The Influence of the Church of England on

Post War Memorialisation in Shropshire 1900–1925

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Submitted for the Open University MA in History

January 2023

Word Count: 15877
Abstract

War memorials are a common sight across the English landscape in both religious and secular settings. This dissertation considers how the design and placement of such memorials came about at both national and local levels. Some of the secondary literature relating to the Great War 1914-18 suggests that the state religion used the groundswell of national grief during and after the conflict to re-establish their position in society at a time when the Church was experiencing increasing secularisation. This argument is tested against the evidence of the discussions and actions taken relating to the interment of the Unknown Warrior in Westminster Abbey on the same day that the secular Cenotaph was being unveiled, showing there was a deliberate, rapid and successful move on the part of senior clergy to shift the focus of the day from the secular to the religious.

The papers of the Powis Estate relating to the village of Lydbury North in Shropshire suggest similar patterns at a local level. The supporters of the church war memorial scheme that made up the War Memorial Committee chaired by the Vicar were determined to provide a sacred monument that would survive over time by being placed within the curtilage of the parish church. However, some felt a more secular memorial in the form of a village institute would be more appropriate to a community that did not all worship in the parish church. Despite this opposition, the War Memorial Committee continued with fundraising and planning until they had achieved their objective.

The dissertation concludes that the influence of the leaders of the Church of England in channelling the focus of national grief from a secular to a religious setting was mirrored at a local level. By placing the memorial on sacred ground, post war remembrance was indelibly linked to the state religion and ultimately won over the alternative suggestion of a secular village institute.
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Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is my own, unaided work and that I have not submitted it, or any part of it, for a degree at the Open University or at any other university or institution. Parts of this dissertation are built on the work I submitted for assessment as part of A825.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr Rachel Duffett for her enthusiastic help and support whilst supervising this dissertation. I would also like to thank the staff at Shropshire Archives, Dr. David Caddick and Rev. Hannah Lins for their interest and encouragement.
Introduction

Beside the south door of the parish church of the village of Lydbury North in Shropshire is a sandstone cross that commemorates the twenty five men from the parish that died in the Great War (1914-18). It looks different today than when it was unveiled in December 1920 as the original cowl has been removed and the names of five parishioners that died in the Second World War (1939-45) have been added. Otherwise it has remained in its place at the centre of the village for over a century as the villagers that commissioned it had planned. It is thought that 74.5% of the estimated 70,000 twentieth century war memorials were erected following the Great War resulting in what has been described as the ‘militarisation of the landscape’.¹ From the complex symbolism of the Cenotaph in Whitehall to the plainest memorial in a country village they could be thought to be symbols of a time when communities came together in harmony to remember their war dead.² But a war memorial can also represent a complex site where community conflicts were played out often based on social class and denominational differences.³

This dissertation will consider the discussions and disagreements about the Lydbury North memorial, just one of the thousands raised in the years after the Great War. As many take the form of Christian iconography and are to be found either in a church building or within the curtilage of a place of worship as in this

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case, it is not unreasonable to assume that the Church of England was often at the centre of discussions regarding the memorial and how this was seen in Lydbury North will be considered in detail.

From the work undertaken on both A825 and A826 it is clear that a good local history is one that is written with an understanding of context. This dissertation aims to reflect that definition. The key primary sources are the minutes of the War Memorial Committee of Lydbury North and the records of the Powis Estate which include numerous letters and other documents relating to the war memorial. When researching this dissertation it became clear that the minutes did not reflect the debate that took place in the parish. The minutes are part of the parish records but it is the documents held in the Powis Estate records that provide the evidence of the discussions and disagreements that occurred. Of particular interest are a series of letters from Rev. Bernard Kissack who had been the Vicar of Lydbury North from 1912 –19 and who continued to demonstrate a strong connection to the debate around the memorial once he had left the parish. The archive also does not include any detail relating to the outcomes of the meetings held by those who objected to the memorial and wished to see a village institute instead. Whilst lacking this detail is frustrating there is enough information in the surviving documentation to have some understanding of the conflicts that occurred. Lydbury North also has a ‘War Record’ which was collated by Rev. Kissack and provides detail relating to numbers of volunteers, casualties and village activities during the war as well as information on the war memorial itself which has provided useful information about how the parish was impacted by the

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war. For the national level discussions Hansard records have been accessed along with both national and local newspaper articles from the period.

Historians writing about the position of the Church in society in the early twentieth century hold contradictory views, either describing Edwardian Britain to be experiencing a crisis in relation to faith in an increasingly secular society or alternatively being a society that depended on their very real religiosity to express their social values. A number of texts consider the response of the Church to conflict. The views of the clergy during the Boer War are discussed by Mark Allen and Mark Chapman who argue that there was less enthusiasm for the war than may be believed. During the Great War the involvement of the clergy at a local level is seen in the work of Alan Wilkinson who believes that this has largely been ignored by historians in favour of the national debate. Callum Brown offers the view that what some see as a crisis of faith during and after the Great War was more a crisis of authority as deference to authority in society including to the Church reduced. Keith Grieves notes that in some places the existing social order found challenge to their authority by those who desired an interdenominational facility for returning servicemen to use, often outside the direct

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5 Lydbury North War Record, St Michaels Church, Lydbury North.
control of the Church.\textsuperscript{10} This he believes reflects what could be the beginning of post war religious doubt.\textsuperscript{11}

Chapter One will consider memorialisation practice following the Second Boer War, 1899-1902. The first section will discuss the differing views of historians about the position of the Church of England at the turn of the century when it was considered by some to be under threat from a number of factors including secularisation and a reduction in attendance that potentially made it less relevant to many. The second part of the chapter will discuss why the Boer War was seen as a turning point in terms of remembrance. It will argue that this conflict was the first that involved large numbers of the population who were more involved due to volunteers coming from all social classes and with greater access to the popular press. This also meant that death in battle was not restricted to the professional army. Military authorities did not appear to acknowledge this new found need of families to contribute to memorials and actively excluded them when funding regimental memorials. Local leaders and the government saw no reason to raise further memorials and left it to the armed forces. The Church provided a means by which memorials could be raised and substitute funerals held to support the bereaved in their home parishes. The final section uses examples from Shropshire to illustrate this argument. The chapter will conclude that during and after the Boer War the Church was central to remembrance for some.


\textsuperscript{11} Grieves, p.179.
Chapter Two reviews how, during and after the Great War, the Church of England and other denominations provided support for individuals and communities. The first section considers the narrative of sacrifice and will show how, at parochial level, the churches were central to acknowledging the sacrifice of service personnel and their families. This they did through not only religious activity but leading parish community schemes such as fundraising and supporting forces overseas. Nationally, the government understood that there was now a need for formal memorialisation but wanted this to be in secular form almost completely excluding the Church. The Church found an opportunity to move the focus from the secular to the sacred through the burial of the Unknown Warrior on the same day as the unveiling of the Cenotaph which will be discussed in the second part of the chapter. This had the effect of moving the Church of England centre stage at an event that was seen as crucial to bring the nation together after the trauma of conflict.

Finally, Chapter Three will, in the form of a local history case study, look in detail at the events and discussions held in Lydbury North after the war in relation to the proposed war memorial. The methodology includes both quantitative and qualitative information. By using primary evidence supported by academic research it will show that the Church at a local level reflected the way the national church acted in that it worked swiftly and in a determined way to manage local memorialisation despite opposition. Whilst just one example of the events at a local level, the secondary literature shows that it was not an isolated example of discord within a community.
Chapter One: The Church and Military Memorialisation 1900-14

In order to provide context for the later discussion, this chapter considers memorialisation following the Second Boer War 1899-1902, a conflict which occurred during a period of changing attitudes to social class and organised religion in England.¹ The chapter will show that places of worship were often seen as focal points for memorialisation and that religious ritual was central to the process even to those that may not have been regular churchgoers. It begins by reviewing the position of the Church of England in 1900 before discussing the burgeoning practice of commissioning war memorials at local level - there are at least 520 Boer War era memorials in England - and links this to an increasing popular awareness of the war.² For the first time the numbers of volunteers from the developing middle classes and increasing levels of literacy meant that the population was more engaged with the popular press and coverage of the events during the conflict. In addition, the fact that those who died did so far from home denying their families a grave beside which to mourn impacted on a population to whom funereal ritual was important.³ The final section of the chapter will consider examples from Shropshire to illustrate how the Church was involved in post war memorialisation at the turn of the twentieth century in the county.

The Church of England 1900-1914

Valerie Parkhouse describes the period during and after the Boer War as being a time when the parish church was the place that bereaved people turned to.⁴ But

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¹ Peter Donaldson, Remembering the South African War: Britain and the Memory of the Anglo Boer War from 1899 to the Present (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), p.11.
³ Donaldson, Remembering, pp.2-3.
⁴ Parkhouse, p.86.
Parkhouse also suggests that the placement of memorials in churches and the religious inscriptions on them should not be taken to suggest that people were supporters of the Church of England, particularly the working-classes. By the Edwardian period church attendance in the countryside was thought to be ten per cent higher than that in large towns and cities. Clive D. Field suggests that non-attendance in church was not merely a class specific problem but was related to the religious crisis identified by Hugh McLeod who attributed it partly to the marginalisation of the role of the Church within society through secularisation and industrialisation.

