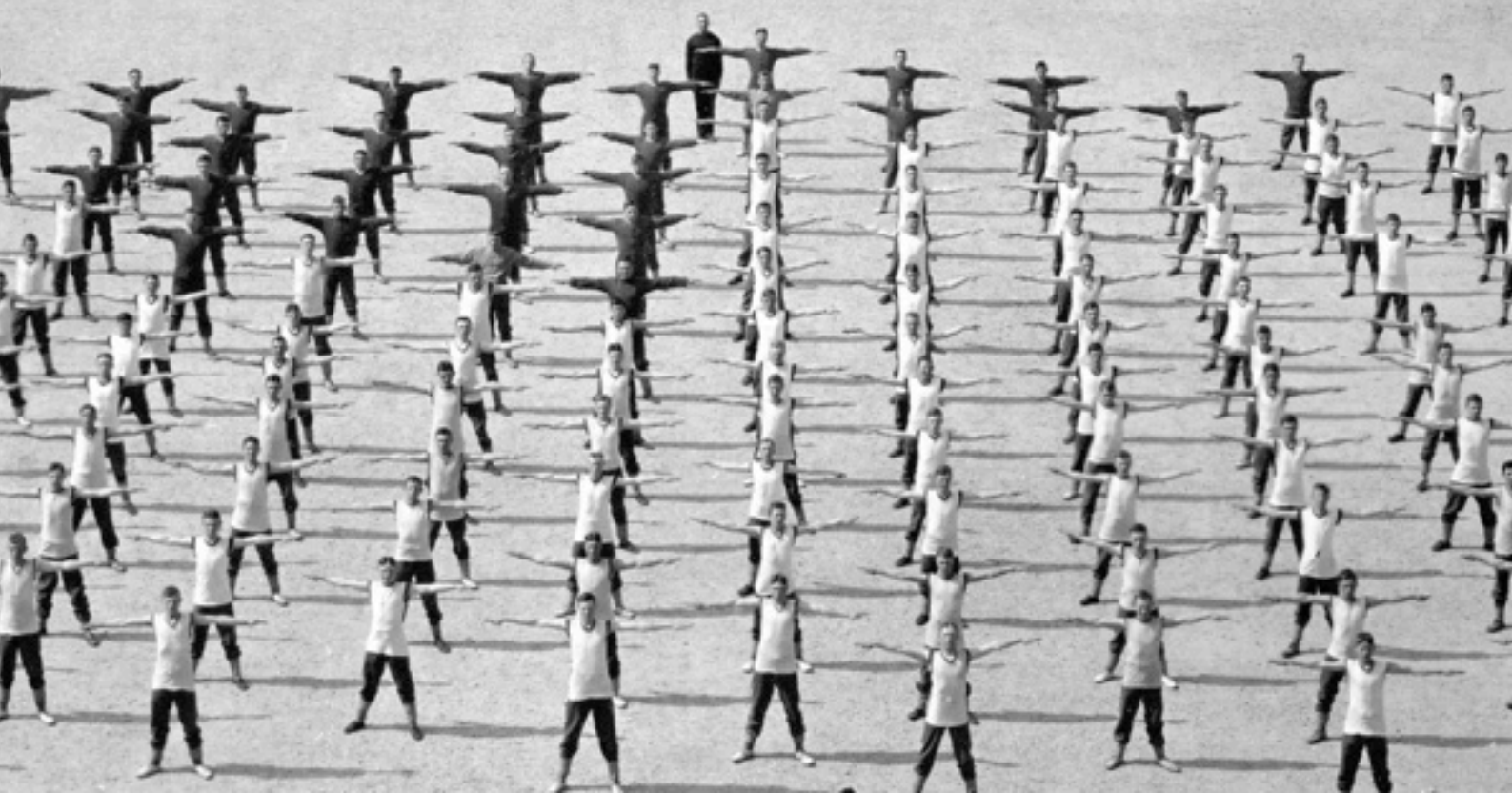




Dorchester and the First World War

A guide to resources
for teachers and local history researchers



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Introduction

Dorchester has a largely hidden First World War history. It was home to one of the largest prisoner of war camps in the country, where around 4,500 Germans were detained; large Barracks (now converted to other uses) which housed soldiers of the Dorset Regiment and the Royal Horse Artillery; hospitals; a War Memorial and – unusually – a memorial to the German soldiers who died here.

There are still aspects of Dorchester's First World War history to be researched and it makes an ideal subject for the National Curriculum requirement for a local history study with a national (and international) context.

Local Resources

Museums, archives and libraries hold information about people and subjects in their records and in the knowledge of staff, volunteers and researchers. You can find photographs, documents and artefacts relating to Dorchester in the First World War in these places:

The Keep Military Museum

Opening hours:

1 April - 30 September	Monday - Saturday 10:00 - 17:00
1 October - 31 October	Monday - Friday 10:00 - 16:30
1 November - 31 March	Tuesday - Friday 10:00 - 16:30

www.keepmilitarymuseum.org

01305 264066

If you wish to use the Museum's library, you will need to book in advance. The Museum holds some material relating to Dorchester, although its main emphasis is the histories of the Dorset and Devonshire regiments and the soldiers who served in these.



*New recruits at the
Dorchester barracks,
1914
They have not yet
received their uniforms*

Keep Military Museum

Dorset History Centre

Open Tuesday to Friday 9am to 5pm and first and third Saturdays.

www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/dorsethistorycentre

01305 250550

If you want to look at original archives or photographs, you will need to apply for a CARN (County Archives Research Network) card, which can be obtained without charge on a first visit and used in any local record office. You will need to bring proof of ID and address.

Dorset Local Studies Library

Housed within the Dorset History Centre. No need to book or use a CARN card. Opening hours as Dorset History Centre.

