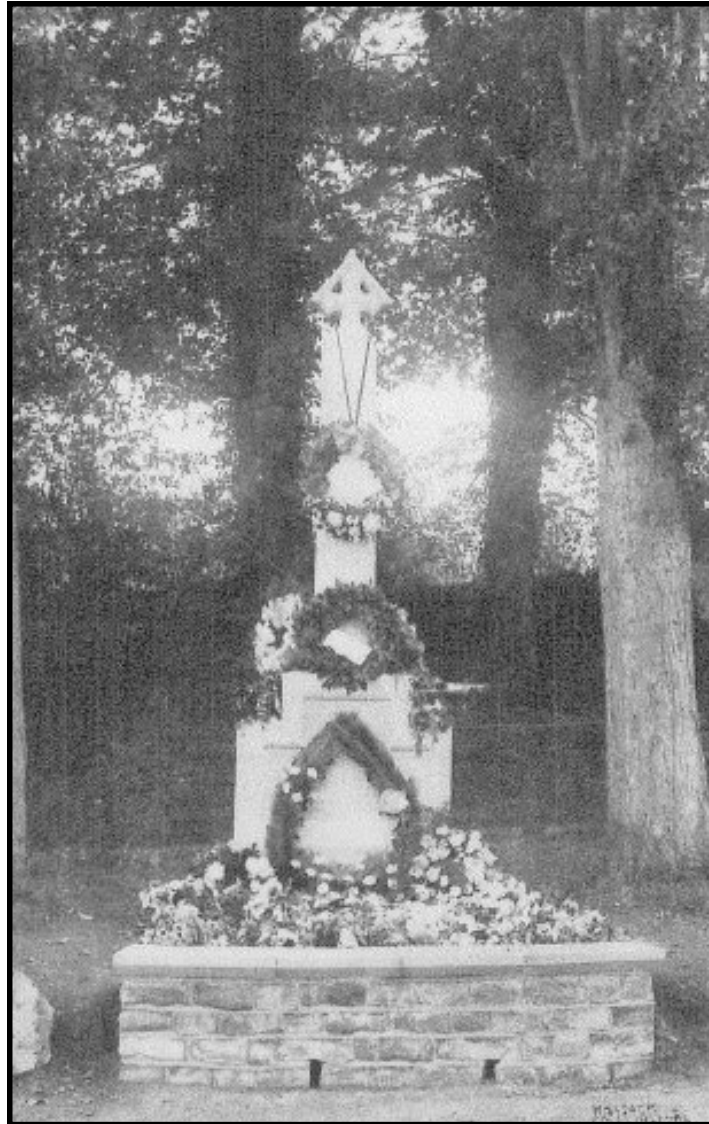


A History of the Aston Tirrold
& Aston Upthorpe War Memorial.



Published to mark the centenary of the Astons war memorial
unveiling and dedication on 29th October 1921.

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2021 (updated 2025)



*Christopher Hawker & Judy Barradell
Smith with our Lottery funding banner*

In 2014 the Astons were part of Heritage Lottery Fund (Lives of the First World War Fund) nationwide project, commemorating the centenary of the start of the First World War.

With an ambitious programme of research into the lives of the Astons soldiers who had lost their lives in the First World War, and with the involvement of many current and past residents of the villages, the project culminated in a fascinating weekend long exhibition.

In 2018 a second exhibition was held to commemorate the ending of that war, bringing together the initial research and much new information that had emerged since the first exhibition.

2021 marked the centenary of the Astons war memorial, and this booklet was produced to explain its history, and its place in the nationwide commemoration of that terrible conflict.

In 2025 an exhibition was held marking the 80th anniversary of the end of World War Two, at which time this booklet was updated.

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The Parish Council of Aston Tirrold and Aston Upthorpe.

Aston Tirrold & Upthorpe War Memorial

1921-2021

Marking the 100th anniversary of its initial dedication on 29th October 1921

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Ryan Morris, memorial stonemason.



The unveiling of the Cenotaph by George V November 1920.

The nation mourns

After the 1918 armistice the British Government declared that 19th July 1919 would be celebrated as Peace Day, to mark the signing of the Versailles Peace Treaty.

It was meant to be the celebration of a great military victory, and a huge parade made its way through London, watched by thousands, and with several firework displays in central London parks.