At this time the term ‘secularisation’ related to ‘the state takeover of church property and functions including giving out relief to the poor, maintaining schools, influencing social policy and controlling charities’ which actively reduced the influence of the institution that upheld the moral and religious structures of society rather than just a reduction in the numbers of church attendees. An example is the Elementary Education Act of 1870 in which the state formally accepted responsibility for education although the role the Church had played was still influential and its role should not be overlooked. This may go some way to understand why the Church may have been keen to maintain a central role in community life in part through managing the process of military remembrance. However, Callum Brown writes that the association with the state meant that the

5 Parkhouse, p.86.
8 Brown, p.3.
9 Elementary Education Act, 1870, 33 & 34 Victoria, Ch.75; Parkhouse, p.323.
10 Brown, p.3.
Church of England was socially acceptable and seen as a relaxed and undemanding religion, only requiring periodic expressions of devotion to demonstrate a level of personal religiosity.  

James Obelkevich agrees, writing that the Church of England was a faith that individuals of all social classes were prepared to engage with even if only at particular points in their lives such as marriage, baptism and burial. Particularly among the middle and upper classes there was also a sense that as the Church was part of a social order in which they themselves had a privileged position, it deserved their support. This statement appears to imply that church attendance was driven by a need to comply with social status but Obelkevich believes there was also a real commitment to religious faith adding that social pressure worked as a deterrent on church attendance in the working classes in the same way it encouraged attendance in the middle and upper classes.

From the beginning of the Boer War, the clergy of Church of England sought to give their congregations the Christian justification for and explanation of the war although some critics interpreted this as the Church blindly supporting government policies due to its close links with the establishment of the state. However, through his analysis of sermons of the time, Mark Chapman believes this is an inaccurate view and that the clergy, whilst generally supporting the war, did not reflect the extremes of patriotism and imperialism that was evident in society and

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13 Obelkevich, p.338.
14 Obelkevich, p.338.
indeed promoted a narrative of humility and responsibility towards the Empire.\textsuperscript{16} Domestically, the revitalised sense of national solidarity appealed to some of the clergy and Chapman believes this could be considered with hindsight as a ‘trial run for the First World War fifteen years later’.\textsuperscript{17} There was, in reality, a number of different attitudes to the war among the clergy including complete opposition, although many only chose to share their views in private, reflecting what Mark Allen believes was the political dilemma the Church faced being so closely associated with the state.\textsuperscript{18}

\textit{Remembering the Boer War}

Thomas Pakenham believed the Boer War was ‘the most prodigal since 1815, it was expected to be over by Christmas 1899, it cost more than £200 million and 22,000 Imperial lives were lost, the majority from disease’.\textsuperscript{19} It was considered to have been a significant blow to British self confidence at a time when well established societal norms were already being challenged.\textsuperscript{20} Importantly, the war coincided with the developing middle classes beginning to establish themselves in society despite much of the hierarchical social structure still being in place. It validated and confirmed the status and respectability of the middle classes as they made up the majority of the initial volunteers for the army along with large numbers of working-class volunteers – a situation that would be seen again at the outbreak of the Great War.\textsuperscript{21} In part this was due to the changes in the structure of the British Army through the Military Localisation Act of 1872 instigated by Edward Cardwell, the

\textsuperscript{17} Chapman, p.182.
\textsuperscript{18} Allen, p.31.
\textsuperscript{21} Donaldson, \textit{Remembering}, p.11.
Secretary of State for War 1868-74. This was in response to concerns about the calibre of recruits particularly from urban working class backgrounds and led to regiments having local areas from which to recruit.\textsuperscript{22} There was a view that rural recruits were fitter and more compliant towards authority which demonstrated a nostalgia felt for the hierarchical rural society and which was reflected in the Act.\textsuperscript{23} A major reason for the numbers of recruits of all classes that volunteered was the enthusiastic patriotism and militarism of the time, seen again at the beginning of the Great War.\textsuperscript{24} Meurig Jones writes that at the end of the nineteenth century the Victorians created their own values based on service to God, Queen and Empire and that through promoting these values the print media played an important role in shaping attitudes towards the war and the numbers volunteering.\textsuperscript{25} It is estimated that up to 1914 more than five hundred English language books and pamphlets about the war were published, raising awareness during the conflict and ensured that the army maintained a high profile after hostilities had ended.\textsuperscript{26}

In part due to Cardwell’s reforms, the Boer War was the first in which the names of all ranks not just those who held a commission, were inscribed on memorials in virtually every case, described by Peter Donaldson as the ‘democratisation of memory’.\textsuperscript{27} The period also saw an unprecedented popular movement to create memorials to individuals which Jones believes is in part due to most social classes having at least some disposable income and therefore having the ability to

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{22} Parkhouse, p.2.  \\
\textsuperscript{23} Parkhouse, p.2.  \\
\textsuperscript{24} Parkhouse, p.xiv.  \\
\textsuperscript{26} Donaldson, Remembering, p.2.  \\
\textsuperscript{27} Donaldson, Remembering, p.171.
\end{flushright}
contribute, resulting in many people being commemorated more than once.\textsuperscript{28} Most memorials to individuals were placed in a public area where they could be seen, a Protestant church being the most common location for this and possibly indicative of the need of the bereaved to seek solace in the familiar particularly as there was no grave beside which to mourn.\textsuperscript{29} Although written about the aftermath of the Great War, Catherine Moriarty’s view that there was a disruption of how individuals and communities grieved due to the lack of a body and a grave was also true of the Boer War given that the majority were buried in South Africa.\textsuperscript{30} Moriarty also believes that the Boer War is an interesting precedent for the Great War as it was the first in which volunteers had died in numbers beside professional soldiers whose deaths may have been considered a professional hazard and therefore lacked the pathos of a brave volunteer giving his or her life.\textsuperscript{31}

If true that war memorials are an expression of the era in which they were created, there is much to be gleaned from Boer War memorials and how they differed from those raised after previous conflicts which tended to commemorate individuals such as senior leaders and rarely if ever named those who were not commissioned.\textsuperscript{32} Parkhouse notes that the informal memorials such as the ‘Spion Kops’ at football grounds, named after the 1900 battle, were evidence of how widespread the impact of the war was.\textsuperscript{33} As the war had claimed the lives of those that were considered to have followed their patriotic duty by volunteering in such large numbers, there was also a move on the part of local leaders to demonstrate recognition of their locality’s

\begin{thebibliography}{1}
\bibitem{28} Jones, p.4.
\bibitem{29} Jones, p.5.
\bibitem{31} Moriarty, p.65.
\bibitem{32} Jones, p.2.
\bibitem{33} Parkhouse, p.324.
\end{thebibliography}
contribution to the Imperial cause although many were content to leave such
memorialisation to the military authorities. Following the suggestion that an arch
be erected at the eastern end of the Mall as a national memorial, it seems that the
Government was also content to allow others to lead commemoration, reflecting on
the activity at local level saying that they were ‘not prepared to say that the proposal
seems to be generally regarded as desirable’. 

‘Salopia Stands Grief Stricken’

According to Peter Francis at least twenty nine Boer War memorials have survived in
Shropshire, mostly in churches but also in town halls and schools. Lydbury North
has no such memorial and so those in churches in two other villages will be
considered as will the regimental memorial to the Kings Shropshire Light Infantry
(KSLI) in Shrewsbury. County regiments erected memorials to provide a visible
reminder of the sacrifice of regulars and volunteers and the strength of the bond of
the ‘military family’ in part as a response to the Military Localisation Act. An example
is that in Shrewsbury to the fallen of the KSLI (Fig.1.1). The memorial is in a
prominent position overlooking the park and was funded by members of the regiment
at a total cost of £604 15s 10d. Funding such as this was not uncommon
according to Donaldson who believes that restricting of subscriptions to exclude the
bereaved families from contributing meant that the dead were effectively removed
from their blood families making them appear to be the possession of the army (Fig

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34 Donaldson, Remembering, pp. 11-12.
35 Hansard, 4th series, vol 139, 03 Aug 1904 col.714.
36 In Memoriam: Captain Gordon Wood, Poem by Esther Knott, All Saints Church, Culmington, Shropshire.
38 Shrewsbury Chronicle, 29 July 1904, p.5.
1.2).\textsuperscript{39} This argument would be raised again following the decision not to repatriate the dead of the Great War and the resulting disagreements in relation to the standardisation of headstones in the military cemeteries that were being laid out.\textsuperscript{40}

\begin{figure}[h]
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\begin{minipage}[t]{0.45\textwidth}
\caption{KSLI Memorial Shrewsbury (Photo: Graydon Radford)}
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\begin{minipage}[t]{0.45\textwidth}
\caption{KSLI Memorial Inscription (Photo: Graydon Radford)}
\end{minipage}
\end{figure}

In the case of Shrewsbury, although the memorial was completely funded by the regiment, the land and plinth were donated by the Town Council reflecting the desire of local authorities to be involved in the memorialisation process whilst not necessarily leading it. Despite the memorial not being within the curtilage of the adjacent church, there was still a religious element to the unveiling ceremony in July 1904 with prayers and hymns illustrating the importance of religious ritual in the commemoration process. The newspaper lists the civic, religious and military dignitaries that attended but there is no description of the bereaved families that may have been there.\textsuperscript{41}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{39} Donaldson, \textit{Remembering}, p.50.  \\
\textsuperscript{41} \textit{Shrewsbury Chronicle}, 29 July 1904, p.6.
\end{flushright}
Religious symbolism also played an important role in the commemoration of the life of Captain Gordon Wood who is commemorated in the ancient All Saints Church, Culmington, a village about twelve miles from Lydbury North. This large memorial window is everything that might be expected of the time in that it commemorates a member of the landed gentry, is full of Christian iconography portraying as it does St Michael and the Christian Soldier and is accompanied by a further memorial in the form of a brass plaque raised by his regimental colleagues all of whom are listed on the plaque but which is placed away from the window itself.42 His father was not only the local landowner but was also the churchwarden at the time of the memorial installation in 1901. He would have been in a position to influence its placement and installation although there are no records of the faculty application or discussions at vestry meetings about it as these records appear not to have survived.43 The window is what draws the eye when visiting the church. Touchingly there is a framed copy of a long poem about him which hangs below the window itself.44 The brass tablet from the regiment is on the facing north wall and is not directly opposite the window, giving the impression that it may have been family and local friends who led the memorialisation process rather than the military family and that the window was the centre of memorialisation. Gordon Wood, despite being buried on another continent may have been mourned how his family dictated because they were in a position to do so. The physical memorials were not the only form of recognition of his death which illustrates the need to provide some form of ‘surrogate funeral’ which

