

BACK TO THE FRONT

*Abbots Langley, Bedmond, Hunton Bridge,
Langleybury and Leavesden*



Great War Project



**Souvenir Programme
Project Celebration Afternoon
Sunday 24th February 2019
Bedmond Village Hall**



Abbots Langley Parish Council



BACK TO THE FRONT PROJECT

Welcome

Welcome to the End of Project Celebration for the very successful Back to the Front Project. In 2018 the Project played a significant part in the Parish of Abbots Langley's commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the end of the Great War. Throughout 2018 the Project staged many events and activities as part of the commemoration. We estimate that over 200 people assisted with the planning, production and support for these activities, and thousands of others attended and participated.

This afternoon we are together to celebrate the success of the Project. On behalf of the Project I want to thank each and every one of our volunteers, supporters, and the organisations that provided Grant aid which made everything possible.

The main funding for the Project came from the Heritage Lottery Fund, whilst significant financial support was also received from Abbots Langley Parish Council, Three Rivers District Council, and Hertfordshire County Council (Sara Bedford's Locality Grant). I should also like to thank the Bedmond Village Hall Committee, the Church of the Ascension, and St Lawrence Church at Abbots Langley for providing facilities and support throughout the year.

The Project aimed to convey a better understanding of the Great War to the local community and also bring that community together to commemorate the part played by their forefathers serving in the Great War. Feedback received, postings on social media and exceptional attendances at all of the Project's events, and the outstanding support of the Remembrance Sunday Service at Abbots Langley, where it is estimated that 2,000 villagers attended, all indicate that we met those objectives.

It is apt that a line in the song "Only Remembered", from which the Project's November production took its name goes "Who'll tell the stories?"

I hope we did.

Thank you all very much. Without your support it couldn't have happened.

Roger Yapp

Project Leader

Back to the Front

www.backtothefront.org

Project Research



The Back to the Front Project started with the research of just one man – Walter Owen – from Trowley Bottom at Abbots Langley, but quickly expanded to cover the men listed on the Abbots Langley War Memorial. As experience with Great War military and family history research was developed, more and more sources of information were discovered. Soon over

twenty sources were being examined, and slowly the stories began to emerge. Trips to the battlefields in France and Belgium were arranged to see first-hand where many of the men fought and died. It was much harder to find out the details for those that returned, and great assistance was given by Lorraine Bennett and Pam Rastall at the St Lawrence Parish office as they had discovered the Parish Roll of Honour which was recorded in the Parish Magazines at the time. Some 450 men were listed in the Parish Magazines, and starting with these names the Project went on to find out the details for a total of 667 men and women. In 2014 the Project worked with Abbots Langley Parish Council to erect a noticeboard adjacent to the War memorial at St Lawrence Church. The stories of the fallen have been displayed on the board on the 100th anniversary of their death, and the Bell Ringers of St Lawrence Church have tolled the bell one hundred times at twelve noon to mark each event.



Project Team & Project Volunteers

Several new members joined the Back to the Front Team from March 2017 in preparation for 2018 when the Project planned to mark the 100th Anniversary of the end of the Great War in the local Abbots Langley Parish. The new members brought new ideas and skills, and came from a variety of organisations in the local area. From the photograph (left to right) – Liz Burns (Abbots Langley Branch Royal British Legion); Elaine Johnson (Three Rivers District Council); Jane Lay (Abbots Langley Parish Council); Wendy Ball (Bedmond); Roger Yapp; Delva O'Regan (Abbots Langley Local History Society) and Geoff Cunningham (Western Front Association).



Not in the picture but playing their part were Peter Waddell (St Lawrence Church); Tim Perkins (ALPC) and Pam Lewis (RBL).

The Project Team has met each month throughout 2017 and 2018. During 2017 a lot of time was spent planning a programme of events and activities for 2018. In November a successful Grant Application was made to the Heritage Lottery Fund, and additional funding was secured from the Abbots Langley Parish Council, Three Rivers District Council and Herts County Council (Sara Bedford's Locality Grant).

The Project organised its first appeal for Volunteers in September 2017, and the Volunteers met for the first time in January 2018, and have been invaluable in supporting the activities throughout the year. In total 200 individuals supported the Project.

Window Stickers & Abbots Langley Great War Walk

Using information derived from the Project research the addresses of many soldiers from Abbots Langley and Bedmond were pin-pointed. In May 2018 the Project delivered window stickers and information packs to these houses, and encouraged the current occupants to display the stickers prominently at their property. The information pack provided details of the Project's programme for 2018, and also the story or stories of soldiers that had lived at the property at the time of the Great War. Quickly, stickers appeared in windows throughout the village, and interest in the project took off.