But it was the unveiling and dedication of the Cenotaph on Whitehall that caught the public mood. Cenotaph means 'empty tomb' which reflected that there had been no repatriation of soldiers' bodies.

The hundreds of thousands of British men and women who died in the war never came home, but were buried near where they had died. The decision made by the government as early as 1915 had been controversial and extremely upsetting for families.

The original Cenotaph, designed by Edwin Lutyens, was made of wood and plaster and meant to be a temporary structure - but the simplicity of its style resonated with the public, and in the following days hundreds of floral tributes were left at its base, and newspapers urged that it be retained as a permanent memorial.

By the end of that month the Government had bowed to public pressure and decided to rebuild the Cenotaph in stone, to the same design and on the same site.

This decision was a formal acknowledgement of the national mood whereby communities wanted to be able to create local memorials where individual names could be recorded for posterity, and bereaved families could mourn.*

The following year, and for the first time, Britain marked the exact moment two years previously when the Armistice ended the fighting, and at 11am on the 11th November 1920 King George V stepped forward to unveil the new permanent Cenotaph and joined the nation in two minutes of silent reflection.

In the years immediately following towns and villages all around the country erected memorials, either in the shape of memorial halls or war memorials, and the tradition of marking our country's war dead each year began.

*Although this process began in 1919, the government had fixed the cutoff date of 31 August 1921 for when a death could qualify as being war related. It was for this reason that most war memorials were not finalized until after August 31st, 1921.

The history of the Astons war memorial

Although the process of collecting names began in 1919, the government had fixed a cutoff date of 31 August 1921 for when a death could qualify as being war related. It was for this reason that most war memorials were not finalized until after August 31st, 1921.

Because of the different religious beliefs of bereaved families around the country, good practice advised that memorials should be built on common, non-religious ground, preferably in a central location at the heart of a community.

Francis John Kynaston Cross (owner of Astons Manor) gifted a piece of land opposite The Chequers Inn to the community for this purpose - a perfect site at the junction of both villages. No records exist however of that transaction. The land had once been used as a pound for stray animals and was where the village stocks once stood, and was also where road scrapings (mud and horse manure) were piled up and later sold at an annual auction held at The Chequers Inn.

The building of the Astons war memorial was funded by local subscription and may have been awarded grants from other places. A committee was formed to decide on the style of the memorial and the names that went on it. The style chosen was for a Calvary Cross design for the top with the block and cross made from limestone - probably from a quarry local to Oxford. The lettering on the pedestal was originally V cut and may well have been painted in black. We do not know the architect or the builder.

Agreeing on names to be included was a challenge. Some families did not want the name of their dead relative displayed, some still felt their loved one might still return to them alive, while other families had moved away and felt unconnected with the village.

We have seven black and white photos of the dedication, unveiling and blessing of the war memorial on 29th October 1921. We believe this date was chosen as on that date in 1914 the first man from the village, Wilfred Thomas Savegar aged 27, was killed near Ypres, Belgium.

In 1921, the villagers assembled to witness its official opening when the memorial, draped with a Union Jack, was unveiled. The scenes revealed in those photos are of the community standing around the memorial. Women and men stood along the road and on the bank. The young boys stood on one side of the memorial and the young girls on the other, all dressed in their best clothes bearing flowers and wreaths which they then laid on and around the memorial. We do not know what was said but we can see both the Presbyterian Minister and the Church of England Minister standing side by side.

To commemorate the 100-year anniversary of the start of WW1, a grant was applied for from the Heritage Lottery Fund (Lives of the First World War Fund) which was awarding money to communities who wanted to commemorate the beginning of WW1. This, plus money from the community and fund raising by the Astons History Group, helped pay for the village WW1 exhibition in 2014, as well as the professional cleaning of the whole memorial and the re carving of the WW1 name plaque which had weathered badly.

This also gave us the opportunity to correct the misspelling of the surname of one of those named, Joe Connelly - see page 12.



October 29th 1921: The Dedication, rector Charles Boxall Longland officiating.



October 29th 1921: The Unveiling



October 29th 1921: The Blessing



Remembering 'The Great War': November 2014

The Tom Powell Collection

The photos below are part of the Tom Powell's collection of photos, cards and diaries, which were very kindly given to the Astons History Group in 2019 by his niece Judy Powell of South Moreton.



The photo on the left shows the Astons veterans' wreath on the front gate of Croft House, Fuller's Road - the home of Lucy Fuller - the last of the Fuller family to live in the Astons.