42 Jones, p.2.
43 Shropshire Archives (SA), P87/V/1 Culmington Parish Records, History of All Saints Culmington (1971).
44 Francis, p.113-4.
the Church had long held a dominant role in providing and which was seen again
during the Great War.\textsuperscript{45}

\begin{figure}
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\begin{minipage}{0.4\textwidth}
Fig. 1.3: All Saints Culmington showing memorials Window
(Photo: Dee Radford)
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\begin{minipage}{0.4\textwidth}
Fig. 1.4: Capt G.E.B. Wood Memorial Window
(Photo: Dee Radford)
\end{minipage}
\end{figure}

Following a send off dinner held in Ludlow on 27 January 1900, Captain Wood and
the Squadron of Shropshire Yeomanry that he commanded left for South Africa.\textsuperscript{46}

By the end of October that year he was dead, his obituary appearing in the local
paper on the 27\textsuperscript{th}.\textsuperscript{47} The following weekend a memorial service was held in the
parish church in Ludlow, the closest town to Culmington, preceded by a parade of
civic dignitaries and military personnel who, along with his family, having marched to
the church through crowds lining the roads, listened as the Rector intoned the burial
service and the military band played Beethoven’s Funeral March.\textsuperscript{48} This was not the
first such memorial service for Captain Wood as on the day after the news had
broken in the local press, morning and evening memorial services were held in

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{45} Moriarty, p.66; Donaldson, \textit{Remembering}, p.6.
\textsuperscript{46} \textit{Ludlow Advertiser}, 27 January 1900, p.4.
\textsuperscript{47} \textit{Ludlow Advertiser}, 27 October 1900, p.5.
\textsuperscript{48} \textit{Ludlow Advertiser}, 10 November 1900, p.5.
\end{footnotes}
Culmington church at which the bell was tolled and the Death March in Saul played.\textsuperscript{49} There was, of course, no body to bury. Captain Wood was buried in South Africa having been borne to his grave by his Sergeants one of whom said that he was glad to be able to ‘perform this last duty for one who was a true specimen of an English gentleman’.\textsuperscript{50} A service, described as a festival by the local paper, was held in October 1901 to dedicate the window.\textsuperscript{51} Such a description illustrates Donaldson’s point that such ceremonies were often almost ‘carnivalesque’ in the way that they celebrated collective values and achievements and in which the needs of the bereaved could not overcome the self congratulatory tone of the service.\textsuperscript{52} It had been funded by locals both rich and poor ‘who had pleasure in contributing’, and was heavy in militaristic rhetoric as well as appropriate religious texts and hymns. It was followed by a reception at Captain Wood’s family home where a letter from the King was read out and his posthumous South African War medal presented to his father.\textsuperscript{53}

Another example of a Boer War memorial is in Condover, a village near to Shrewsbury (Fig 1.5). The memorial is to Private John Beddall who died of Enteric Fever on 04 June 1901 whilst serving with a Volunteer Battalion of the Kings Shropshire Light Infantry (VBKSLI) in South Africa.\textsuperscript{54} In July 1905 the dedication service for his memorial in the parish church in the village was reported upon in the local press. Members of the VBKSLI marched from Shrewsbury to attend evening service during which the memorial was unveiled.\textsuperscript{55} Whilst a less grand occasion

\textsuperscript{49} \textit{Ludlow Advertiser}, 03 November 1900, p.5.
\textsuperscript{50} Francis, p.114.
\textsuperscript{51} \textit{Ludlow Advertiser}, 27 October 1901, p.5.
\textsuperscript{52} Donaldson, \textit{Remembering}, p.172.
\textsuperscript{53} \textit{Ludlow Advertiser}, 27 October 1901, p.5.
\textsuperscript{54} \textit{The Advertiser}, 08 June 1901, p.5.
\textsuperscript{55} \textit{The Advertiser}, 22 July 1905, p.4.
than that of Captain Wood’s dedication, the involvement of the church as a place of display is still clear although there is no indication as to whether his family were present and there is no evidence of discussions regarding the memorial in the vestry minutes of the church. Private Beddall is remembered on the KSLI memorial in Shrewsbury and so is an example of one who was commemorated twice – by his community and his army family (Fig 1.6).

Fig 1.5: Memorial to Pte J. Beddall, Condover (Photo: Graydon Radford)  
Fig 1.6: KSLI Memorial, Shrewsbury (Photo: Graydon Radford)

Summary

The Boer War was a significant event for many people in England unknowing as they were about the trauma that was to follow within twenty years. Although dwarfed by the losses after the Great War the fact that volunteers from all classes were commissioned or enlisted meant that many previously unaffected families now understood the risks and dangers that the military faced and so the drive for memorialisation differed from that of previous conflicts. The Church of England, under pressure from reduced attendance and the impact of secularisation, became a focus for commemoration providing the means by which memorials could be raised by communities and military colleagues alike whilst ensuring that religious

56 SA, P81/C/1, Condover Parish Records: Vestry Minute Book, 1901-1905.
ritual was central to the process. Places of worship were seen as the appropriate place to guard the memory of loved ones. The continued custom of the authorities to control memorialisation such as the regimental memorials that excluded the bereaved would not end here but following the Great War the increasingly assertive bereaved began to influence the memorial process.
Chapter Two: Remembrance: From the Streets to the Abbey, 1914-20

‘Remembrance is the means by which the incommensurability of the Great War is acknowledged and expressed’.¹

This chapter will discuss the commemorative responses to the Great War during and immediately after the conflict and will consider the extent to which the Church of England was involved in these activities. It will explore the role of churches in remembrance at a local level throughout the war which included supporting individual families, provision of additional religious services, managing community projects and in some places the support of street shrines. At a national level it will argue that the Church of England actively pursued a central role to remembrance by adopting the idea of the Unknown Warrior interment in Westminster Abbey in 1920. In doing so it was successful in moving the focus of national remembrance from the secular Cenotaph to the sacred Abbey on a day that was already resonant with meaning. The chapter will conclude that despite diminishing congregations during the war the Church was active at a local level in supporting communities. At a national level Church leaders were acutely aware of the reducing attendances and so were keen to make the Church of England central to national memorialisation.

Sacrifice

Adrian Gregory describes how in order to make sense of grief there is a need to construct a narrative that somehow gives the impression that good comes out of loss.² This was understood on a national level where the narrative was around the

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‘pre war rhetoric of God, Empire, King and Country on notions of sacrifice and presenting the war as a crusade for human dignity and liberty’.³ For individuals, families and communities, the Great War was a very different experience than that of the Boer War and the level of sacrifice could never have been imagined in 1914. Firstly, the scale of the losses of the Great War were unprecedented.⁴ Although there is some confusion to the exact numbers of British service personnel who died as a result of the war the best estimate is 722,785.⁵ As a result, there were barely any communities that were untouched by loss.⁶ There was just one so-called ‘Thankful Village’ in Shropshire where all twenty of the men who enlisted returned home.⁷ Secondly the decision by the Government not to repatriate the dead from the battlefields caused real distress to those who still took comfort from the Victorian rituals around death.⁸ But unless someone died in Britain or had been brought back through the casualty evacuation route, their mortal remains stayed overseas and their families sacrificed the funeral rituals.⁹

Gregory describes the parents of those who were killed in the Great War being particularly affected by this decision as emotionally they were trapped between the Victorian rituals that they would have understood and the more modern sense of loss that required a greater internalisation of mourning that would have been alien to

⁹ Heffernan, p.297.
them. This began during this conflict as parents faced up to the sacrifice of one or more of their offspring without the solace that the ritual of a funeral may have brought them. Of the twenty five casualties from Lydbury North three had funerals either in the parish or locally. Two brothers, James and Basil Everall, are buried in the churchyard of the Catholic church in the parish. James died in hospital in Aberystwyth of pneumonia in 1915 whilst on basic training and Basil of wounds in hospital in Sheffield in 1917 following evacuation from the battlefield. The third was Viscount Clive, the eldest son of the Earl of Powis who died of wounds in London having been evacuated and was buried near to Powis Castle in Welshpool in 1916. The remaining twenty two men were either buried in military cemeteries overseas or remembered on memorials with no known graves.

In February 1917 the Catholic Church of Plowden in Lydbury North parish held a memorial service for Captain Godfrey Plowden who had died of disease and was buried in Egypt. His parents had both also recently died and both his brothers were serving officers on active service. At a packed service, a catafalque representing the coffin with the deceased officers sword on top of the Union Flag was central to the ceremony to commemorate his life. In the parish church such services were also carried out. In August 1916 an ‘impressive service’ was held in memoriam to the ‘four gallant lads’ who had died in the previous months.