The Library also holds information in local history books, local directories, such as Kelly's, and the Dictionary of National Biography (the DNB). You can access the DNB from your own computer by logging in with your local library card at: <http://www.oxforddnb.com>



*First World War troops at
Dorchester West Station*

Dorset County Museum

Dorset County Museum

Holds collections relating to Dorchester and a good collection of photographs. However, considerable parts of the Museum will be closed for two years for re-building works. If you wish to use the collections for research, please book well in advance and please note some items may not be available until after the Museum re-opens in 2020.

www.dorsetcountymuseum.org

01305 262735

Dorset County Library

[Dorchester Library](#) opening hours:

Monday	10.00 - 17.30	Thursday	09.30 - 17.30
Tuesday	09.30 - 19.00	Friday	09.30 - 19.00
Wednesday	09.30 - 13.00	Saturday	09.00 - 16.00

01305 224440

You can use e-books and online resources with your library card by [clicking here](#). Online resources you might find useful include the Times archive and the Encyclopaedia Britannica.

Books

Dorchester Remembers the Great War by Brian Bates, published by [Roving Press](#) (2012)
The author has researched all the people named on the War Memorial in Dorchester.

Living with the Enemy: Dorchester's Great War Prison Camp by Brian Bates, published by Roving Press (2016)

Dorchester Past by Jo Draper, published by Phillimore & Co. (2001)
Includes a chapter Dorchester in the First World War.

A Dorchester Camera by Jo Draper, published by Dovecote Press (1984)

The resources listed here are about Dorchester's role in the First World War, but if you wanted an account of a Dorset soldier's time at war, you could try:

A Sergeant Major's War by Ernest Shephard, published by The Crowood Press Ltd (1988)

There are also other soldiers' stories on display at the Keep Military Museum and on their website.

National Resources

National Archives

You can search all the catalogues of the UK's archives here:

<http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk>

Imperial War Museum

The Museum has a large collection of photographs and other resources at www.iwm.org.uk many of which are available free. You can also hear audio recordings of [Voices of the First World War](#) and search records of [those who served](#) and [conscientious objectors](#).

War Memorials

You can find out about UK War Memorials at www.ukwarmemorials.org and see the listing of the Dorchester German War Memorial [here](#). There is a learning programme for schools [here](#).

British Newspaper Archive

A searchable database of historic newspapers
www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/



International Resources

Red Cross database of WWI Prisoners of War

Five million records from the international archives of the Red Cross are recorded on a searchable database. All individual ICRC records relating to the First World War (prisoner's index files and their associated lists) have been digitized and are now directly accessible on this site. <https://grandeguerre.icrc.org>

You can search for a person by name (surname first), choosing the nationality from the drop down list. You can then read the records about Red Cross parcels delivered, letters, inspections of the Camp and so on. More information in the article below on the German War Memorial and its Creators.

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

<https://www.cwgc.org> includes records of 1.7million graves from the First and Second World War.

Wikipedia

Check the sources quoted at the bottom of the page to ensure accuracy. By clicking 'View History' at the top of the page you can see who has been editing the page and judge whether anyone has introduced inaccuracies, or if the page has been corrected.

Wikimedia Commons

Pictures that can be freely used for exhibitions and educational projects

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Main_Page

Articles on Dorchester's WWI History

by volunteers taking part in the Poppy Trail project

War Memorials



*The unveiling of the War Memorial,
1921*

Dorset County Museum

Individuals and communities wanted to recognise the loss that resulted from the war by creating a permanent record of the sacrifices made.

Dorchester Cenotaph

Getting the memorial built

It was never officially called a cenotaph, but all the local people called it that.

At the first public meeting on 14 March 1919 at the Corn Exchange, it was reported in the Chronicle that there was a duty to erect some memorial to 'the gallant Dorchester men who had so nobly sacrificed their lives for King and Country'.

There were lots of suggestions of the type of memorial this could be including:

- Swimming pool for children
- Workingman's Institute
- Rest home for soldiers and sailors
- Endowment of scholarships for the sons of working class men
- Convalescent home for children

A 24-person committee was set up and on 2 June it reported back to a public meeting. But there was no agreement and the committee suggested two alternatives:

1. Building a monument at the junction of South Street and Trinity Street outside Ernest Tilley's Cycle Shop; and the erection of a memorial institute and victory hall (if there was money)
2. Building the monument but at a different site; unsure funds could be raised for the memorial hall

There was no agreement but it was resolved to defer the memorial hall until public subscriptions showed what funds might be available for it.

The final push came from the Dorchester Comrades of the Great War who wrote a letter to the town council in January 1920 asking for the scheme to be resuscitated. It was finally agreed to build the monument at the corner of South Street and South Walks. There were even suggestions for an arch gate to be placed in Borough Gardens.

The design

People wished to have a similar design to the Cenotaph in Whitehall, designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens. A letter was written asking if the design was copyrighted and his office replied yes it was but they were sure there would be no objection to it being copied providing Lutyens supervised the work. It was too expensive to employ him so the job was put out to tender to local firms for the design, carving and erection of the monument.

This was won by Algernon Grassby, a monumental mason of Maumbury Way at a cost of £400. To accommodate the monument some chestnut trees in the Walks were removed and the kerb realigned.

The monument is made of Portland Whitbed Stone, it is 15 feet high and weighs 17 tons. Relief panels with carved laurel leaf and a crusader's sword decorate the back and front. Robert Membury at the Model Brass Foundry in Colliton Street made the front bronze plaques.

The bronze plaques bear the names of the fallen and the names were collected through public advertising and notices in newspapers and posters around the town, and letters sent to local churches.

In all there are 239 names on the memorial, including 16 sets of brothers, three cases where a father and son died, one uncle and a nephew, two cousins and one woman Constance Hodges.

Unveiling

The memorial was unveiled on 24 May 1921 and the gathering included mourners, dignitaries, Red Cross nurses, representatives of the Dorset Regiment and RFA, Girl Guides, Boys Brigades and Church Lads Brigades.