The photo below shows the veterans standing at the memorial service.

The third photo shows the memorial mound as seen from Spring Lane. The wreaths are still visible, so this photo may have been taken shortly after the service.



First World War Fallen of Aston Tirrold and Aston Upthorpe

81 men are connected with both villages who served in the First World War, and out of those 81 men, 21 were killed in action or died as a result of the war. There are 16 names on our war memorial which are below (3 men are commemorated in the United Reformed Church, and 2 others at Blewbury and Cholsey churches).

Out of those 16 men, 8 men have NO KNOWN GRAVES.

The inscription on our war memorial is: *In honour of all the men who served and especially in grateful recollection of those who fell in the Great War of 1914 - 1919*

Their names are given below, with their age when they died in brackets, and in order of their deaths, from September 1914 and to November 1918:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Regiment served in</u>
• Wilfred Savegar (29 October 1914, age 27)	Royal Berkshire Regiment
• Gordon Lewington (25 January 1915, age 19)	Coldstream Guards
• William Aldridge (25 January 1915, age 36)	Coldstream Guards
• William Knobbs (2 February 1916, age 24)	East Yorkshire Regiment
• Frederick Lay (24 May 1916, age 27)	Royal Berkshire Regiment
• Hubert Cummins (14 July 1916, age 19)	Royal Berkshire Regiment
• James Corbett (19 September 1916, age 33)	Royal Berkshire Regiment
• Edgar Whichello (4 April 1917, age 20)	Royal Berkshire Regiment
• Albert Lewington (23 April 1917, age 35)	Royal Naval Division
• Frederick Elderfield (11 May 1917, age 31)	East Kent Regiment
• Mark Didcock (16 May 1915, age 30)	Royal Berkshire Regiment
• Claud Lillington (31 July 1917, age 21)	Royal Berkshire Regiment
• Robert Bishop Slade (23 July 1918, age 26)	Royal Flying Corps
• Joseph Connelly (13 September 1918, age 18)	Royal West Surrey Regiment
• Francis Kimmer (6 November 1918, age 18)	East Yorkshire Regiment
• George Richard Clacy (9 December 1918, age 19)	Royal Berkshire Regiment

On the following page is the exhibition text for Fred Savegar, the first Aston's' casualty.

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

Remembering the Astons during the First World War

FRED SAVEGAR



PRIVATE WILFRED THOMAS SAVEGAR
1ST BATTALION BERKSHIRE REGIMENT
SOLIDER NUMBER: 8113

He was born on the 29th May 1887 in Dilwin, Herefordshire to Thomas and Elizabeth Savegar. His family were living at Peartree Cottage in Aston Tirrold by 1901. Known to his friends and family as Fred, he enlisted at Reading around 1906 for the Regular Army and joined the 1st Battalion Royal Berkshire Regiment.

The 1st Battalion was at Mandora Barracks, Aldershot when war was declared on the 4th August 1914. Fred departed for France on the 12th August 1914 and participated in the fighting withdrawal from Mons as part of 6th Brigade, 2nd Division.

Fred was killed in action at Molenaarelsthoek in Flanders during The First Battle of Ypres. He was our villages first casualty of war. Officially his death is documented as the 27th October but the battalions war diary says he was killed on the 29th October 1914. **One Hundred Years Ago.**

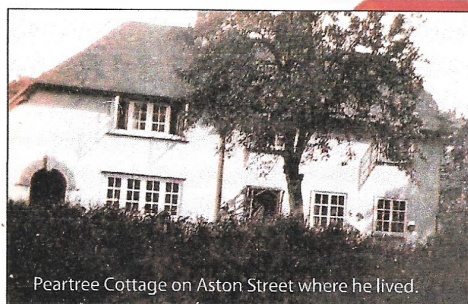
He was 27 years old and left behind his wife Elisie Maud and his son Leonard David who was 8 months old.

He is remembered on our village war memorial and on the Muster Roll and plaque in St Michael's Church. He is also **Remembered with Honour** at the Menin Gate Memorial in Ypres.

He has 'No Known Grave'

His actual medals below.

1914 Star British War Victory





The memorial before and after restoration in 2014



Other names:

George Didcock – is remembered at Chosley.

Frank Blake – remembered at Blewbury.

These names are not on our village memorial but are remembered at the United Reformed Church as members of the Presbyterian congregation but not living in the Astons.

