

SHEEPSTOR WAR MEMORIAL

short biographies of those who lost their lives in WWI
compiled by Peter Hamilton-Leggett
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In this, the centenary year of the Great War, it is a fitting tribute we owe to those who sacrificed their lives for the freedoms we so cherish today.

There was a "naivety and innocence" among the men who signed up for the First World War. They had no idea of what they were going into. They didn't just sacrifice their lives, they sacrificed their future and left a sad and depleted generation behind.

Recruitment was intense both in Tavistock & Plymouth - bright uniforms, interesting military equipment, brass bands, local dignitaries, friendly recruiting officers, enticing leaflets (see Europe for Free) and press coverage. However, the people of Devon were reluctant to come forward especially as war broke out at harvest time. In Devon many stayed at home to farm.

The national average who went to war in each village was 11% whereas Devon averaged only 5% but our part of West Devon seems to have kicked this trend. Of the 70 inhabitants from Sheepstor parish, 16 (23%) went off to fight. This was twice the national average. The area also led the way in generosity by collecting eggs & sphagnum moss, knitting garments and sending food parcels let alone collecting £1000s. Of those that went 2 are remembered on our memorial. Others, born or connected with the parish, are remembered on other memorials.

The hotly debated Military Service Act came into force on 2 March 1916. From this date, most single men between the ages of eighteen and forty-one years old were considered to be in the military and could be called-up to fight at any time. A second Act in May 1916 included married men and a third, in 1918, raised the upper age limit to 51.

Out of more than 14,000 parishes in the whole of England and Wales, there are only around 50 so called 'thankful parishes', which saw all their soldiers return.

21050 Private William Henry MORTIMORE

William was born on 21 September 1881. His parents, Charles and Mary Mortimore, owned the Park Cottage Inn, Sheepstor. William went to Meavy School and later became a ringer in Meavy. By 1901 he was living in the Parish of St Saviour, Dartmouth, working as a bricklayer. He married at the beginning of 1906. He enlisted into the Devonshire Regiment and was awarded the Victory and British War medals. He was killed in action on 23 April 1917, aged 36 and lies buried in Bay 4 of the Arras Memorial, France. By this time his parents had moved to Milton Combe. His name also appears on the Meavy Roll of Honour.

PLY/15599 Thomas Henry BLATCHFORD

Thomas Henry was born 28 August 1895 at Durrance, Meavy to Thomas and Alice Mary Blatchford. By 1901 his father had the tenancy of Meavy Barton Farm. Educated at Meavy school where the family address was now Hayford, Meavy. Their father died, aged 48, on 23 March 1907 and the school register notes that on March 28 the children "left the neighbourhood". No trace can be found for most of them and in 1911 Alice was an inmate at the Tavistock Union Workhouse.

The next we hear of Thomas Henry (Harry) is in January 1912 when he enlisted in the Royal Marine Light Infantry, Plymouth Division, aged 17 years. He was aboard HMS Defence at the Battle of Jutland and was killed in action when the ship exploded with loss of all life. His body was never recovered. He had been awarded the usual three war medals - 1914 Star, British War & Victory. He is also remembered on the Plymouth Naval Memorial.

NOT ON MEMORIAL BUT REMEMBERED ELSEWHERE

Major John BAYLY TD

Son of Robert & Emma Sophia Bayly, John was born in 1869 in Plymouth. In 1913 he was awarded the Territorial Distinction medal. At the outbreak of war he had joined the North Devon Hussars. He died of pneumonia in 1918, aged 48 years. He is buried near NE corner of Sheepstor church and is remembered in his home town on the Ivybridge War Memorial.

26259 Alfred EVA born 1888 to Henry & Rosie Eva. Joined Duke of Cornwall Light Infantry. Died 2 April 1918 aged 33. Was living at Ringmoor Cott, Sheepstor before joining up. Remembered on the Walkhampton War Memorial.