The Prince of Wales was invited to attend but was not available so the Right Hon Lord Ellenborough, who had served with the 2nd Dorsets in the Boer War and worked tirelessly during the Great War, carried out the ceremony.

Several hymns were sung and an address was made by the local clergy to remind people about the sacrifice that had been made. The ceremony ended with the playing of the Last Post.

Other local war memorials

St George's Church Fordington

The memorial inside the church is a white marble plaque mounted on a black marble background. There are 65 names of members of the parish, including four sets of brothers.

Holy Trinity Church, High West Street

This Catholic Church was Church of England during the Great War and has a memorial fixed to the outside of the south wall. It is a rectangular plaque carved with angels carrying a flag in one hand and a sheaf of corn in the other, representing the bread of life. There are 38 names, including four sets of brothers and one father and son.

St Peter's Church, High West Street

St Peter's Church has three memorials. The first is at the front outside the church, dedicated on 20 December 1920, and features a cross on an elongated, octagonal pillar sitting on a plinth. There are 24 names on a bronze plaque, including three sets of brothers. The second is found inside the church and is a framed plaque showing 25 men of the parish. The third memorial was erected by the Dorchester branch of the Salisbury Diocesan Guild of Bellringers and lists nine campanologists, including William Painter from Dorchester.

Memorial at the Post Office, Trinity Street, designed by Thomas Hardy

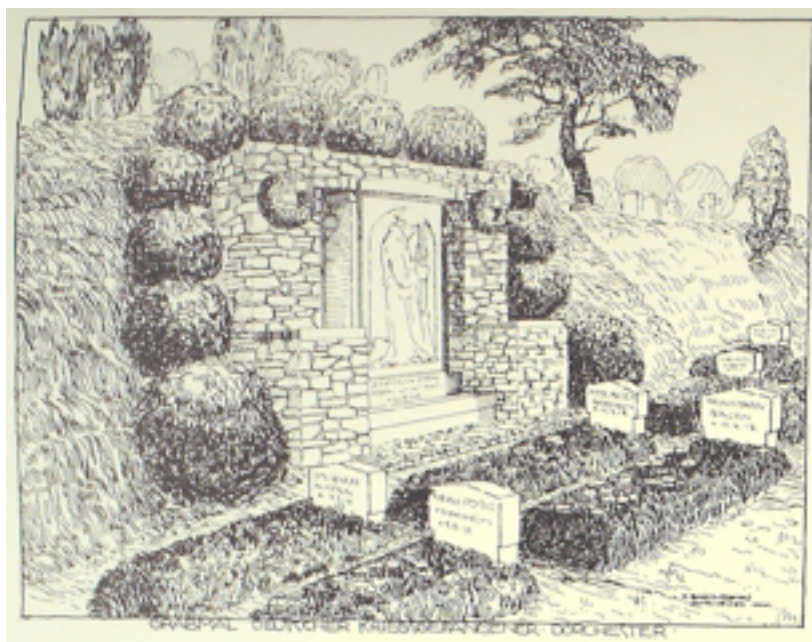


Thomas Hardy was commissioned by the Post Office to provide the inscription for a memorial to the eleven local postal workers killed in the First World War. Honoured to be asked, Hardy offered to design the monument as well. Before he became a successful novelist, Hardy had trained as an architect, and was a skilful draughtsman. He produced the work in a week, writing to the district postmaster that 'the service that I rendered was a very small thing to do for the devoted men whose names appear in the list'.

The inscription 'None dubious of the cause, none murmuring' was taken from one of Hardy's earlier poems 'The Embarcation'. Written in 1899, the poem reflects on the departure of soldiers from Southampton Docks to the Boer War, and laments that 'the late age of thought' cannot find a better solution than war to international disputes.

German War Memorial, Fordington Cemetery

This memorial, found at the eastern end of the cemetery, is dedicated to the 45 Germans who are buried here. It was erected at the end of the war and shows a German soldier in uniform, kneeling with a bowed head, holding a rifle. The German inscription reads: 'Here lies German soldiers in a foreign land but not forgotten', but there are no names listed on the memorial.



A drawing of the German War Memorial at Fordington by Karl Bartholmay, the designer of the memorial and a prisoner of war

The drawing is from a booklet of drawings of the prisoner of war camp made by prisoners and published after the War

Keep Military Museum

There are also small memorials at other places in the town, such as the gates at The Thomas Hardy School. You can find them listed at www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk

The Keep and the Barracks



The Keep was originally the gatehouse for the Depot Barracks of the Dorsetshire Regiment and also the County Armoury. Designed to resemble a Norman Castle, it is built of Portland stone. Completed in 1879, the Barracks were the administrative centre for the Regiment and its base for recruitment and training.

Britain entered the First World War on 4 August 1914 and soon patriotic young men flocked to the Dorchester Depot, anxious to serve in a war which many believed would be over by Christmas. Pictured is a group of new recruits being inspected by a corporal on the parade ground.



Here a group of young recruits is shown at a gym class, the arch of the gatehouse being visible in the background. They would soon be involved in a war that claimed the lives of over 700,000 British service personnel, including [Private Will Sanders](#) (back row first from left) who together with some 150 comrades was killed at Hill 60 in Belgium by a German gas attack launched on 1 May 1915.

As the war continued with heavy losses, the need for recruits increased and the Depot remained at the forefront of training and recruitment until the Armistice that ended the war on 11 November 1918.

by Ernie Thomas

Colliton House Hospital

Colliton House was built in the 1600s as the town house of the Churchill family. Originally a small L-shaped house, it was remodelled with the addition of a longer wing c.1720. In 1914 when it was opened as a hospital on 7 November it was the home of war hero and, sadly, later casualty himself Denzil Hughes-Onslow. The house he vacated was used to accommodate the Administration and Consulting rooms of the Clinical staff. The patients were treated primarily in wards housed in tents which spread across the lawns. Planned to provide 40 beds initially, it expanded to 100 during the course of the war. In 1916 it absorbed the wounded housed previously at Church Street Hospital at No 5 Church Street opposite Wollaston House, the home of its Commandant Mrs Acland.