James Collins

Gardner Fuller

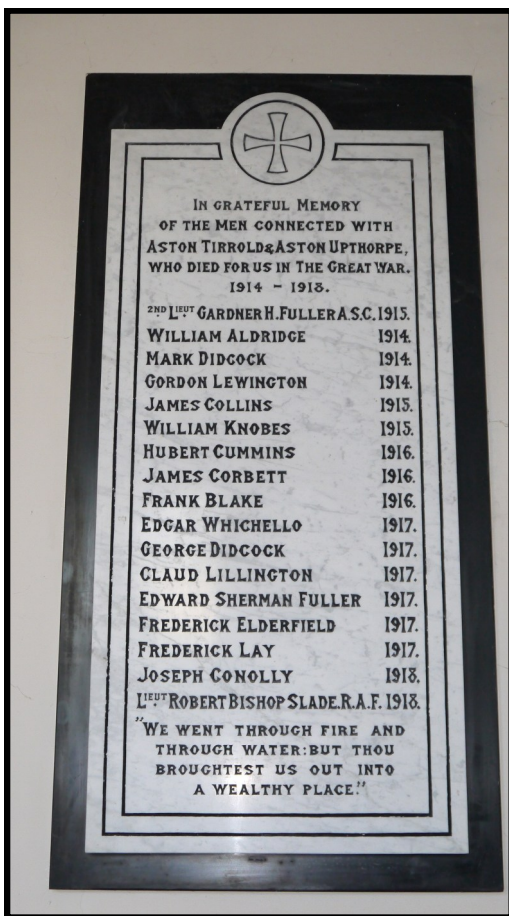
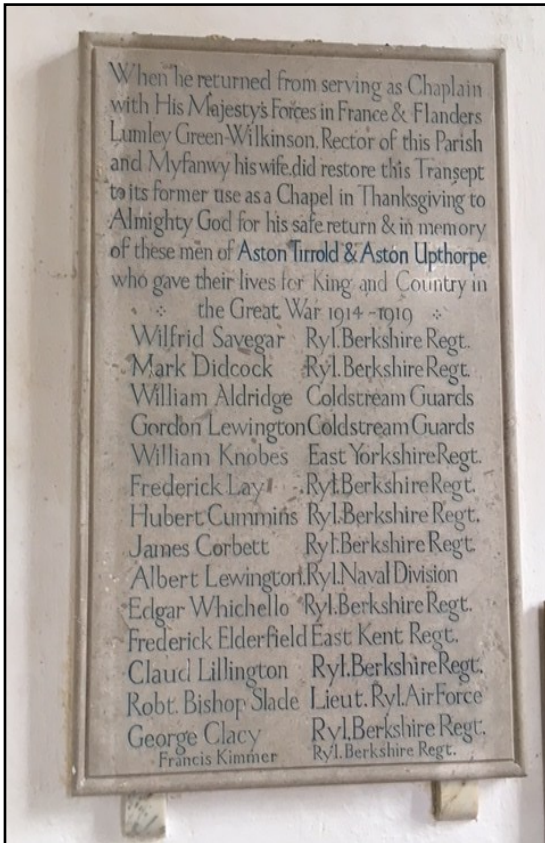
Edward Fuller

World War One memorials in the Astons' churches

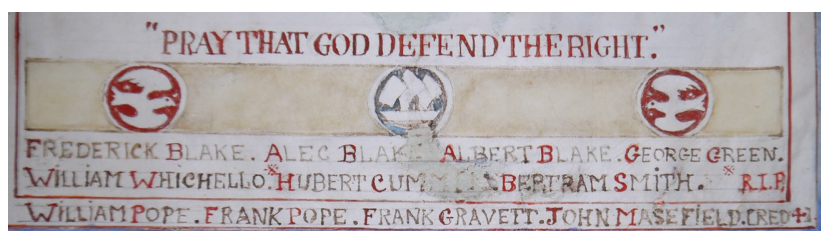
There are two memorials in St. Michael's Church.

One marks the restoration of the Lady Chapel by Rector Lumley Wilkinson Green, in honour of the Astons soldiers who died (left).

The second is the 'muster roll' (below, re-framed in 2014) which records all Aston soldiers who served in the war. This includes John Masefield (Poet Laureate 1930—1967) who lived at Lollington Farm at this time, and who worked with the Red Cross (see detail below) .



