

Wellow and World War I

Wellow does not have the usual cross or monument, since after the war it was decided instead to commission a meeting place for the community as a fitting memorial. As a result, the original Memorial Hall was built on land donated for the purpose by the Saviles of Rufford and was 'erected in honour of those from this village who served in the Great War 1914 – 1918'. It was officially opened in 1923 by Lady Titchfield, the wife of the sitting M.P. When the hall was rebuilt in 1981 the commemorative stone tablet was incorporated in the front wall. Inside the hall are two Rolls of Honour on wooden wall plaques, one for each of the World Wars.

St. Swithin's church also houses two memorials. There is a stone tablet bearing the names of the fallen of World War I, and also a hand written 'Roll of Honour for King and Country' listing all the men who served.

Taken together, the three memorials provide a surprising amount of detail about the villagers who went to war, but also some intriguing discrepancies. Depending on which memorial is consulted, there were 5, 6 or 7 men who lost their lives in the war, and two or three taken as prisoners of war. The total number of men who served is 54 on the church Roll of Honour, but only 49 in the hall (despite the latter presumably being produced at a later date than the one in the church). There are also some minor differences in initials and spelling for several names, but almost certainly they are the same people.

In common with many places the age range of those who died is from 18 to 26 years. These young men lost their lives in Belgium, France, Turkey, Greece and (rather surprisingly) Scotland. Four were killed in action, one was killed in a naval accident, and two died of wounds. Poignantly, one family lost two sons. The worst year of the war for Wellow was 1915 with four deaths, and sadly the final casualty died only a month from the end of the war in 1918.

Photographs of the two Rolls of Honour in the Memorial Hall can now be found on the village website at www.wellow.me. The five men who served and are not mentioned on the Memorial Hall Roll of Honour are Francis Askew Bell (Lieutenant, Sherwood Rangers, of Wellow House and son of the agent for the Saviles' Rufford estate), John William Caunt (Royal Scottish Fusiliers, of Wellow Green), Arthur Cutts (Sherwood Foresters, who was taken prisoner of war), J.T.R. Sharp (Sherwood Foresters) and Richard Truman (Royal Field Artillery).