With its marquees spread across the park Colliton was described as “a very complete hospital with a first class operating theatre, an X-ray installation and Mechano-therapeutic apparatus”. The Commandant was Miss Winifrede Marsden and the Matron Miss M le G Whiting. Major Burroughs-Cosens was the Chief Medical Officer and the Chaplain Canon Hankey.



Tents housing patients in Colliton park

Transport from the station where the casualties arrived was organised through a motor pool with vehicles loaned by local garages such as Channon and Sons and Tilley and Sons. When demand was high the horse ambulance from the County Hospital helped out. The Hospital's busiest day was 1 May 1917 when 147 patients arrived which must have stretched its resources to breaking-point.

Across Dorset as a whole there were 53 Red Cross Hospitals, some in private houses with as little as three beds and some in special wards in established hospitals. Colliton House was one of the largest. By 1919 2,794 Red Cross volunteers were recorded. They had cared for 21,200 of the less seriously wounded soldiers.

Not only those nursing on the wards were part of the civilian war effort, “an army of ladies” supported them. As it was recorded “We make tail bandages, roller bandages, swabs and fomentation pads. Moist dressings are also required in large quantities and these use sphagnum moss which is collected by boys from mossy grassland valleys and the heathland moors. Special products include pneumonia jackets to keep victims warm, and trench foot

slippers. Davis slings, and stump covers and knee covers have brought home to us the fact that some soldiers have been horribly mutilated”.



One of the wards at Colliton House in a former drawing room

Dorset County Museum

Dorchester can be justifiably proud of its hospitals and people's contribution to the war effort.

Additional information: In 1914 the Dorset County Hospital, then in Princes Street, operated on a small scale, treating around 400 in-patients a year. Realising that Dorchester ought to do its part in treating wounded and convalescent servicemen, Captain John Acland, Chairman of the hospital committee, proposed that 70 beds be made available. To these were added another 50 in the Masonic Hall and in a private house in Church Street. At Colliton House, wards were installed in the house and in marquees, with 200 beds served by staff from the Royal Army Medical Corps assisted by 50 Voluntary Aid Detachment nurses. Colliton House hospital treated over 2,000 patients.



The County Hospital with its large verandas for patients to sit on or have their beds wheeled out onto

Dorset County Museum

Channon & Sons

In addition to Dorchester's role as a garrison town, some local companies had additional involvement in the war effort. Edward Channon & Sons, Motor Engineers in High East Street, manufactured vehicles and parts for gun carriages and Eddison's Steam Plough Works in Fordington supplied farms with steam ploughs to replace the horses that had been taken away for use in the War.



From *Dorchester in Old Photographs* by Ted Gosling:

Channon & Sons' carriage & motor works in 1905. Edward Channon bought the premises from Stroud & Co. in 1898, and continued on as carriage makers until the demand ceased. Ernest Channon stands by the Channons' car that he designed & produced.

They then acquired the first Morris Motors agency in the county in 1912, which they retained for 60 years. At the end of the 20th Century the business closed & the premises are now occupied by a wine distributors.

Photo & text taken from *Dorchester Past* by Jo Draper:

During the First World War Edward Channon & Sons, Motor Engineers, in High East Street, manufactured parts for gun carriages, some of which are visible in the photo.



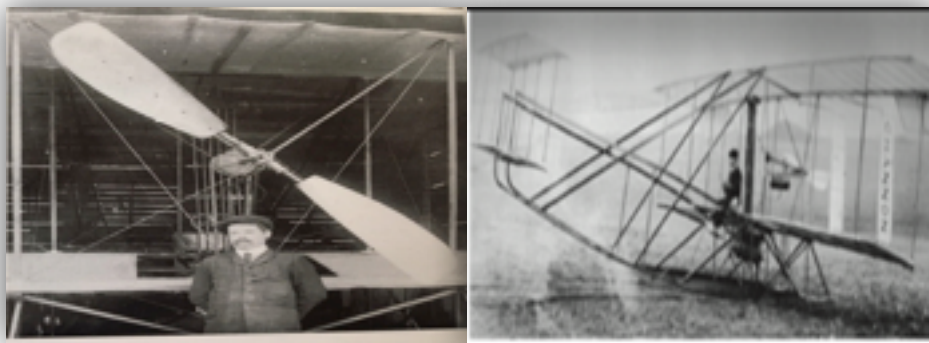
Edward Channon is seated centre with a hat, with his sons Ernest (left) and Ralph (right) The work force are all women and Channons were one of the earliest in the area to employ women, including Mrs Ernest Channon, second from the left.

Channons seem to have been the only war production company in Dorchester, but many supplied goods to soldiers and prisoners.



Photo taken from social media & text from *Dorchester Past* by Jo Draper:

Electricity: Channon & Sons carriage & motor works factory installed its own system in 1901 with a large 'electric arc lamp of 1,200 candle power' out in the street, and lamps in all the workshops. A gas engine was used to generate power, and there was no battery storage, Mr Channon preferring to use electricity as he 'makes it'. The ease of use impressed the Chronicle's reporter: the electric lights "can be used in any one room separately if it is desired as there is a means of turning them on & off."



Photos and text taken from *Dorchester in Old Photographs* by Ted Gosling and *A Dorset Camera* by David Burnett:

Ralph Channon began construction of an aeroplane in May 1909 which was built along the lines of the Wright brothers 'Kitty Hawk' and was built in the Dorchester Channon & Sons' yard. The aeroplane was taken to Maiden Castle for its first flight on 20 November 1909. The original idea had been that she would slide down the steep hill to take off but it didn't move. Wheels were, therefore, placed beneath the craft that would then drop off as it left the ground.

