

GODALMING TOWN COUNCIL



PRESS RELEASE

Godalming Commemorates WW1

August 4, 2014 marks the beginning of the national commemoration of the centenary of the First World War and is the first of six national memorial days to be held between August 2014 and November 2018.

On behalf of the whole community Godalming Town Council plans to honour and remember the lives of the 281 young men from the former Borough of Godalming who are known to have died; plus those who served and others affected by the war and the families who suffered. During the four-year period of commemoration the Town Council will arrange a number of events and work towards a single WW1 memorial for the town.

The first commemorative events will take place on Monday 4 August. At 2.30pm outside the Farncombe Day Centre in St Johns Street, the Town Mayor Councillor Andrew Wilson and the Rector of Farncombe Rev James Rattue will unveil and dedicate a board representing a time clock of the war. The time clock will name all 281 men and record the dates they died. A second board and time clock will be located at the Pepperpot.

Later, at 6.30pm, at Ss Peter & Paul Church the Rev Canon Mervyn Roberts will lead a short act of remembrance, during which the Colour Standard of Godalming's Old Contemptibles will be paraded and re-dedicated in their honour. This will be the first time since 1966 that the Standard has been paraded and it will be carried by David Hammond whose Grandfather, Frank Hammond, was the Standard Bearer for Godalming's Old Contemptibles. All members of the community are welcome at either or both of these events.

As part of its research identifying the names of those from Godalming who died during the war, The Town Council has produced a supplement to the original Roll of Honour which lists an additional 117 men who died during the war, along with further details of those already recorded. A facsimile of the original Roll of Honour with the new supplement will be presented by the Mayor of Godalming to Godalming Museum, and a further copy will be placed by the WW1 memorial plaque inside Ss Peter & Paul Church. Alongside that plaque will also be placed a 1915 lantern, to be lit during the service on 4 August. This 'Vigil Light' will be kept alight by the Ss Peter & Paul Church as a continuous act of remembrance during the centenary period, 4 August 2014 to 11 November 2018 for those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

Ends

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Notes for Editors:

War Memorial

Unusually for a town of its size, Godalming does not have a single memorial that names the fallen of the First World War. (The war memorial in the Phillips Memorial Park lists the dead from WW2 but not WW1.) After WW1 ended, the council of the time proposed the opening of a Peace Park; this idea was rejected by residents at a public meeting held at the Borough Hall and the organising committee resigned. In the absence of a council sponsored memorial, Godalming's churches created their own memorials, with the first being the Memorial Chapel at St John the Evangelist, Farncombe. Other memorials soon followed at Ss Peter & Paul Godalming, St John the Baptist at Busbridge (now Busbridge Church) and Godalming Wesleyan Methodist Church (now Godalming United Church). A memorial was also installed at Godalming Fire Station in Queen Street and relocated with the firefighters to the present Godalming Fire Station in Bridge Road.

Roll of Honour

Godalming Borough Council did commission an illuminated Roll of Honour that recorded the names of all those from the town who served not just those who died. The original of that Roll of Honour is in the safekeeping of Godalming Museum and is available to view online in the Ancestry pages of the Godalming Joint Burial Committee at <http://www.godalming-jbc.gov.uk/Ancestry>

At the time that the various Memorials and the Roll of Honour were being planned and created the names were collected from the local community. This was a difficult task and not all the names of those who died were recorded. It is surmised that this was for many reasons including widows and parents moving away or dying before the memorials were created. With access to the National Archive and the Commonwealth War Grave Commission's records, Godalming Town Council has identified 117 men killed who were not previously recorded in the Roll of Honour of whom 60 are not recorded on any of the town's various memorials.

Of the young men of Godalming aged between 18 and 41, approximately 15% of them lost their lives, the youngest being 16 year old George Grover of Farncombe St, who was just 15 when he lied to the Guildford recruitment Sergeant.

The Old Contemptibles

The 'Old Contemptibles' was the self-appointed name of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) who served in France between 4 August 1914 and 22 November 1914 (Battle of Mons). It was alleged at the time that Emperor Wilhelm II of Germany (the Kaiser) had referred dismissively to the BEF as a "contemptible little army". As the Old Contemptibles passed away, the Godalming Standard was laid up at Ss Peter & Paul in 1966. As part of Godalming's commemorative programme the Town Council undertook to have the Standard, which is a unique piece of the town's social history, preserved and lightly restored by a professional conservator to allow it to be paraded over the centenary commemorative period, with the ultimate aim of conducting further preservation works to ensure it survives as a reminder for future generations.