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12 UK Army Registers of Soldiers Effects 1914-15, [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk) [accessed 03 September 2022].
13 SSGW, p.135.
14 SSGW, pp.135-6.
15 SSGW, p.136.
16 Ancestry, [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk) [accessed 05 September 2022].
17 *Ludlow Advertiser*, 17 February 1917, p.3.
18 *Ludlow Advertiser*, 02 December 1916, p.2.
Wall describes the Church of England behaving with a ‘final flourish of Victorian paternalism’ by leading commemorative projects and encouraging the placement of memorials in churches or churchyards. He believes this partly evolved churches often displaying rolls of honour during the war and therefore having ownership over collective memories.\textsuperscript{19} But the Church of England also had a central role within the community during the war years. The ‘War Record’ of Lydbury North gives a comprehensive record of activities within the parish during the war.\textsuperscript{20} It was compiled by the Rev. Bernard Kissack who did not complete it until eighteen months after he had moved away which may suggest the level of ownership he felt for the information included in it. It caused him a lot of anxiety, writing in 1919 ‘I am very dissatisfied with it – somehow I could not get it into the shape I hoped’ and he felt sure that the Earl of Powis would want amendments saying ‘I feel sure much will come under his censure’.\textsuperscript{21} The document includes details of all those who served, died or were injured on active service as well as activities that the church had led in the village during the war including fund raising for military, church and local funds, food collections for serving parishioners and support of the local auxiliary military hospital. Nearly £1500 was raised in total during the war years and over £1800 invested in War Bonds, again led by the church although it is not clear whether all denominations worked together to achieve this.\textsuperscript{22}

Fund raising was not the only activity and parishioners were involved in providing items for troops including garments, socks, mittens and walking sticks. Throughout

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{19}] Samuel Walls, “"Lest We Forget": The Spatial Dynamics of the Church and Churchyard as Commemorative Spaces for the War Dead in the Twentieth Century”, \textit{Mortality} 16 (2011), 131-144 (pp.133-4).
\item[\textsuperscript{20}] Lydbury North War Record (LNWR), pp.17-22.
\item[\textsuperscript{21}] SA, 551/25/1411/6, Powis Estate Records (PER), Correspondence from Rev. Kissack, 15 Dec 1919.
\item[\textsuperscript{22}] LNWR, pp.17-22.
\end{itemize}
the war they collected over 8000 eggs for military hospitals. This level of involvement was something that was central to the lives of many parishes. There is also evidence that clergy at home and in the theatres of war tried to support individual families by reassuring them that their relative had been appropriately buried. In 1915 Rev. Kissack obtained a picture of the grave of a young soldier for his parents which may have given them some comfort in knowing that he had received a proper burial – important to a generation who viewed an unmarked grave as associated with punishment and victimisation. Just nineteen when he died in July 1915, the parish church in Lydbury North may be seen in the background of the photograph of him below. The memorial that bears his name now stands to his left by the church door.

Fig 2.1: The young soldier (Photo: St Michaels Church, Lydbury North)

*IMAGE REDACTED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS*

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23 LNWR, p.23.
Military padres at the front also sought to support the parents whose sons had been executed. Padre Railton, who was central to the interment of the Unknown Warrior was present at the execution of Shropshire’s only condemned soldier Private Denis Blakemore on 09 July 1917.26 Padre Railton wrote to Private Blakemore’s parents to reassure them that he had conducted their son’s funeral having administered Holy Communion to him. This was described by Blakemore’s father as ‘a great consolation … we shall always be grateful for that through your sympathetic feelings and holy administrations he died a good Christian soldier’.27 There is some irony in this as Private Blakemore appears to have been so unsuited to life as a soldier he had deserted and been court martialed twice before being sentenced to death, but his parents clearly took comfort from Padre Railton’s words.28 The padre was often the first to contact a family to inform them of their son’s execution thereby providing them with the information that he had died before the official notification of the manner of their death arrived.29

During and after the Great War the dead took on a sacred dimension and as casualties increased the need to commemorate them moved from a family to a national obligation.30 This was underlined by the practice of the Government acknowledging the sacrifice made by individuals and their families by the production of memorial plaques sent to families for each death along with a commemorative scroll signed by the King.31 The way that communities remembered those who had

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26 SA, MI17377/1/8, Shrewsbury Soldiers Killed or Executed in World War One: Pte Denis Blakemore Court Martial Certificate confirming proceedings.
28 SA, MI17377/1/8.
31 Bushaway, p.138.
died, and during the war years who were still serving, was important to families as public affirmation of the sacrifice both they and their loved ones were making for the national effort.\textsuperscript{32}

**Street Shrines**

Commemoration of family members began to appear in differing forms from the beginning of the war, ranging from commissioned windows in churches to a photograph in the corner of a cottage sitting room.\textsuperscript{33} At the end of the war families were able to obtain original battlefield grave markers to put in their place of worship as a personal reminder of loss and there are several examples in Shropshire.\textsuperscript{34} But it was as the news from the battlefields began to filter home in the summer of 1916 and the terrible losses from the battle of the Somme when 20,000 British soldiers were killed and 40,000 wounded on the first day became known, that the first signs of remembrance in the form of street shrines began to be seen on the streets of England.\textsuperscript{35}

Street shrines were an informal way in which local communities could reflect the emotions of grief, pride and hope in a tangible symbol and provided a focus for remembrance and quiet contemplation.\textsuperscript{36} Initially Rolls of Service were displayed in local areas often in or near to churches to provide information about the people that had joined up. It was only a matter of time before these too assumed a sacred dimension as they formed the centre of the shrine listing those who were dead as

\textsuperscript{32} Bushaway, p.139.
\textsuperscript{33} Nick Mansfield, ‘Class Conflict and Village War Memorials’, *Rural History*, 6 (1995), 67-87 (p.75).
\textsuperscript{34} Moriarty, p.66; Francis, p.159.
\textsuperscript{35} Tarlow, p.110; Todman, p.80.
well as still serving.\(^{37}\) Often seen in urban areas such as East London where communities were particularly close, they indicated not only the need of individuals to remember the dead but were also where they played out their part of a contract to protect the living who were still in danger at the front by offering a prayer and laying flowers at the shrine which usually included a crucifix as well as the Roll of Honour.\(^{38}\) They were often organised by local churches and were evident of the bond between the people and the parish as they turned to authority to best articulate how they felt.\(^{39}\) However, street shrines were not universally popular. A group calling themselves the ‘War Shrine Protest Committee’ destroyed one near a Catholic church in Ramsgate and then wrote to the local paper to justify their action. In this long letter they state that it is the crucifix that they objected to and that they intended to remove them from all other shrines in the town saying that they were ‘insulted by the idolatries of Romanism and Ritualism’.\(^{40}\) The incident was considered so serious it was noted in the Commons.\(^{41}\) In November the same year, the newly repaired shrine was desecrated again, the figure of Christ being removed and thrown into a nearby field.\(^{42}\)

Mark Connelly noted that the link between the population of East London and their places of worship was strong and that through supporting the shrines, the Anglican Church in particular ensured that all those that lived in the parish, irrespective of religion or denomination were remembered.\(^{43}\) But Bushaway’s alternative view was that the shrines demonstrated a general lack of engagement with the way that the

\(^{37}\) Bushaway, p.140. \\
^{38} Connelly, p.28. \\
^{39} Connelly, p.26. \\
^{40} The Thanet Advertiser and Echo, 16 June 1917, p.5. \\
^{41} Hansard 5th series, Vol 96, 18 July 1917, col.382. \\
^{42} The Thanet Advertiser and Echo, 17 November 1917, p.3. \\
^{43} Connelly, p.36.
church provided spiritual comfort and that they represented a growing interdependence for mutual aid without the involvement of the Church within communities.\textsuperscript{44} This may be what Wilkinson described as the way that some historians referred to the Church as being brief and not necessarily complementary. He suggested that this could be because they felt uncomfortable writing about an institution they found ‘uncongenial’ but acknowledged that it could be because the Church really was marginal to most people’s lives.\textsuperscript{45} After the war however, the Church acknowledged how valued the shrines had been during the war years and how by holding services at the shrines the message of the Church was taken out into the street (Fig 2.2).\textsuperscript{46} This view is reflected in a piece in the \textit{Ludlow Advertiser} in August 1916 which links the popularity of street shrines to the newly launched National Mission of Repentance and Hope, an attempt by the Church of England to respond to the spiritual needs of the nation, saying that in many places the shrines enabled religion to be brought out into the open.\textsuperscript{47}

\textbf{Fig 2.2: Bishop of Birmingham Blesses Street Shrines\textsuperscript{48}}

\*\*\*IMAGE REDACTED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS\*\*

\textsuperscript{44} Bushaway, p.140.
\textsuperscript{45} Wilkinson, p.22.
\textsuperscript{46} Wilkinson, p.300; \textit{Birmingham Daily Post}, 08 December 1916, p.2.
\textsuperscript{47} Wilkinson, p.70; \textit{Ludlow Advertiser}, 26 August 1916, p.3.
\textsuperscript{48} \textit{Birmingham Gazette}, 09 October 1916, p.1.
The National Mission failed to make much difference to church attendance in late 1916 as it was launched across the country at a time when a self assessment concluded that the Church of England had become an enclave for the professional and upper classes.\(^49\) However, street shrines provided an alternative site of remembrance and reflection for many that may not have felt comfortable attending the parish church.

There is no evidence of there being a war shrine in Lydbury North. There were several in Ludlow, seventeen miles away, where two were erected in September 1916 paid for by donations to the parish church. Less than a month later twelve more appeared in the town, ten of which were paid for by church donations.\(^50\) All of the shrines had a formal blessing at which the clergy asked people to stop and pray not only for those who had died but those who were still in danger.\(^51\) Unlike some of those in London, many of the Ludlow memorials had disappeared by the end of the war, indeed within a year some had become rain damaged and faded and very difficult to read.\(^52\) In London however, many were retained and became firmly fixed in the community’s memorialisation practice after the war.\(^53\) During the war in Lydbury North, there was also increased activity in the parish church to support the community. This consisted of one day every week being set aside for intercessions with three services being held and at each the names of every parishioner serving in the forces was read out. On the third Sunday of each month an extra communion service was held for intercessions and for those who died a memorial service was

\(^{49}\) Clive Field, ‘Keeping the Spiritual Home Fires Burning: Religious Belonging in Britain during the First World War’, *War and Society*, 33 (2014), 244-268 (p.252).