Ernest Channon (pictured above) also helped with the construction of the aeroplane and went for a short flight in July 1910. The plane had a White & Poppe six-cylinder engine, but the screw and gearing were all made by Channons.

Ernest Channon was probably at the first International Aviation meeting at Bournemouth when Sir Charles Rolls of Rolls Royce crashed his aeroplane & was killed. Channon's experiments with flying machines then ceased, no doubt to the relief of the rest of the family and company.

Horse Mustering

In 1914 the British Army only had 25,000 horses and needed half a million more in short order. In the first year of the war in consequence the countryside was virtually denuded of horses. The gentry took its hunters with it by choice but the local farmers were forced by purchase or requisition to lose the draught horses – their Shires – to transport guns, ammunition, supplies and for use as ambulances. Obviously this had a devastating effect on agriculture with its heavy dependence on horse power as local newspapers recorded.



A muster of horses at Broadwindsor, 5 August 1914. "Farm horses throughout the district were seized today by the requisition of the military authorities, without regard to the needs of harvesting; and some were even removed from carriers' carts in the streets of Dorchester." (Dorset County Chronicle, August 1914).

All this livestock was collected, ready to be moved by road by 13 June 1914 in readiness for the approaching war. The horses obviously had to be transported by ship to the war zone, initially Egypt for service in the Dardanelles. In April 1915 the Dorset Yeomanry's 498 horses and 56 mules embarked at Avonmouth. They were tightly packed and vulnerable to seasickness and disease aboard the HMS Commodore. Thirty horses did not survive the journey.

Eight million horses died during the fighting by 1918 despite the efforts of their devoted carers and the Veterinary Service – one horse to every two men. Horses' rations were wholly inadequate and lack of water was a constant problem, especially in the terrain in which the Yeomanry fought. The Remount Dept spent £67 millions on purchasing, delivery

and training. Livestock deaths meant that 1,000 horses a day, mostly half wild, were shipped in from America and elsewhere.

At the end of hostilities many of the horses were abandoned to ill treatment. Fortunately for the Yeomanry horses in Egypt a British woman in 1930 founded the Warhorse Memorial Hospital in Cairo – [The Brooke Trust](#) – which continues to this day.

From the records of the Dorset Yeomanry:

Unit	Riding horses	Pack horses	Draught horses	Carts
A Squadron: Major Allhusen, Purchasing Officer	87			
A Squadron: F.E. Pope	20	2	1	
A Squadron: Mr Hammond, Transport Manager	4			2
B Squadron: A. Gordon	67			
B Squadron: W. Mogg & C. Young			13	4
B Squadron: A. Tyrwhitt Drake	20	3		
B Squadron: Major Henning	14	3		
C Squadron: Captain Beaver	17	2	1	
C Squadron: Mr Hammond, Transport Manager			4	2
D Squadron: Sir Harry Hoare	108			
Total	337	10	19	8

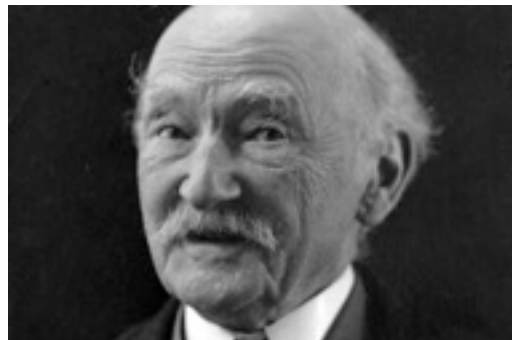
The Anti-war Poetry of Thomas Hardy

Thomas Hardy wrote a number of “anti-war” poems. He did not like what he learned about war, what he heard about war, and what he noticed about war. Although most relate to the Boer War, he did write a number of significant poems relating to World War One. These poems had a profound influence on other war poets, the most notable of which are Siegfried Sassoon and Rupert Brooke. His career as a poet saw him consistently condemn war. In his eyes it was both futile and wasteful of life. He harboured the belief that man can overcome the evils of conflict. Running throughout his anti-war poetry is the pessimistic view he held of man’s bellicose stupidity, whilst other poems portray him as triumphantly optimistic in stressing the fact that the good things in life would survive long into the future when wars are forgotten.

“The Man He Killed” is a somewhat bitter poem. As well as demonstrating the stupidity of war, it completely demolishes any belief in the patriotic motives of those who face one another in conflict.

“Had he and I but met
By some old ancient inn,
We should have sat us down to wet
Right many a nipper kin!

But ranged as infantry,
And staring face to face,
I shot at him as he at me,
And killed him in his place!”



The viewpoint of ordinary soldiers? Hardy often implies there is no good reason for battle. He uses everyday language to convey his strong anti-war message, with particular regard to the treatment of soldiers, not just in death but also in life. He always holds great emphasis on the utter worthlessness of war.

By contrast, “In Time Of The Breaking of Nations” can be seen as a comment not only on the First World War, but on all wars. Hardy believed that life in its most basic form will continue, regardless of the impact of war.

“Yonder a maid and her wight
Come whispering by:
War’s annals will cloud into night
Ere their story die.”

This poem gives an impressionistic glimpse of everyday life, of rural tranquillity and its lack of urgency. It seems to suggest life as such will persist, unchanged, long after the rise and fall of kingdom after kingdom, and long after the details of war and conflict have been buried forever.

Note: Hardy’s attitude to war was not clear cut and there are many soldiers in his books. At the beginning of WWI he appeared to support the endeavour, but this changed as the War went on.