On the late May Bank Holiday the Project organised a Great War Walk around the centre of Abbots Langley and we were overwhelmed when 220 walkers took part. On some streets, with window stickers being displayed in nearly every house, the impact of the War on the village could easily be seen. At the end of the Walk the walkers were treated to an excellent selection of refreshments provided by the 1st Abbots



Langley Scouts. Working with the Project two of the Scout Leaders had researched the role of the Abbots Langley Troop during the War, and a very informative exhibition was staged at the Scout HQ.

Abbots Langley Carnival & “Mud & Memorials”



In June 2018 the Project took a stall at the Abbots Langley Carnival. Considerable interest in the Project was shown by the multitude of visitors to the stall, and great feedback was received, especially with regards to the Window Stickers and Great War Walk. Requests were made for a repeat walk, and also for stickers from those living in houses without them. A

second walk was subsequently organised and thought was given as to how more stickers could be distributed.

Also in June in an activity entitled “Mud & Memorials” the Project worked with 280 children at seven local Junior Schools to create clay tiles, each identifying a fallen soldier from the Parish. Working with a professional Clay Artist – Jo Atherton – each group was given an introduction to the stories of the local soldiers, and then worked designing their own tiles. Throughout the remainder of 2018, in a lengthy process, the tiles were fired and glazed, and in the Spring of 2019, will be used to create two new War Memorials, one in Abbots Langley, and the other on the front wall of the Bedmond Village Hall.



Millennium Poppy & More Window Stickers



On Saturday 16th June, during a short ceremony, the Abbots Langley branch of the Royal British Legion unveiled a newly created mosaic poppy at the Millennium Garden at the centre of Abbots Langley. The poppy was designed and built by local Royal British Legion member Frank Rouse.

Having distributed window stickers to the houses in the Parish where it had been identified that men from the properties had served during the Great War, the Project established that this covered only about 30% of the soldiers from the village. These men had given their

exact address when they joined up, whereas many others gave only their street name, or just the name of the village as their address in their Service Records. As a result for some streets in the centre of Abbots Langley it could be assumed that a soldier lived at virtually every house – but just who lived where was not known. A new, second window sticker, was designed in July and distributed together with information packs in a “Could a Soldier Have Lived at this Property” scheme.



Bedmond & Repeated Abbots Langley Great War Walks

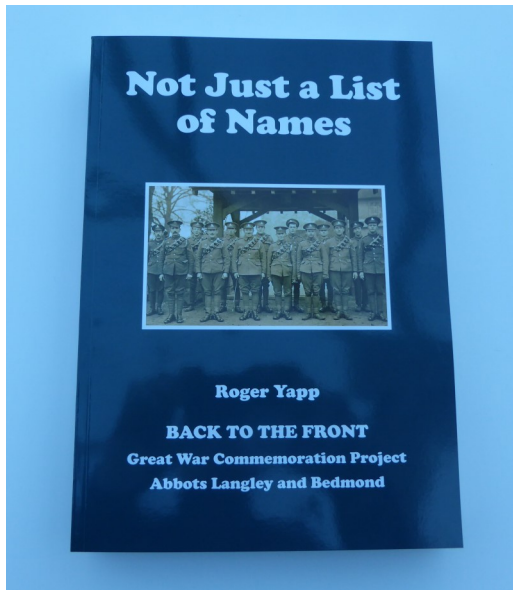


A Great War Walk for Bedmond took place on August Bank Holiday Monday. In response to feedback received from the earlier walk around Abbots Langley, walkers were offered a shorter or longer walk around the village. Approximately 130 walkers took part in both walks and refreshments were provided at the Bedmond Village Hall. In advance of the Walk, window stickers had been distributed to the properties in the village where individuals had served in the Great War.

A second Abbots Langley Great War Walk was organised in early September. This time the route was changed and included visiting the area of Trowley Bottom and the area around the old Leavesden Asylum. Once again the Abbots Langley Scouts provided refreshments at the end of the Walk.



Project Book & Tough Ten Race



Throughout 2016 and 2017 the stories were finally completed for 667 men and women from the Parish that had served in the Great War. In January 2018 the Project successfully applied for a Grant from the Abbots Langley Parish Council to support the publishing costs of a book to record the stories of these men and women. Preparations for the production of the book, which was entitled “Not Just a List of Names” were completed by the end of September 2018, and the finished books arrived from the printers a few weeks later. Each book was the size of an old style telephone directory and weighed five and a half pounds!



The annual “Tough Ten” charity race around the streets of Abbots Langley became associated with Back to the Front in October 2018. To commemorate the 100th anniversary of the end of the Great War, the race organisers used the Project’s Tommy Langley logo as the centre-piece of their 2018 medals. Richard Baldwin, Roy Barnes, and Paul Quarman, three modern day descendants of Abbots Langley’s Great War soldiers, helped start the races and also distributed medals to runners as they completed the course.