\(^{50}\) Derek Beattie, *South Shropshire’s First World War* (Logaston Press, 2014), p.186.

\(^{51}\) *Kington Times*, 16 September 1916, p.2.


\(^{53}\) Connelly, p.35.
held on a Sunday following their death to provide some comfort to the grieving family.\textsuperscript{54} This local support was reflected at a national level, although as the war went on there was a staffing issue as clergy left for the front and support of the bereaved and suffering stretched available pastoral resources.\textsuperscript{55} After the end of the war it was understood that there was still a need to support the bereaved and remember the dead both at national and local levels.

\textit{The Cenotaph and the Unknown Warrior}

The first major national event following the Armistice was a Victory Parade on 19 July 1919 to mark the signing of the formal peace Treaty at Versailles on 28 June.\textsuperscript{56} The original Cenotaph, designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens to be a temporary structure, was the centrepiece for that parade with the intention of it being a celebration of military achievement but one that had a tribute to the dead in the form of the Cenotaph itself.\textsuperscript{57} Winter describes how the monument brought the dead of the war into the centre of the seat of government through its placement in Whitehall.\textsuperscript{58} It could also be argued that it was also brought into the centre of the religious establishment being so close to Westminster Abbey.

Celebrations on 19 July 1919 were not confined to London as all over the country local communities had arranged various activities to mark the day. In Shropshire,

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{54} LNWR, p.25. \\
\textsuperscript{57} Fletcher, p.252; Tarlow, p.113; Alex King, \textit{Memorials of the Great War in Britain: The Symbolism and Politics of Remembrance} (London, New Delhi, New York, Sydney: Bloomsbury Academic, 1998), p.141. \\
\end{flushright}
among many events, the inhabitants of Bishops Castle four miles from Lydbury, held a parade through the town with two wounded veterans given pride of place.\(^{59}\) In the county town of Shrewsbury, the date of the 19\(^{th}\) July was discussed at a meeting of the Peace Celebrations Committee. The decision had previously been made to hold celebratory activity in early August to coincide with the return of troops from overseas and it was decided not to change the date to that suggested by the Government so that a full programme of events to welcome home the members of the KSLI could be held.\(^{60}\) In Ludlow the day started with rockets being fired from the castle at 06.45hrs and events continued through the day including a church service, lunch for 570 discharged soldiers and a carnival which sadly was curtailed due to torrential rain.\(^{61}\)

Although the Cenotaph was a secular monument, for some it was a religious experience being there on that day in July 1919. The *Manchester Guardian* stated that in the vicinity of the Cenotaph ‘a light was shining in the daylight like a light on an altar’, a view echoed by Geoff Dyer who quoted Stephen Graham’s words saying the monument ‘gathered to itself all the experience and all that was sacred in the war’.\(^{62}\) But Winter describes Anglican clerics as being clearly discomforted by the fact that so many people sought a sacred site that was not a church because the Cenotaph was deliberately and completely lacking in any Christian iconography.\(^{63}\) This view was illustrated by an editorial in the *Church Times* which stated that ‘the man in the street is passionately fond of symbolism, so long as it is not that of the

\(^{59}\) Beattie, p.173.
\(^{60}\) SA, DA5/119/30, Shrewsbury Borough War Memorial Committee Minutes 04 July 1919.
\(^{62}\) *Manchester Guardian*, 21 July 1919 cited in King, p.143; Dyer, p.19
Church’ before going on to criticise the perceived cult of the Cenotaph saying that the population was ‘suffering from an access (sic) of cenotaphotropy in which all sense of proportion was lost’. The idea of a cult is reflected in the work of Alex King who notes that the use of the word ‘Armisticetide’ is redolent of a religious tradition and who cites the Bishop of Ripon who called Armistice day ‘the new Good Friday of the post war world’. This is illustrated by the first anniversary of the Armistice later that year, when more than one million men and women gathered around the temporary structure.

It was clear that action was required and in a debate in July 1919 requests were made in Parliament for an exact replica to be made permanent on the same site. The First Commissioner of Works, Sir Alfred Mond, submitted a memorandum to the Cabinet requesting them to make a decision as to the feasibility of this proposal. In the document he tells the Cabinet that Lutyens himself had been in touch with him urging him to promote the idea of a permanent memorial on the same site. Mond suggested ‘no other site would have the same historical and sentimental association’ although he did feel that the sombre design of the memorial may not reflect the triumph of victory. The subject was discussed in Parliament several times over the next few weeks whilst awaiting the Cabinet’s decision with several voicing the view that there should be Christian imagery and inscriptions on the Cenotaph. The response from the Leader of the House was that it ‘should visibly express the great

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64 Editorial, Church Times, 21 November 1919, p.475.
65 King, p.21.
66 Fletcher, p.253.
68 The National Archives (TNA), CAB 24/84/84 The Temporary Cenotaph in Whitehall, Memo dated 23 July 1919.
69 TNA, CAB 24/84/84.
Dee Radford

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debt which it owes to all those who, from all parts of the Empire, irrespective of their religious creeds, made the supreme sacrifice’. 71 Perhaps then, it is of little surprise that when an opportunity to move the focus of national remembrance and promote the relevance of the Church of England arose, the Church hierarchy took it.

Padre David Railton already mentioned above, suggested to the Dean of Westminster, Herbert Ryle, that an unknown body be disinterred from the battlefield and reburied at Westminster Abbey to serve as a memorial to the fallen. 72 The idea had come to him during the war but he did not approach the Dean until August 1920. He soon received a reply and it appears from this letter that the idea of carrying out the interment on the same day as the unveiling of the permanent cenotaph was that of Dean Ryle as he said ‘the idea occurs to me that it would be appropriate as a wonderful way of commemorating the Armistice’. 73 It was not until 19 October, a month before Armistice Day that Railton received confirmation from the Dean that his idea had been accepted by the government and Buckingham Palace and, once in the press, the public. 74

Lord Curzon, a former Viceroy of India was given the task of coordinating the procession and the subsequent interment. The Cabinet had planned the ceremony at the Cenotaph to be an inclusive event to commemorate different races and religions. The church leaders wanted to add a distinctly Anglican element to proceedings but faced opposition. The Archbishop of Canterbury put this down to

72 Richards, p.167.
73 Railton Family Archive, Dean Herbert Ryle letter to David Railton, 16 August 1920 cited in Richards, p.167.
74 Richards, p.170.
the Cabinet, particularly Prime Minister Lloyd George, being less concerned about
the wider faiths being represented and more about Nonconformist criticism of the
Anglican Church taking the prominent place. Lord Curzon brokered a partial
compromise between Archbishop Davidson and Lloyd George although two weeks
later Davidson revisited the idea of leading prayers at the Cenotaph on which he had
previously conceded and won his argument that he should do so. As Wolffe writes
regarding images of the occasion, ‘a conspicuous sprinkling of surplices indicate that
visually as well as ritually, secularisation of the event had been successfully
resisted’.77

The Times, in a specially produced supplement to the paper on 12 November 1920,
described the ceremony at the Abbey in great detail calling it the most ‘beautiful and
affecting of all the great ceremonies that had taken place in the Abbey in recent
years’.78 For a week after the ceremony and before the grave was filled in, it was
estimated that over a million people filed past the grave as part of the Great
Pilgrimage. Although the Cenotaph was a powerful symbol, the Unknown Warrior
represented the thousands who had no known grave.80 The final inscription on the
leger stone over the grave refers back to the narrative of sacrifice for God, King and
country and for the ‘Sacred Cause of Justice and the Freedom of the World’.81 That
inscription was purely the work of the Church as the Prime Minister stated in

75 John Wolffe, “Martyrs as really as St Stephen was a martyr”? Commemorating the British Dead of the First World War, International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church, 15 (2015), 23-38 (p.31).
76 Wolffe, p.32.
77 Wolffe, p.32.
78 The Times Supplement, Friday 12 November 1920 p.ii.
79 Todman, p.51.
80 Fletcher, p.255.
81 Wolffe, p.33.
Parliament that ‘the question of an appropriate inscription … is a matter entirely for the Dean of Westminster’.  

**Summary**

In order to try and make sense of grief, the narrative of remembrance during and after the Great War was around sacrifice, not just that of individuals who served but also of the families, communities and the nation they left behind. At a local level the Church of England used its position in the community to support people through community activities to support the war effort, provision of additional services and, when required holding memorial services for loved ones. There is also evidence of individual clergy especially chaplains serving overseas, understanding how important it was to families to know that their loved ones had received a proper burial. The hierarchy of the Church of England understood the importance of being seen to be involved in national remembrance activity and took the opportunity to do so by adopting the idea of the Unknown Warrior. But Jay Winter believes that national memorials, because of their importance, do not tell the whole story of remembrance.  

The discussions between Davidson and Lloyd George took place in late 1920. By this time, in Lydbury North the memorial was being constructed ready for its unveiling in December 1920 although the proposed new organ for the church was some years off. The next chapter will show that despite challenges over the war memorial, the influence of those that described themselves as ‘church people’ remained strong.

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84 SA, 552/25/1393, PER, Correspondence re War Memorial, Letter 24 Feb 1919.
Chapter Three: ‘We Want Something Sacred’\(^1\): Memorialisation in Lydbury North, 1918-25.