Thomas Hardy served as a magistrate at the Court in Shire Hall from 1884. He served on an anti-profiteering committee during the First World War, ensuring that local traders were not making undeserved profits by claiming price rises were due to the War. He said it was 'the only war-work I was capable of'. You can find an article about his role as a magistrate, Thomas Hardy - Justice of the Peace by Edward C. Sampson (1977) here: <https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/cq/vol13/iss4/5/>

Conscientious Objection in Dorchester during the First World War

Background

The UK entered WWI in August 1914. By the end of 1915 it was obvious that a volunteer army was not attracting enough recruits to enable effective military action, especially as the numbers being killed were so high. The moral pressure of the Derby Scheme had also failed to attract the required numbers. The Military Service Act, passed in January 1916, specified that men aged 18 to 41 were liable to be called up for army service with some exceptions, including some married men, widowed men with children, ministers of religion. A second Act in May 1916 made the upper age limit 51. The Act also specified that exemption from military service could be claimed on seven grounds. These were that the man was either working in or was being educated for work of national interest other than the military, that serious hardship would result, ill-health, or that he was working in a specified reserved occupation (work of national importance). In addition a man could claim exemption on the grounds of conscientious objection to military service.

When a man was called up on one of these grounds his case was heard by a Military Service Tribunal (MST). MSTs existed in each of the major towns and also for the town's rural district. If the applicant was not satisfied with the verdict he could appeal to the Dorset County Appeals Tribunal. Similarly the military could appeal against a decision. There was a route to a final Appeal in the Central Tribunal. These bodies met at various intervals, usually weekly or fortnightly, sometimes monthly. Most conscientious objectors (COs) applied on religious or humanitarian grounds and had to demonstrate their previous commitment to their beliefs. Approximately 16,000 men appeared before MSTs as COs out of approximately 770,000 cases (2%). About 6,000 men were imprisoned for various periods of time, some for over two years.

In June 1916 the Home Office Scheme was introduced to try and reduce the number of COs in prison. All imprisoned COs had their cases reviewed. Those believed to be genuine could be released to undertake "work of national importance", under the control of the civilian Pelham Committee. Those who refused or were not held to be genuine were returned to gaol.

Very few records of the MSTs survive but the Somerset and Dorset Chronicle made full reports of many of those held in Dorset.

Arrangements for COs

When a man claiming to be a CO was not exempted from military service or work of national importance or if he refused to accept either he was placed in the Non Combatant Corp (NCC) under military discipline. Members of this body assisted the military but were not obliged to carry out activities that directly contributed to killing. Many COs accepted this form of service. A minority did not and were called Absolutists. These men would refuse to wear the uniform provided by the NCC. This resulted in a court martial for a refusal to obey an order.

The Dorset base for the NCC was Westham Barracks, Chickerell, and men from all over the country were sent there to join the 3rd Battalion of the Dorsets, a training battalion for recruits. The Absolutists were sentenced at their court martial, usually to one year, sometimes two, commuted to 112 days. They were then transferred to a prison, often Winchester, Wandsworth, Wormwood Scrubs, Dartmoor or Dorchester.

Conscientious Objectors In Dorset

The Imperial War Museum records show 108 COs with a link to Dorset, meaning they lived there, were sent there, were court-martialled in Dorset or held in Dorchester Prison.

I have found 63 COs who were living in Dorset at the time they were called up, the majority appeared in 1916. Major sources are the Somerset and Dorset Chronicle, the Peace Pledge Union Men Who Said No and the Imperial War Museum Pearce Collection. The majority felt able to accept work of national importance. A minority refused to accept that the state should compel them to serve, even for work of national importance or in the Friends' Ambulance Movement, War Victim Relief or similar accepted work.



79 absolutist COs appeared before court martials at Westham, Weymouth, two at Wareham, one at Blandford. All of these were sentenced to prison, receiving sentences from 6 months to two years. All but a few received one year. The majority of those appearing served time in Dorchester Prison.

At least 65 COs were placed in the Non Combatant Corp (NCC) Sections 1-5 and sent to report to Westham or Dorchester military camps. On refusing to put on a military uniform they were court-martialled.

Only two Dorset residents were sent to Dorchester Prison.

COs from Dorchester

I have found only one Dorchester man who appeared before a Military Service Tribunal. Charles Morgan, reported in the Chronicle on 9 March 1916, as appearing before Dorchester Borough Tribunal. He claimed he was a Christadelphian, refusing on grounds of conscience. He was a clerk with the post of Surveyor of Taxes. His job in 1916 was to assess taxes and organise tax collection – income, land tax and super tax on profits. Government departments from summer 1916 could grant exemption certificates. He was conditionally exempted, released by his employer and carried out work of national importance with the Office of Woods, Forest of Dean. He had to leave this work as he was not strong enough and was looking for farm/market garden work.

Dorchester Prison

The records relating to Dorchester Prison in the First World War have been lost or destroyed so it is difficult to know exactly what the situation was. I found 92 names of COs who spent time in the prison. 60 of these had been committed from a court martial in Weymouth, 2 from Wareham and one from Dorchester. The majority stayed only a short time, usually weeks, though a small minority stayed for longer, some over two years and were not released until 1919.

It would seem that in 1916 the prison held none or very few criminals. Instead it was a base for men sentenced in military courts. The majority of men held were COs, many from Westham. For example, on August 7th 1917 51 of the 79 prisoners were COs, according to the Prison Visitors Committee Record Book. In July 1917 there were 49 COs in the prison, the highest number after Wandsworth (111) and Winchester (88). (I Appeal unto Caesar- the case of the COs: Mrs Henry Hobhouse, 1917.) There were 163 cells and the number of prisoners held between January 1916 and May 1917 varied from 18 to 79.

