

A SALUTE TO COURAGE & SACRIFICE

A Parish at War

A military record of three Oxfordshire villages
Deddington – Clifton – Hempton

Michael Allbrook and Robert Forsyth



This unique book is about the some 600 men and women from one small parish – a population of 1,490 in 1911 – who served their country in times of conflict. It records their names, service details and many of their experiences from Waterloo to the recent war in Iraq. Also included are those who served in the Home Guard, Women's' Land Army & Timber Corps, Royal Observer Corps, WVS, Narrow boats, and how the parish managed the evacuees.

The book was launched in Deddington Parish Church following the Armistice Day Service on 11th November 2011

Profits will be donated to The Royal British Legion

Just a few of the stories revealed by the authors' research include:

- ◆ Letters home from the Boer War provide a fascinating insight into one soldier's experiences.
- ◆ Several brothers from the Parish died in WWI - one family lost 3 brothers.
- ◆ 48 men from the Parish died in WWI and are named on the War Memorial; the book reveals a further 19, all of whom can rightly claim to be from Deddington, who also died in action, but are not on it.
- ◆ One Army officer won the Military Cross twice for bravery in WWI and his two brothers also saw combat action in the Royal Flying Corps.
- ◆ The recollections of an 11 year old boy, who was evacuated to the parish in 1939.
- ◆ A baker's lad, who became a naval cook, served on ships supporting the raid on Lofoten, the hunt for the Bismarck (he was sunk while serving in the destroyer *HMS Mashona*), then action-packed Malta and Arctic convoys. He applied for transfer to submarines to be safer!
- ◆ A soldier recounts that he was captured in waters off Dunkirk by a German submarine, spending the rest of WWII as a Prisoner of War. Incredibly - showing he bore no grudges to an enemy who held him prisoner - the same man employed a German ex PoW to help with his garden post war.

- ◆ An 18 year old boy joined the RAF instead of the Fleet Air Arm in 1939 because he could not find the correct recruiting office before he had to return to his school dorm for the night. He went on to fly 44 different types of aircraft – including the legendary nuclear-armed Vulcan bomber.
- ◆ Not everybody returned from service, even in times of so-called peace; an 18 year old National Serviceman was ambushed and killed by Communist bandits while on patrol in Malaya (now Malaysia) in 1950.
- ◆ Also uncovered is a Royal Observer Corps underground bunker that, during the Cold War, was meant to measure radio-activity if the Russians attacked the UK with nuclear weapons. It was in service right up until 1989.
- ◆ One of the authors – Robert Forsyth – was a Cold War warrior himself, including being captain of a nuclear-powered attack submarine. His story is also told.

Further information about the content of the book can be found on the parish website where much (but by no means all) of the research material is archived at www.deddington.org.uk/history/worldwars

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WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT IT

‘Michael Allbrook and Robert Forsyth are to be congratulated on the production of this excellent book. It is a true labour of love in which many hours of research have been spent collating information and details of parishioners who served our country during both world wars and after. I was particularly interested to read of Robin Hall, who was killed in action serving with The King’s Own Yorkshire Light Infantry in Malaya in 1950, who is buried in ‘God’s Little Acre’, Batu Gajah, Parak. I also served there, a few years later, and recall burying comrades in that same cemetery.’

Major David G Hood MC, President, Deddington Branch, The Royal British Legion

‘On 8 May 1918, in one of the tragedies of war, 20 year-old Ted Ambler was patrolling No-Mans-Land in northern France when he was shot by a nervous young sentry; both were from the same Company, 2nd Battalion, Scots Guards. Today, all his family is dead and his story almost forgotten. This made me decide to research War Memorials, to share more information about those who are commemorated.’

Michael Allbrook co-author

‘The average age of a WWII soldier was their early twenties - and many were still teenagers - and most had not travelled much beyond their own county when they suddenly found themselves on the sands of North Africa or in the monsoon heat of the Burmese jungle or wading ashore on to French soil on D-Day. Each and every one could write their own book so but in many cases they never had the opportunity to put anything into print. We hope that our book throws some light on their service and ensures some of the details of what they did are not lost forever. It has also been a great honour to bring the story from the early 20th Century, right up through the Cold War today, revealing an astonishing continuity of service and potential sacrifice that means the Parish even today finds itself doing its bit for the defence of the nation.’

Robert Forsyth co-author

THE AUTHORS

Michael Allbrook

Michael moved to Deddington in 2007 from Surrey where he had run his own recruitment business specialising in staff for Human Resources. His earlier career was in personnel management with several companies including EMI. He was appointed a Companion of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development in 1989. He married Sally in 1969 and their two daughters and their families live locally.

His Grandfather, Arthur, served in WWI and volunteered to train in gas warfare, a silly decision some thought, but his knowledge was soon considered too great to risk his serving on the Front. Three Uncles also served; Walter was so traumatised by his experiences that he returned a changed man. Ted was shot and died whilst on patrol in No Mans Land and Jack died from his wounds in 1917.

In WWII both his parents volunteered for, and were, Officers in the Royal Artillery and the Women's Royal Air Force. Two Uncles also served and all survived. Uncle Edward, who was in Tanks in the Desert Rats, took part in the North African Campaign, the invasion and fighting in Italy and was posted home to join the Normandy invasions. At this point he was severely wounded near Falaise which resulted in his spending the next year in hospital.

Michael's birth coincided with D-Day and the arrival of the first flying bombs. For this reason his Mother and he moved from Essex almost immediately and then to London where one memory is walking to school and passing so many bombsites awash with rose bay willow herb and buddleia.

Rob Forsyth

Rob's grandfather served in the Royal Artillery in WWI, as did his uncle in WWII. His father was a Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (RNVR) officer in WWII, serving in Coastal Protection and Air Sea Rescue forces. His nephew served in the Fleet Air Arm in the 1980s.

Rob grew up in Priors Marston, Warwickshire, and Tring, Hertfordshire. During his time in the navy Rob and his wife, Maureen, lived in many places and when they moved to Deddington in 1977 with their children Nicola, Justin and Jonathan, their plan was to be here for a couple of years but, like lots of other people, have found many reasons for remaining in the parish ever since.

After an exciting career as a submarine officer, on the front line at sea in the Cold War, Rob left the Royal Navy (RN) in 1981 to seek wider horizons than a periscope offered and worked for a number of high technology companies, the last of which was Westland Group plc as its Marketing Director.

On retirement from this second career (1999), he continued in the aerospace business as a consultant for a few years and was a founding director of The Oxford Channel, one of the first local TV stations in the country.

Rob is now fully retired but still fully occupied with parish history, golf, tennis and four grandchildren.

THE BOOK

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