This final chapter will examine the events and conversations that took place in Lydbury North from the end of 1918 until the unveiling of the church war memorial two years later and latterly the installation and dedication of the new church organ in 1924. The first part of the chapter will discuss the religious and social situation in the parish before the second section discusses in detail the numbers of men who enlisted, were wounded or died on active service. This is in order to provide some context to the third section which will show that despite there being dissent within the community regarding the most appropriate form for the memorial, the supporters of the church war memorial doggedly continued to progress their fundraising and other activities whilst those who opposed it did not appear to progress their scheme past some meetings and a questionnaire asking for views. Surviving correspondence shows clearly differing views between individuals despite the main protagonists being members of the elite of the parish and members of the parish church congregation.

*Lydbury North Parish 1900-1920*

Lydbury North was, and remains, an extensive agricultural parish with a scattered population over a number of small settlements including the main village of the same name. Positioned in south Shropshire the nearest town is Bishops Castle.

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\(^1\) Shropshire Archives (SA), 552/25/1336, Powis Estate Records (PER), Minute Book of War Memorial Committee (Minute Book).
Statistics show that the population in 1913 was 806, just fifteen more than in 1901.\(^3\) It was a parish dominated by three major landowners - the Earl of Powis who owned three estates in Shropshire and one in Montgomeryshire, the Whittaker family and the Plowden family.\(^4\) Brown writes of Christian segregation being in place in England and the parish of Lydbury North is a good example of this. The Roman Catholic faith, despite being nearly wiped out during the sixteenth century still had a national presence albeit a much smaller percentage of the faith community in the early twentieth century.\(^5\) In 1851, the Plowden family maintained a domestic chapel at their home in the parish, one of eleven Catholic places of worship across Shropshire at the time.\(^6\) By 1862 they had built a church

\(^2\) Lydbury North Parish Council, [www.lydburnorthparishcouncil.org.uk](http://www.lydburnorthparishcouncil.org.uk) [accessed 30 December 2021].


\(^4\) *Kelly’s Directory 1913*, p.144.


\(^6\) The National Archives (TNA), Home Office Ecclesiastical Census Returns 1851, HO 129/353 Clun, p.19.
specifically for the wider Catholic congregation that was not confined to those living in the parish. At the start of the twentieth century Lydbury North was a traditional agricultural parish with religiosity provided for by the Church of England in the major settlement with two Non Conformist chapels and a Roman Catholic church that provided for Catholics across a wider area.

The service registers of the Church of England at this time do not record all attendees but only those that received communion. During the period 1900-20 the number of communicants in Lydbury North ranged on a weekly basis from between two and fifteen where recorded. The numbers receiving communion at all services on Easter Sunday between 1900 and 1920 have been collated and are shown in Chart 3.1 and Table 3.1.

Chart 3.1: Lydbury North Parish Church Communicants, Easter Sunday 1900-20

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7 St Milburga’s Church webpage: [https://stmilburgas.org/st-walburgas-church/](https://stmilburgas.org/st-walburgas-church/) [accessed 03 January 2022].
8 Field, Clive, ‘Keeping the Spiritual Home Fires Burning: Religious Belonging in Britain during the First World War, War and Society, 33 (2014), 244-268 (p.247).
9 SA, P177/A/7/1-2, Lydbury North Parish Records, Preachers Books and Service Registers 1900-1920.
10 SA, P177/A/7/1-2, Lydbury North Parish Records, Preachers Books and Service Registers 1900-1920.
Table 3.1: Lydbury North Parish Church Communicants, Easter Sunday 1900-20

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<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 1916 it was estimated that across the country, the numbers of communicants at Easter were six percent fewer than in 1914.\(^{11}\) The figures in the table show that Lydbury North reflects this estimation with seven percent fewer communicants in 1916 than in 1914 and that as the war went on communicants dropped further. This was also in line with the national picture and was due to a number of factors, not least that members of the congregation were serving soldiers and that due to their absence their families were working longer hours on the farms.\(^{12}\)

**Service and Sacrifice**

In the weeks after the declaration of war in August 1914 there was a wave of patriotism and militarism across the country that resulted in queues outside recruiting offices.\(^{13}\) According to Derek Beattie the young men of South Shropshire

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\(^{11}\) Field, *Home Fires*, p.252.

\(^{12}\) Field, *Home Fires*, p.266.

demonstrated more than just patriotism being driven by curiosity about life away from the farms and villages of the area from where many had never travelled. He noted that the Chief Recruiting Officer admitted that agricultural workers were the easiest to enlist.\(^\text{14}\) In these early weeks of the war Lydbury North saw a stream of men enlisting in the forces some, perhaps, influenced by their mother or wife as in the parish magazine in October 1914 advice was given on how to persuade their menfolk to join up by saying ‘I don’t want you to go but if I were you, I should go’.\(^\text{15}\) This illustrates the view that the churches became part of the recruiting machine by taking on the role of ‘patriotic flag-waver’.\(^\text{16}\)

Chart and table 3.2 shows how many Lydbury North men joined the forces during the war. From the initial enthusiasm seen in 1914 the numbers joining steadily declined throughout the years but in total 150 men left the village for military service including eight who were already serving.\(^\text{17}\) Apart from two men who served in the Royal Navy, the rest served in forty four different army units across several theatres of war which, after 1916, was due to conscripts being placed where they were needed including as reinforcements.\(^\text{18}\)

**Chart 3.2: Lydbury North Enlistments 1914-1918 (N=150)**


\(^{15}\) *Clun Valley Parochial Magazine*, October 1914 cited in Beattie, p.20.

\(^{16}\) Brown, p.89.

\(^{17}\) Lydbury North War Record (LNWR), pp.6-9.

Table 3.2: Lydbury North Enlistments 1914-1918 (N=150)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Other Ranks</th>
<th>Officers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Already Serving</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>141 (94%)</td>
<td>9 (6%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A total of twenty five men died during the war which represents 17% of those who served. Forty eight were wounded, six of whom were wounded more than once.\textsuperscript{19}

The War Record does not give details regarding injuries but a report of the unveiling of the memorial in 1920 describes some of the surviving servicemen being permanently disabled.\textsuperscript{20} Table 3.3 shows that as the war went on the rate of attrition experienced by the village increased with nearly half of the parish deaths occurring in the last year of the war. Throughout the conflict families in the village experienced the news of a death of a serviceman on a regular basis. The longest period between such notifications was eight months between the news that Private James Brunt was missing believed killed in September 1915 and the death of Sapper William Addis, a professional soldier who was killed in action in France in May 1916.\textsuperscript{21} The final death that the villagers heard about was that of Private Charles Wilcox who had served since October 1914 and died of disease as a prisoner of war in October 1918.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{19} LNWR, pp.6-9.
\textsuperscript{20} Ludlow Advertiser, 25 December 1920, p.4.
\textsuperscript{21} LNWR, pp.6-9 and p.16.
\textsuperscript{22} LNWR, p.16.
Table 3.3: Lydbury North Killed/Died (n=25) and Wounded (n=48)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Killed</th>
<th>% of total Killed</th>
<th>Wounded</th>
<th>% of total wounded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>22*</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>19**</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*In 1917 one was wounded for the second time
** In 1918 six were wounded for a second time

Church War Memorial Committee 1918-24

The date of the Armistice was to become significant as the country sought to find a way to memorialise those that had died during the conflict, but the immediate response on the declaration of the end of the war was that it was a time to celebrate. Peace celebrations took place as soon as news filtered through that morning. On the suggestion of the vicar, Lydbury North school hoisted the flag, sang the national anthem and allowed the children the rest of the day off. It must have been a bitter sweet day for the villagers that had experienced bereavement or hardship due to loss or injuries of their family members and it is probably no surprise plans for a memorial to those who died were swiftly put into place.

Jay Winter describes those who came together to organise the memorials after the war as groups that were united by shared experience making them the ‘key agents of remembrance’ in their local environment. He goes on to discuss the view that at a national level the politics that surround decision making can make the emotion of remembrance less obvious than at the local level where these agents have strong

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personal links to the site of remembrance. In listing those who died in conflict, the memorial represented a place where people could mourn and also be seen to do so, therefore highlighted their own sacrifice as well as their lost family members. It is the strength of feeling that led to division as much as consensus in a community of committed and involved individuals who may have had differing views on what constituted an appropriate memorial.

In December 1918 there was a public meeting in Lydbury North school at which ‘after much discussion, it was unanimously agreed that there would be a Church War Memorial to take the form of a cross in the churchyard on which will be engraved the parish Roll of Honour’. In addition there would be a new organ for the church which would be partly funded by money already raised. With the minute book, are the notes for Rev. Kissack’s speech to the meeting. In this he provides his justification for a church war memorial as opposed to a parish memorial with some strength, maybe indicating that there had already been some dissent expressed. He notes that ‘88% of those that went from this place were church lads – baptised in church, worshipped in church and their parents considered church people’. He goes on to say ‘this is why a Church War Memorial! We want something sacred (it has been a Holy war), something that appeals to the highest and the best there is … something that those who follow us can look to’. The importance of longevity is seen in other studies of memorials following the Great War in a desire to show that

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25 Winter, p.149.
26 Fletcher, p.255.
28 SA, 552/25/1336, PER, Minute Book.
29 SA,552/25/1336, PER, Minute Book.
30 SA, 552/25/1350, PER, List of reasons for Church not Parish Memorial.
31 SA, 552/25/1336, PER, Minute Book.
the dead would never be forgotten by ensuring their names would be associated with a building considered permanent.\textsuperscript{32} Rev. Kissack refers to this saying that the church had been there over nine hundred years and would continue to stand ‘as long as the world lasts’, perhaps a reference to the perceived short life span of a village institute which may have already been mentioned.\textsuperscript{33} The choice of a cross was the most common in Britain being seen as a sacred symbol of sacrifice and resurrection rather than death.\textsuperscript{34} Such strength of feeling is evident in surviving records of other villages in Shropshire where in one case the Vicar was accused of ‘bullying’ the meeting into rejecting the suggestion of a hall in favour of a shrine.\textsuperscript{35}

The minutes for Lydbury North do not record names or numbers at the meeting but it was held at a time when influenza was prevalent in the area and so it may not have been well attended.\textsuperscript{36} Indeed, the Earl of Powis sent his apologies for this initial meeting as he was unwilling to risk becoming infected.\textsuperscript{37} It was agreed that twenty people would be contacted and asked to join the Committee. Landowners, farmers and employees of Lord Powis make up the bulk of this.\textsuperscript{38} The Honorary Secretary, Erskine Edmonds, was the Churchwarden as well as Lord Powis’s estate accountant.\textsuperscript{39} Bartlett and Ellis note that even for a catastrophe such as the war, society changed very little with even the bereaved not being fully considered or consulted although on the Lydbury War Committee three members were bereaved.