Schools' Singing Workshop & Bedmond Exhibition

In October, Brenda Southorn ran a Singing Workshop for 120 local Junior School children at the Henderson Hub. The children were introduced to a selection of songs that the soldiers sang whilst at the Front in the Great War. The children sang several songs and the lyrics and context of the songs was explained in an entertaining afternoon of song and music.



At the end of October the Back to the Front Exhibition opened at the Church of the Ascension (“Tin Church”) at Bedmond. The local story of life during the Great War was explained on 26 professionally produced exhibition panels. The Exhibition, which was open each morning, remained at the “Tin Church” for a week before re-locating to St Lawrence Church at Abbots Langley. Throughout the week a constant flow of visitors attended the exhibition.



“Spirit, Service & Sacrifice” Concert Party & Street Poppies



In February 2018 ideas were discussed to produce a Concert Party evening at Bedmond Village Hall. Concert Parties had been organised at the Hall by a group of local ladies called the “Bedmond Pioneers” during World War 2 and by Violet Henderson during the Great War. A selection of acts and individuals agreed to participate and

plans were made to provide an evening of food and entertainment for the residents of Bedmond, who were encouraged to attend in period costumes. The evening entitled “Spirit, Service and Sacrifice” took place on Saturday 3rd October, where Master of Ceremonies Brian Hibberd introduced a series of local acts to over 100 guests. A great evening was had by all, and will be remembered for years to come.



Towards the end of October a team from the Abbots Langley Parish Council, working with the Abbots Langley branch of the Royal British Legion, attached giant red poppies to the lamp-posts in the centre of Abbots Langley, Bedmond and Leavesden.

Abbots Langley Exhibition & “Only Remembered”



The Back to the Front Exhibition opened at St Lawrence Church at Abbots Langley on Saturday 3rd November. To coincide with the opening, the Project Team were on hand to distribute pre-ordered copies of the project book “Not Just a List of Names”. The Exhibition was very well received, and over 150 people left very complimentary comments in the Visitors’ Book. The Exhibition remained at the Church for three weeks, and it is estimated that it was visited by several hundred people.

The pace of Project activities increased as the 100th anniversary of the Armistice to end the Great War approached on 11th November. At the end of October rehearsals began for “Only Remembered”, a production to tell the story of the village during the Great War through words and music. Using the Project research, letters and newspaper reports from the time, Simon Ash (Director) created a story which was interspersed by an appropriate, inspired selection of songs by Brenda Southorn (Musical Director). The production ran for four performances, three of which were sold out.

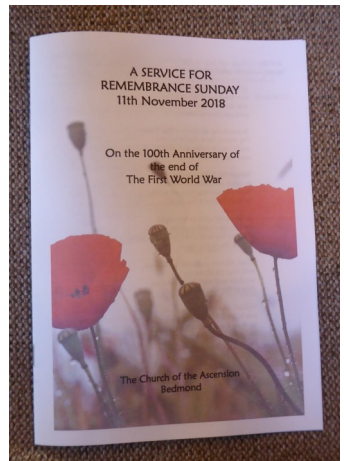


Remembrance Sunday 2018

The Armistice which marked the end of hostilities for the Great War was signed at 11.00am on 11th



November 1918. At 11.00am on Sunday 11th November 2018, one hundred years later, it was estimated that 2,000 people attended the Remembrance Sunday service at the War Memorial at Abbots Langley. Earlier in the day services had been held at the War Memorials at Leavesden and Langleybury, and at 3.00pm a Service of Remembrance took place at the Church of the Ascension at Bedmond. Later, an evening of prayer, music and poetry led by Brian Hibberd entitled “Now That The Guns Have Stopped”, was held at the “Tin Church” at Bedmond and respectfully closed the day’s activities.



Project Activities 2019



Back to the Front will continue into 2019. In April/May new “Mud & Memorials” War Memorials will be unveiled at the Abbots Langley Club and the Bedmond Village Hall.

Throughout 2018, and continuing into 2019, the stories of the men and women from other parts of the Parish have been researched. Research for 204 men and women from Langleybury/Hunton Bridge is complete, whilst work continues to explore over 400 individuals from Leavesden. Later in 2019 the stories of these groups will be published on the Project web-site.

The War Memorials at Abbots Langley, Bedmond and Langleybury were all erected in 1919, and in 2019 will be 100 years old. Planning is underway to re-dedicate the Memorials at Abbots Langley and Bedmond later in 2019, at which point the names of those that died during the Great War, but for some reason were not included on these Memorials at the time, will be added. From Back to the Front research twenty-seven men have been identified that can be added to the Abbots Langley Memorial, and one man that can be added to the Memorial at Bedmond. More information about these events will be available at the Project web-site www.backtothefront.org.





Horses Field Poppy August 2018: Tracey Addison. Three Rivers District Council:
Leavesden Country Park Photography Competition winner 2018

www.backtothefront.org