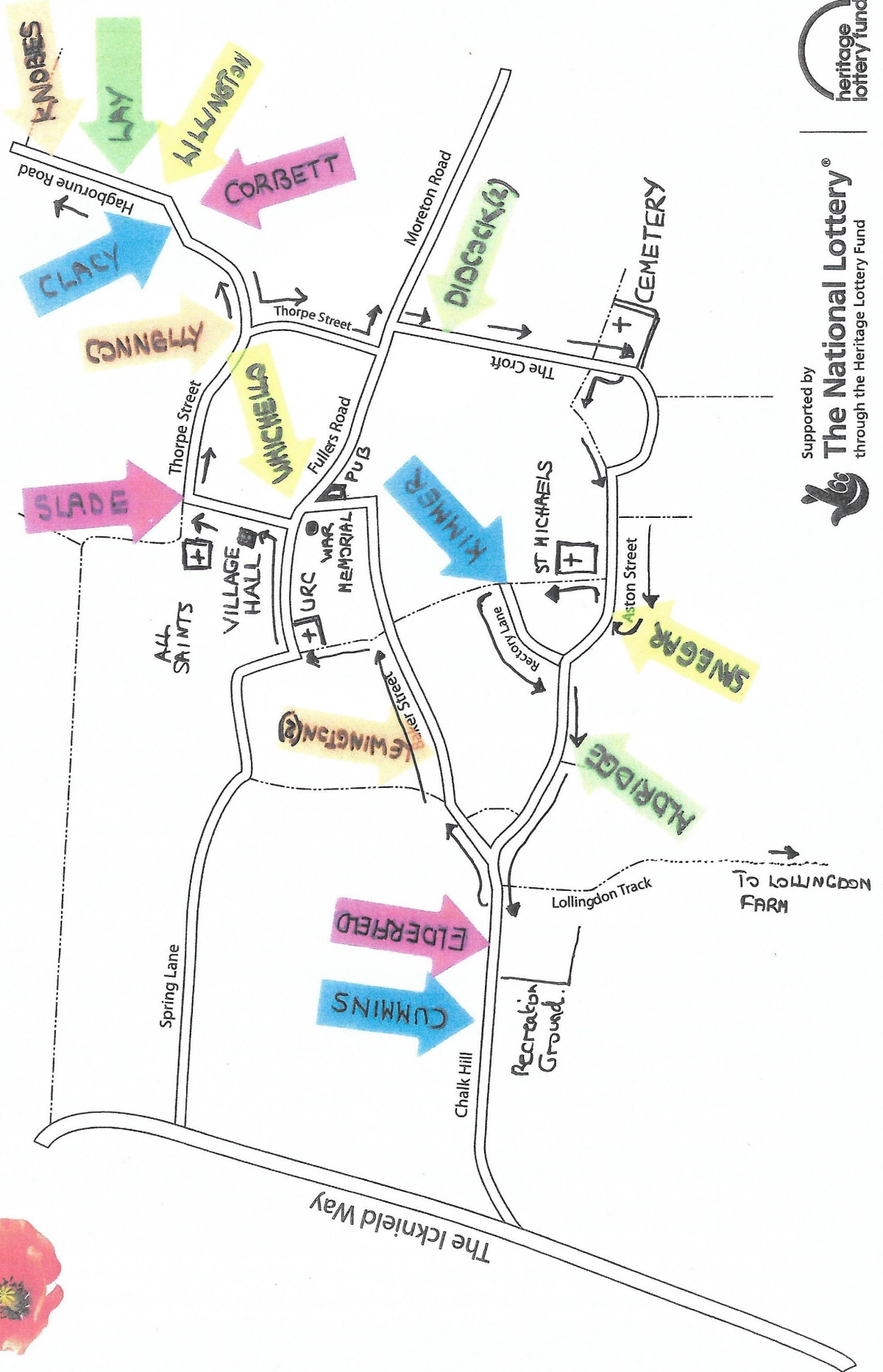
The Presbyterian Chapel (now the United Reformed Church) plaque in Spring Lane.



John Masefield's entry on the muster roll.

The 2014 exhibition weekend included a 'Poppy Trail' around the village showing where our soldiers had lived.