\textsuperscript{33} SA, 522/25/1336, PER, Minute Book.
\textsuperscript{34} Moriarty, ‘Christian Iconography and First World War Memorials’, \textit{Imperial War Museum Review}, 6 (1991) 63-75 (p.69).
\textsuperscript{35} Mansfield, p.78.
\textsuperscript{36} Beattie, p.180.
\textsuperscript{37} SA,552/25/1356, PER, Letter,30 Nov 1918.
\textsuperscript{38} SA,552/25/1336, PER, Minute Book.
\textsuperscript{39} SA, 552/25/1596,PER, Lydbury North Churchwardens Accounts,1920.
fathers and one was an ex-serviceman.\textsuperscript{40} The involvement of a major landowner like Lord Powis was not unusual as many gentry families were closely involved with the design of local memorials and as a bereaved parent he may have felt more inclined to be involved.\textsuperscript{41} There is no evidence that he attended any of the committee meetings but he wrote several letters expressing his opinion on various matters and liaised with the architect to consider the form and location of the memorial.\textsuperscript{42}

The convening of such a meeting that may not have been representative of the parish population is important. Alex King notes that in organising the committees, villages continued to observe their parish behaviours and so it may have felt the obvious thing for the parish church officials to take a lead.\textsuperscript{43} Keith Grieves believes that ‘despite the forces of dechristianisation at work in the countryside … few adherents of the existing social order were prepared to contemplate, with equanimity, the decline of the church as a traditional source of leadership in rural areas’.\textsuperscript{44} This seems to be the case in Lydbury North as at the first meeting of the newly elected Committee which was held a month after the public meeting, Rev. Kissack was in the Chair. It was agreed that there would be two sub committees to carry out the detailed work relating to the memorial and the organ and report back to the Committee. The Vicar would chair both of these as he would the eventual meeting to agree the inscription and all also included the Honorary Secretary.\textsuperscript{45} The

\textsuperscript{40} Bartlett and Ellis, p.234  
\textsuperscript{41} Fletcher, p.256; Bartlett and Ellis, p.235.  
\textsuperscript{42} SA,552/25/1434, PER, Letter, 07 Dec 1919.  
\textsuperscript{44} Keith Grieves, ‘Common Meeting Places and the Brightening of Rural Life: Local Debates on Village Halls in Sussex after the First World War’, Rural History, 10 (1999), 171-192 (177).  
\textsuperscript{45} SA, 552/25/1487, PER, Copy of Resolution, n.d.
meeting received several letters of resignation from those who ‘were not in harmony with the scheme’ showing that there was dissent from the outset.\textsuperscript{46} Mrs Mary Whittaker, wife of a local landowner did not resign but also did not attend saying ‘the committee is so large I am sure you can manage without my attendance’.\textsuperscript{47} Mrs Whittaker was a prominent member of the congregation of the parish church. She ran the Sunday School and visited the local school to award those who attended Sunday School classes.\textsuperscript{48} She was also the most vocal in the support of the Parish Institute scheme.

Following this first Committee meeting in January 1919, a series of letters were written between Erskine Edmonds and Mrs Whittaker who said that she would like to set up a separate meeting as soon as possible to discuss ‘the war memorial in the Parish’.\textsuperscript{49} The distinction between a ‘Church’ and a ‘Parish’ war memorial is central to this debate as in this correspondence Mrs Whittaker suggested in confidence that ‘as a parish all the funds get collected together and put into one project – a Parish Institute’.\textsuperscript{50} Nick Mansfield believes that such buildings are more common in larger communities with no dominant landowner and suggests that it could be because the gentry could foresee funding issues in the future upkeep of such a building and therefore preferred a ‘one off’ expenditure model such as a monument.\textsuperscript{51} However he also quotes another Shropshire landowner who said that ‘a parish room is very nice but people will be apt to forget in time why it was put up’.\textsuperscript{52} Nationally, the case against the movement for practical memorials such as a village institute was still

\textsuperscript{46} SA, 552/25/1364, PER, Letter, 25 January 1919.
\textsuperscript{47} SA, 552/25/1366, PER, Letter, 30 January 1919.
\textsuperscript{48} SA, ED5787/10/2, Lydbury North School Log Books, 1910-20.
\textsuperscript{49} SA, 552/25/1351, PER, Letter, 11 December 1918.
\textsuperscript{50} SA,552/25/1352, PER, Letter, 25 December 1918.
\textsuperscript{51} Mansfield, p.78.
\textsuperscript{52} Mansfield, p.76.
being made at this point.\textsuperscript{53} Indeed, Keith Grieves quotes one parishioner who objected to the proposal in a village in Sussex as saying 'I submit that the commemoration of the dead should not be made a mere excuse for demands by the living for something they would like to have'.\textsuperscript{54} Grieves believes that the religious rhetoric around the war as a crusade meant that many committees were keen to provide a sacred object of mourning with much use of ‘exhortatory moral language’ as was heard at the Lydbury North meeting in December 1918.\textsuperscript{55}

The meeting Mrs Whittaker arranged was held on 20 January 1919 but no records are available as to the outcome, although in later correspondence it was suggested that the meeting was not constitutional and no committee was formed.\textsuperscript{56} Rev. Kissack then wrote to Mrs Whittaker on 31 January 1919 saying that ‘if you and the principle supporters … are prepared to entirely drop the Institute Scheme, I think we could, without difficulty, have a united meeting of all denominations’.\textsuperscript{57} This is interesting as according to Gregory the Roman Catholic church would have been unwilling to formally participate in any joint commemoration led by the Church of England.\textsuperscript{58} Also, in all the archival documents that have been reviewed in researching this dissertation there is no mention of collaboration with other congregations in the parish. The letter goes on to say that this ‘peace solution’ was being offered without any official authority but if she agreed, the matter would be put before the church committee ‘as one section of the parish’.\textsuperscript{59} The response from Mrs

\textsuperscript{54} Grieves, p.176.
\textsuperscript{55} Grieves, p.171.
\textsuperscript{56} SA,552/25/1352, PER, Letter, 23 December 1918; SA, 552/25/1396, PER, Letter 07 February 1919.
\textsuperscript{57} SA,552/25/1397, PER, Letter, 31 January 1919.
\textsuperscript{59} SA, 552/25/1397, PER, Letter, 31 January 1919.
Whittaker is not known but a letter to her from one of those she described as a supporter of the Institute suggested that she did not have the power to come to an arrangement without calling a further public meeting as it would constitute a breach of faith with the community. Two weeks later, Erskine Edmonds wrote to Mary Whittaker again saying that as she and her principle supporters had not agreed with the suggestion, the War Memorial Committee ‘had neither the power nor the inclination to drop our church scheme which had been unanimously agreed by a meeting of church people’. This rather abrupt wording may reflect the crisis in confidence being experienced by the Church of England and the desire to be in control of the memorialisation process.

Correspondence between Erskine Edmonds and the people described as chief supporters of the Institute Scheme included that with John Norton, a farmer and land agent who noted that ‘there was a sharp divergence of views and ‘in a parish like Lydbury any scheme of this nature cannot be carried through successfully without the help of the whole parish’. John Norton felt that his views had been inaccurately conveyed by Mrs Whittaker in that he did want a formal memorial but also a suitable place for returning servicemen to enjoy their leisure hours but did not know if this was financially viable. In early 1919 a questionnaire was sent out to the parish by Mrs Whittaker with several options for people to indicate their preference for a memorial (Fig. 3.2).
There is no evidence of the results of this in the archives and no further evidence of another meeting arranged by Mrs Whittaker and her supporters including John Norton until a year later but again the outcome is unknown.

In the meantime, in the summer of 1919, Rev. Kissack left the parish and moved to Yorkshire. Letters from him to Erskine Edmunds survive in the Powis Estate Records and make fascinating reading in relation to the disagreements over the memorial. In the first, received in August 1919, he refers to Mrs Whittaker’s questionnaire, stating that ‘the referendum stuck in my windpipe’ and went on to complain that ‘we went forward to them for the sake of peace and fellowship and all we got was a supercilious slap in the face and they need reminding that such rebuffs
are not easily forgotten'.

Undeterred, the War Memorial Committee continued with their plans for fundraising regardless of the dissent. The list of subscribers to the fund shows that even those who did not agree with the plan contributed to the fundraising. Families of fifteen of the twenty five men named on the memorial contributed. The Catholic Plowden and Everall families were among those who did not. Mrs Whittaker donated £25 to the door to door collection in 1919, second only to Lord Powis who contributed £30, and most institute supporters were involved in the Sale of Works held over that summer providing various items for sale as well as contributing financially. Lord Powis did not agree with the sale feeling this was not a suitable way to raise funds for a memorial but it went ahead, opened by Lady Powis, and raised £170.