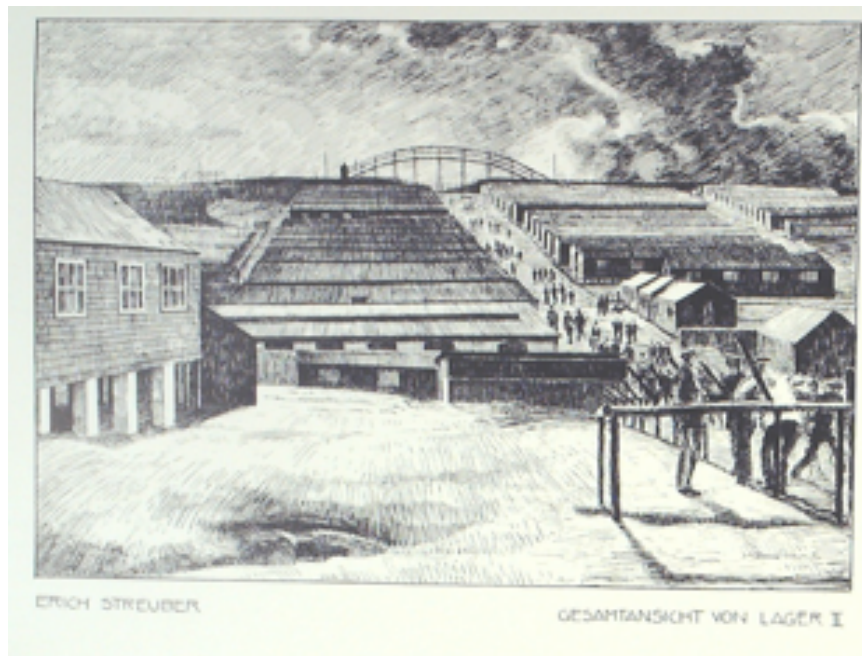
One unique feature of the prison was a magazine produced by the COs called the *Instiligo*, written entirely in Esperanto. It was 'well bound in cloth' with excellent illustrations and up to the standard of the best monthly magazines.

You can find out more about conscientious objectors at the [Imperial War Museum](#) and [listen to a recording](#) of Wilfrid Littleboy talking about his time in Dorchester Prison.

The German Prisoner of War Camp, 1914 – 1919

During the Great War, Dorchester had one of the largest German prisoner of war camps in the country. Prisoners began to arrive on 10 August 1914, at first in small numbers. They were not soldiers, but captured merchant seamen and civilians who had been interned.

The men were housed first in the brick buildings on the extensive grounds of the Royal Horse Artillery Barracks, which are now part of this Grove Trading Estate. With the arrival of increasing numbers of German soldiers, it soon became necessary to provide a more permanent camp. Rows of huts were built, with heating and electric light, each housing about thirty prisoners. (Their guards, meanwhile were accommodated in bell tents on the draughty slopes of Poundbury hillfort.) Visitors were keen to see both the prisoners and the floodlighting, a very recent invention.



A drawing of the Camp by Erich Streuber, one of the German prisoners

Keep Military Museum

The existing military hospital was brought back into use, visited in 1916 by Thomas Hardy, who witnessed the death of one prisoner – ‘to his great relief and mine’, he wrote. Hardy also sent copies of his novels to the prisoners.

At its height, the camp held over 4,000 German soldiers, at a time when the population of Dorchester was about 7,000. They were sent out to work on farms, or to sweep the streets of Dorchester, or to tend the Borough Gardens. Thomas Hardy employed a few of them in his Max Gate garden.

To alleviate boredom, societies, entertainments and courses were set up. Both English and farming classes proved popular. There was an orchestra and a theatre club. The men played football and swam in the Frome.

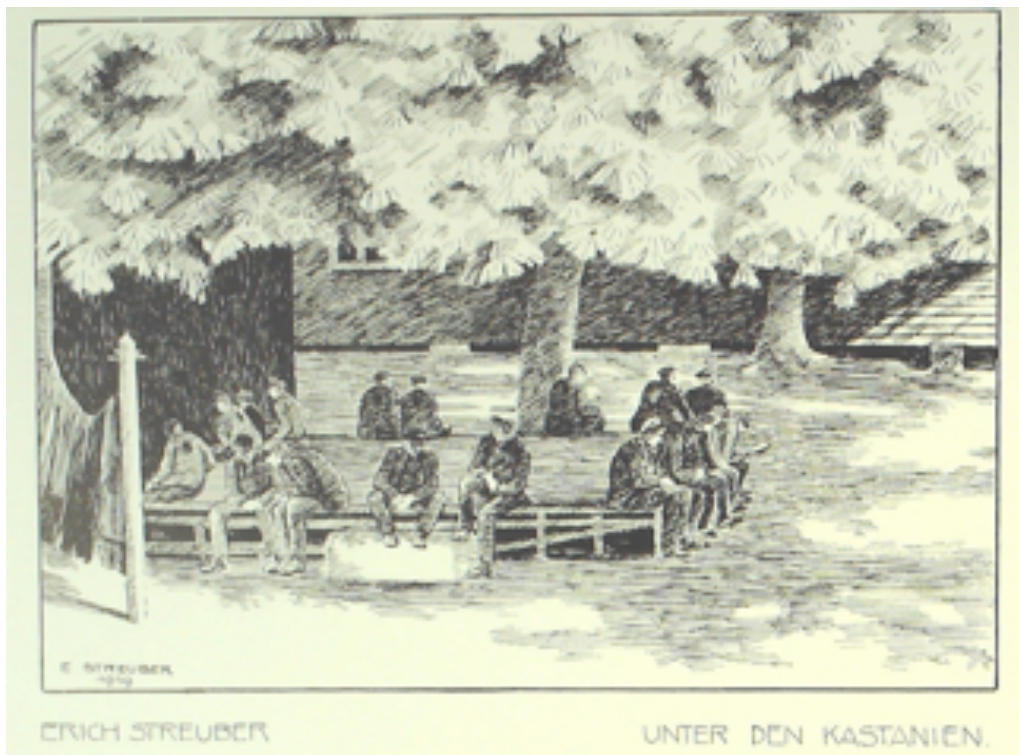
There were still some escapes, most of them unsuccessful. A young Polish soldier was shot dead while trying to cut through the perimeter wire. Another man, Otto Koehn, joined a group of soldiers being repatriated, concealing himself in a packing case half his height. He was discovered fifteen hours later, at Tilbury Docks.



