, and landed in Egypt in December 1915. He was killed during the assault on Gaza, then in Turkish hands. He is buried in Gaza War Cemetery.

Details about the men who were buried or commemorated in Dorchester cemetery can be found on the reverse **10**. For more information, see D.P. McGregor, *Lest we Forget: the men of Dorchester-on-Thames, OXON, who fell in Two World Wars 1914-18, 1939-45* (Dorchester: Dorset Press, 2004).



Grave stone for Frederick Cross Grave stone for Frederick Selwood Grave stone for George Victor Tinson

Private Roland Cobb, born in one of the Croft Cottages on 7 November 1897, son of William Cobb, bricklayer, and Ruth. He enlisted soon after his 18th birthday and was transferred to the Royal Berkshires in 1916. He was wounded in the Grevillers Trench in the Somme in March 1917, and died soon after of his wounds. He is buried in Dernancourt Communal Cemetery Extension, and commemorated on his sister's grave in Dorchester.

Frederick William Cross, born in 1893, son of Frederick Cross, thatcher, and Elizabeth. He enlisted in the Territorial Army shortly before the outbreak of war, and like other territorials was invited to volunteer overseas once war had been declared. His regiment (the Royal Berkshires) was sent to France in 1916. It is likely that he was wounded near Maisseny, repatriated to the UK, and died of influenza in December 1918. He is buried in Dorchester together with his parents.

Lieutenant Harold Ernest Hatt, son of Richard, yeoman farmer of Queenford Farm, and Emma. Before the outbreak of war Harold had established a chemist shop at Tiverton in Devon. In 1914 he enlisted in the Army Service Corps 2nd Mounted Division, 2nd South Midland Mounted Brigade. After discharge from the army, he resumed his chemist's business in Tiverton. However, he died in tragic circumstances, believed to be suffering from what might now be recognised as PTSD, and his body was found in the river Exe in March 1919. He is buried in Dorchester alongside his father.

Private William Henry Hill, born c. 1897, son of Stephen Hill, farm labourer, and Elizabeth. He enlisted at the outbreak of war in 1914, and was later transferred to the Machine Gun Corps, which was sent to France after initial training in the Machine Gun Centre at Grantham. He was later invalided home, and died from pulmonary tuberculosis at the Radcliffe Infirmary in Oxford on 29 March 1919. He is buried in Dorchester, but to date the precise location of his grave has not been identified.

Private Albert Kirby, born in 1888, son of James Kirby, bank messenger, and Selina. A carpenter, after conscription was introduced in January 1916, he enlisted in May with the Royal Berkshire Regiment. He was killed on his way from Le Havre to the front line on 30 July 1916, and is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial. He is also remembered in Dorchester next to his parents.

Private Frederick Selwood, born on 29 February 1896 in Dorchester-on-Thames, son of John Selwood and Eliza. He enlisted as a Territorial at Reading in 1914, aged 18. He died of fever on 30 March 1916 whilst guarding the East Coast of England with the 2nd/4th Battalion Royal Berks, and is buried in Dorchester.

Private George Victor Tinson, born in 1890 at Dulwich, son of Herbert, footman at Hursley. He enlisted at Kingston, and took part in the battle of Loos where he died on 26 September 1915. He is commemorated on the Loos Memorial, as well as on his father's grave in Dorchester.



Old Gatehouse



Dorchester Abbey

Dorchester Remembers Its Heroes

The Dorchester War Memorial 1
 Although a war shrine in the Abbey had been considered as early as 1916, when peace came, discussion of a permanent memorial was initiated by the Parish Council. A public meeting was held on 30 January 1919, and three suggestions were made: a memorial tablet in the Abbey 6, a parish hall, or a monument in the village. A Memorial Committee was formed, and at another public meeting on 14 May 1921, after several changes of direction, it was decided to erect a cross to the memory of the 19 Dorchester men who had died in the Great War. Within five months, on 16 October 1921, the memorial cross was unveiled by Lieutenant-General Sir Hew Darlymple Fanshawe and dedicated by the Bishop of Oxford.



The Dorchester War Memorial today

For more information, see Kate Tiller, *Remembrance and Community: war memorials and local history* (Somerset Herbert, Ashbourne, Derbs.: The British Association for Local History, 2013), pp. 33-35.

Homes Fit for Heroes: Meadside 5
 In 1919, the Housing and Town Planning Act had begun the first large-scale building of council houses. However, for most of the 1920s and early 1930s, the emphasis was on providing new housing for the urban population. Hardly any new housing was provided in rural areas, where authorities felt that agricultural workers would be too poor to afford the rent. Even after the 1926 Housing for Rural Workers Act had been passed, councils tended to prefer subsidising landlords to update existing workers' cottages, rather than building new homes for them. It was not until the 1936 Housing Act that local authorities received sufficient funds to build a larger number of rural council houses, and these were often built on new land on the edge of villages, where plain but spacious semis became characteristic of the period.

The exact date of the building of Meadside is not clear, but for more information see Trevor Yorke, *Homes Fit for Heroes: the aftermath of the First World War 1918-1939* (Newbury, Berks.: Countryside Books, 2017), p. 86.