Rev. Kissack wrote congratulating Erskine Edmonds on the success of the sale of works and the bazaar that was held as part of it in September 1919 and telling him that he had received a letter from John Norton (he referred to him as ‘Brunsslow’ in his letters which is the name of the Norton farm). John Norton gave him the numbers that had responded to the questionnaire of which he gave no detail but said ‘they were intended to impress me I presume’. By March 1920 all the money that had been promised at the original meeting in 1918 had been received plus some from a postal campaign and the sale of works. There was enough to pay for the memorial cross so a further sub committee met to agree the inscription, chaired by

65 SA, 552/25/1411/1, PER, Correspondence from Rev. Kissack, Letter 25 August 1919.
66 SA, 552/25/1347, PER, List of subscribers, n.d.
69 SA, 552/25/1411/5 PER, Correspondence from Rev. Kissack, September 1919.
70 SA, 552/25/1336, PER, Minute Book.
the new Vicar.\textsuperscript{71} Mary Whittaker sent her apologies to the meeting saying that her ‘husband is distressed if I am not present at dinner’ but asked to know what was agreed.\textsuperscript{72} Although the Committee had already agreed that the Roll of Honour should be listed alphabetically, Lord Powis wrote to Erskine Edmonds from Venice in May 1920 to say that the names of the fallen should be listed by rank and include the regiments in which they had served.\textsuperscript{73} This had the effect of moving the name of his fallen son from sixth in the list to the top. Whether this was intended or not, it resulted in more correspondence between the Committee and the architect to change plans and increased the cost of the memorial although as Edmonds explained to Lord Powis to include the regiments was too expensive and the Committee declined to do so.\textsuperscript{74} The way that names were recorded on local memorials varied as many reflected the way that the war cemeteries were laid out irrespective of rank.\textsuperscript{75} But there are other examples of names being listed by rank rather than alphabetically.\textsuperscript{76}

By November 1920 when the unveiling of the memorial cross was a month away, Rev. Kissack wrote to Erskine Edmonds again having seen a reference to the need for an Institute in the parish magazine which he was still receiving. ‘Poor us’ he wrote ‘I suppose we shall go down to posterity as the short sighted enemies of the Parish. I am still confident we were right’.\textsuperscript{77} He was invited to dedicate the memorial on 19 December 1920 and was pleased that Lady Powis had been invited to perform

\textsuperscript{71} SA, 552/25/1527 PER, Inscription Committee Notes March 1920.
\textsuperscript{72} SA, 552/25/1403, PER, Letter March 1920.
\textsuperscript{73} SA, 552/25/1511, PER, Letter 01 May 1920.
\textsuperscript{74} SA, 552/25/1509, PER, Letter 24 June 1920.
\textsuperscript{76} Black, p.137.
\textsuperscript{77} SA, 552/25/1411/9, PER, Correspondence from Rev. Kissack, November 1920.
the unveiling which in the end she did not do as she was unwell. Lord Powis was in London and also did not attend so the unveiling was performed by their daughter Lady Hermione accompanied by her younger brother who was now Viscount Clive following his elder brother’s death in 1916. His name was one of the five added in 1945 following his own death on active service in the RAF in 1943. A piece in the parish magazine about the unveiling, which was attended by members of all denominations, refers to the dissent over the memorial saying ‘we were very glad indeed to welcome those who did not see eye to eye with the promoters of the scheme’. Following the ceremony Rev. Kissack was invited to visit Powis Castle from where he wrote to Erskine Edmonds saying ‘Lady Powis is a cute one…she asked what does Mrs Whittaker say? I was compelled to give a skeleton outline of her attitude together with some of my own forebodings about the future. A veritable impasse as the Earl would put it.’

Fig 3.3: Lydbury War Memorial 1920
(Photo: Lydbury at War)  
Fig 3.4: Lydbury War Memorial 2022
(Photo: Dee Radford)

79 Ludlow Advertiser, 25 December 1920, p.4.  
80 Kington Times, 27 March 1943, p.2.  
81 SA, 552/25/1574, PER, Clun Valley Parochial Magazine, n.d.  
82 SA, 552/25/1411/14, PER, Correspondence from Rev. Kissack, December 1920.
The Committee met several times between May 1921 and January 1924 to further progress the plans for the new church organ. By September 1924 all funding had been received and it was dedicated at the Harvest Festival on 08 October that year prior to which Rev. Kissack wrote to Mr Edmonds saying:

‘But for you it could never have come off and with you out of the way I believe they would have won and diverted the money to the institute stunt and got their own way’. I wonder if I am right in guessing that their move is to launch their institute scheme with a vengeance after the organ is a fait accompli. This will read un-Christian but it has come into my mind and I am not sure that I will be far out in hazarding this guess’. 83

In fact another meeting of the Parish Hall Committee was indeed planned for December that year to consider the present position and what steps would be required to raise further funds but the venue was double booked and it is not clear if that meeting took place. 84 In February 1925 the final meeting of the War Memorial Committee was held. Mrs Whittaker, having attended none of the meetings was represented by her son, himself a retired officer who served in the war and who, at this meeting proposed thanks to the Erskine Edmonds for all his work. The audited accounts were received and the three pounds left over were transferred to the Church funds. 85

Today the memorial remains in the churchyard like the thousands that were erected all over the country. In 1945 five names were added, this time in alphabetical not rank order, the last being the second Viscount Clive. In December 1926 a letter from John Norton on behalf of the ex-servicemen of the village in whose interests the village hall scheme was originally proposed asked that steps would be taken to

83 SA, 552/25/1411/19, PER, Correspondence from Rev. Kissack, 08 September 1924.
84 SA, 552/25/1407, PER, Letter December 1924; SA 552/25/1408, PER, Letter 06 December 1924.
85 SA, 552/25/1336, PER, Minute Book.
provide such an amenity. The meeting of ex-servicemen from whom this request came was chaired by Major Whittaker. In 1928, ten years after the initial suggestion was made, a temporary village hall was erected which was replaced by a new building in 2014.

**Summary**

The events in Lydbury North after the Great War may be representative of many small communities in England at that time. The parish was similar to other agricultural areas with different Christian denominations represented and like many with a major landowner it still experienced a hierarchical society in which the Church played a central role. This may be the reason that the alternative suggestion of a village institute was not successful although it is clear that the Church Memorial Committee was well organised which may not have been the case for those that supported the village institute idea. The way in which the Church and other members of the elite of the village drove through the plans for a memorial in the church grounds is seen in other local studies and shows that despite the reducing attendance and secularisation it remained an influential presence in rural life.

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86 SA, 552/25/1788, PER, Letter 18 December 1926.
87 Lydbury North Village Hall website [www.lydburnorthvillagehall.org](http://www.lydburnorthvillagehall.org) [accessed 01 September 2022].
Conclusion

Just over one hundred years have passed since the parishioners of Lydbury North gathered in the churchyard for the unveiling of the war memorial that had caused such acrimony. During that time memories of the arguments that took place have faded and been reduced to papers tucked away in the county archives. But by carrying out this research the words of those that were central to the debate have been heard again and in doing so have demonstrated how institutions such as the Church behaved in the first quarter of the twentieth century as society changed. It will never been known whether, on reflection, those that were involved in the debate would reconsider the words and opinions that they committed to paper during a time when they must all have been experiencing the effects of the war. It is probable that they never considered that their words would be read again so many years later but it has proved to be an experience that has been enlightening as well as enjoyable but most of all, a privilege.

This dissertation had the aim of identifying the influence of the Church of England on memorialisation from 1900-25 and whether it was successful in ensuring it was central to the process of remembrance at a time of secularisation. It has shown that the Church was aware of how, with its unique ability to provide established ritual and a known environment such as a church building, it was in a position to provide some comfort to those who had no grave beside which to mourn. In doing so it was successful in maintaining its importance in the ritual of remembrance in this country.
Following the Boer War the church provided the means by which a population that was facing the deaths overseas of a larger number of volunteers than had previously been experienced, was able to both display grief and reclaim their loved ones from the formal regimental memorials that were being erected. By the time of the Great War, the challenges facing the Church had increased as its influence in society reduced despite there still being a strong following particularly by the middle and upper classes. However, during and after the war local clergy and military padres supported communities and individuals and became more flexible in how they did so. The street shrines that spread across England in 1916 were supported by churches who saw an opportunity to spread the word to those who might not have attended parish services. Further study into the street shrines outside London would be a fascinating project. The West Midlands has a variety of industrial and rural parishes and comparisons between these different settings would provide a picture of how each considered the use of the shrines in their areas as clearly in Birmingham there was diocesan level support which may not have been the case everywhere.

The government had also changed their view from the post Boer War period when they saw no need for a national memorial maybe due to the significant impact of the conflict on Imperial confidence. By 1918 it understood the need for a national memorial but one with no religious iconography and no lead role for the state Church during the unveiling. It was only as a result of a suggestion regarding the Unknown Warrior that the Church was able to move the focus to the sacred in what appears to be an opportunistic way. However, the huge numbers of those who visited the grave in the first week are an indication of how successful this move was and may have been viewed as such by senior clergy.
Finally, the local study concentrated on the discord that occurred in Lydbury North over a period of several years following the Great War. Events there mirrored others covered in the secondary literature and point to a time when individuals were motivated to provide what they saw as fitting memorials to the fallen having experienced the trauma of the war years. Those that supported the churches, usually the middle and upper classes, were often successful in ensuring that memorials reflected Christian iconography and were placed in or near the parish church. This had the effect of ensuring that memorialisation would be both long lived and closely aligned with the state religion.
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