WHERE THE ASTONS SOLDIERS LIVED



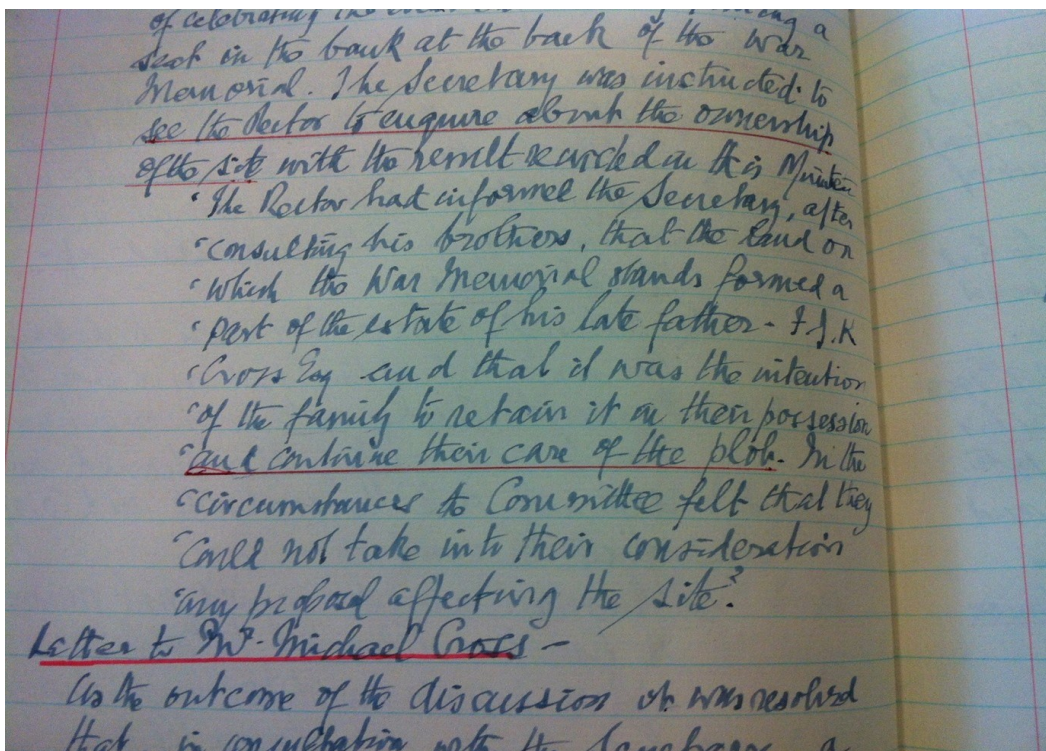
Supported by
The National Lottery
through the Heritage Lottery Fund

Maintaining the fabric of the memorial

Although Frank Cross was known to have 'given' the land for the memorial the actual ownership of the land it stands on was never completely resolved, and the responsibility for the upkeep and maintenance of the Astons war memorial varied over the years.

The parish councils of Upthorpe and Tirrold certainly set up a committee to manage the site, but its remit was always vague, as this extract of their minute book in 1957 shows:

"The secretary was instructed to see the Rector to enquire about the ownership of the site with the result (marked?) in this minutes. The Rector had informed the Secretary, after consulting his brother that the land on which the war memorial stands formed a part of the estate of his late father FJK Cross and that it was the intention of the family to retain it in their possession but continue their care of the plot. In the circumstances the Committee felt they could not take into account any proposal affecting the site".



Extract from the Aston War Memorial Committee book of 1957.

However in 2014, with the proposed refurbishment of the memorial, the Parish Councils of Aston Tirrold and Upthorpe formally agreed to become custodians of the memorial, and also set up a new War Memorial Committee comprising a representative of the Astons Parochial Parish Council, the Astons History Group, and Ryan Morris, an Astons stonemason who maintains the stonework of the memorial.

Next page: the report submitted to the councils at the beginning of the project.

The Astons War Memorial: Report to the Parish Councils.

The somewhat dilapidated state of the Astons war memorial (and particularly of the WW2 nearly horizontal stone) was noted by the joint Aston Tirrold and Aston Upthorpe Parish Councils sometime in 2002 and an attempt was made to find out who was responsible for it.

In the end it was established that after both world wars the memorials were commissioned and financed by committees of villagers set up for the purpose, rather than by any existing body, such as the Parish Councils, the Church or the County Council.

The Parish Councils therefore agreed to assume responsibility for doing something about the memorial and Brian Crawford (Tirrold) and Christopher Hawker (Upthorpe) were tasked with taking the matter forward. Robin Sewell, from outside the councils, kindly agreed to assist with the project.

The possibility of getting financial assistance from outside bodies, such as OCC, SODC, the War Graves Commission and the Friends of War Memorials was investigated and SODC (Economic Development) did, in the end, contribute generously. It was eventually decided to have the WW2 memorial stone completely replaced and the WW1 memorial professionally cleaned, with funding coming primarily from within the Astons, as well as the SODC grant.

The stonemasons AF Jones, of Reading and Ipsden surveyed the memorial and quoted for the degree of restoration they advised. The Parish councils accepted both the advice and the quotation and got the funding started with a modest grant. The rest of the required funding was raised from individual donors within the village and the Stud – the total sum, including lately commissioned work to the flagstone surround, was £2964.80. The work was eventually carried out by AF Jones in October/November 2005.

In these circumstances, without any other obvious “sponsor” and with ongoing maintenance being an issue, I would strongly support the continued “ownership” of the War Memorial by the Parish Councils.

Christopher Hawker (War Memorial Custodian, previous Parish Councillor and Member of the PCC).

14th June 2014



Christopher Hawker with the 2014 exhibition boards on the war memorial.

We will remember them: Our Centenary Exhibition 2014.

The Astons wanted their exhibition to record the impact of the war in the widest sense - its effect on village life in addition to the impact on individual families.

From our grant application to the Heritage Lottery Fund:

“Those who went to war came from all backgrounds; wealth and privilege spared no one in the field of battle. The impact on village life with the removal of menfolk was profound and widespread. We aim to understand how the community coped with these changes, in particular the impact of the religious divides within our villages – between Church of England and Nonconformist congregations. Notably, after the war each church recorded their war dead separately; even our War Memorial does not have a complete list”.

In addition to the exhibition, between 2014 and 2018 representatives from the Astons visited every single war grave of our fallen soldiers - in France, Belgium and Germany - and placed a copy of that soldier’s life story on their grave.

At the 2018 repeat of our exhibition a video was played showing these visits, and visits to other key sites such as the Menin Gate, together with readings and poignant music.

When it finished there was not a dry eye in the hall. We felt we had truly succeeded in reaching our goals.



Right: Anna Dillon and Judy Barradell-Smith visit Joe Connelly’s grave



The exhibition weekend was hugely popular, both with village families and with soldiers' families - some of whom had never visited the Astons before.



The WW2 Fallen of Aston Tirrold and Aston Upthorpe:

In 1947 a new memorial stone was added to the war memorial, and the names of the ten Astons soldiers who had died in WW2 inscribed. Their names are given below in order of their deaths:

Name	Regiment served in
• James Aldridge (25th May 1940, aged 19)	Royal Berkshire Regiment
• Leonard Lillington (1st June 1940, aged 38)	Royal Artillery Field Regiment
• David Langmore (18th December 1941, aged 31)	Royal Fleet Air Arm
• Harold Waldron (22nd April 1943, aged 27)	Air Transport Auxiliary
• Kenneth Horn (28th June 1944, aged 21)	Royal Air Force
• Frederick Ray (12th September 1944, aged 30)	Anti-Tank Regiment, Royal Artillery
• Frank Furlong (13th September 1944, aged 33)	Royal Fleet Air Arm
• Timothy Cross (15th November 1944, aged 20)	1st Middlesex Regiment.
• Henry Wigley (5th March 1945, aged 23)	Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve
• Ernest Bachelor (19th July 1947, aged 28)	Sherwood Foresters

James Aldridge and Leonard Lillington both died during the Dunkirk retreat.

The Aldridge and Lillington families lost sons in **both** World Wars.



Below: the Astons Muster Roll in St. Michael's Church Aston Tirrold, which lists all individuals who served, in whatever capacity, during World War Two.



This booklet is one of a series published to commemorate the Astons during two World Wars: *'We Will Remember Them.'*

- * We will remember them: our fallen soldiers in WW1.
- * From Galloway to Flanders Fields: Wee Joe Connolly 1900-1918.
- * The Astons Home Front: 1914-1918.
- * We will remember them: our fallen soldiers in WW2.
- * The Forgotten War: Frederick Ernest Ray 1914-1944.
- * A History of the Aston Tirrold & Aston Upthorpe War Memorial.

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<https://www.theastons.net/history/the-astons-at-war>

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