German prisoners sweeping the Dorchester streets, watched by their guards

Dorset County Museum

After the Armistice, the prisoners were not immediately released. They were held in Dorchester until 1919 to bring in the harvest. Their huts were sold off, but one remains in nearby Northernhay.



Under the Chestnut Trees by Erich Streuber, another prisoner. Religious services were held here.

The German War Memorial and its Creators

In the churchyard of Fordington St George is a memorial to the German prisoners of war who died in Dorchester prison camp during the First World War. This is the only memorial of its kind in the country. In its creation, and in their treatment of the prisoners in the camp, the people of Dorchester showed a remarkable tolerance of the enemy in their midst.



The memorial shows a German soldier carrying a rifle. It is carved in Portland stone and has an inscription in German which means 'Here lie German soldiers in a foreign land but not forgotten. 1914 – Dorchester – 1919'.

The camp had over 4,000 prisoners at its height and until mid-1918 only twelve men had died there. Each one of them was taken in a solemn funeral procession through the town to be buried in Fordington churchyard. Concrete headstones were made by fellow-prisoners to mark their graves. Thirty-three more men died in the influenza epidemic in 1918-1919, before they had a chance to go home, and they, too, were buried here.

In 1959, the bodies were transferred to the vast German War Cemetery on Cannock Chase in Staffordshire. Every year the men continue to be commemorated at a service in Fordington churchyard on the afternoon of Remembrance Sunday.

The memorial was designed by Karl Bartholmay of Elberfeld (now part of the city of Wuppertal) and carved by Josef Walter of Augsburg, both German prisoners of war. Both have drawings published in the booklet of pictures of the Dorchester Prisoner of War Camp published after the War. (*Copies of the booklet are in the archives of both the Keep Military Museum and the Dorset History Centre.*)

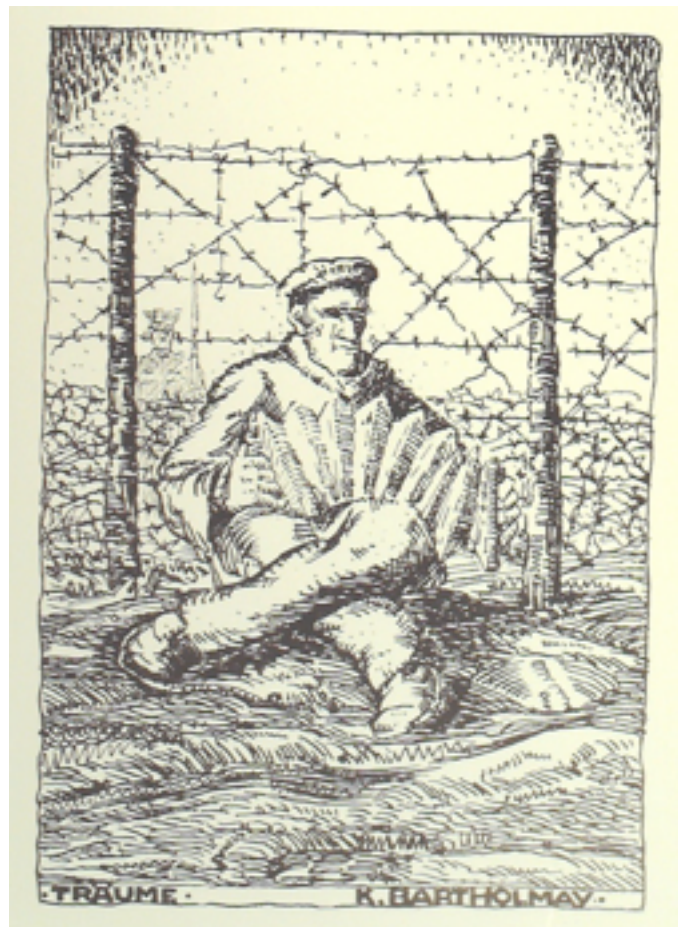
Karl Bartholmay, 1874 - 1968

Karl Bartholmay was born at Elberfeld on 9 April 1874, the son of Carl Bartholmay, a carpenter. In 1890 he graduated from Elberfeld's Arts and Crafts School and in 1903 received an award for the design and production of wall-panel work.

Alongside his studies, he completed a carpentry apprenticeship in his father's business and later he held a position as an interior designer with Professor A. Muller in Darmstadt and then an appointment in the office of Professor Hermann Muthesius in Berlin. In 1912 he was appointed as a lecturer in Elberfeld Arts and Crafts School.

We do not know when Bartholmay joined the army, but he is listed as an 'Unteroffizier' (Rang) - a sergeant - and belonged to the Infantry Regiment 386 I Company.

The Elberfeld Town Archive has a file of papers from the Committee for German PoWs in England 1917-1918 (File S IX 33). It lists groceries for PoWs sent by relatives. Parcel delivery was organised by the Committee in England with the Red Cross and the Dutch Government.



A drawing 'Dreams' by Karl Bartholmay made while he was in the Dorchester prison camp. It could, perhaps, be a self-portrait.

The first entry of post sent to Bartholmay is 14 February 1918. He was then in Base Depot Camp BEF in France, but the date of his capture not known. The widow of Carl Bartholmay (presumably his mother) of Nutzenberg Strasse 13 in Elberfeld was recorded as the sender, and the parcel contained money (7DM), one and a quarter pounds of sausage, one packet of cheese and 300g sugar.

Along with other Elberfeld soldiers who were interned in Dorchester, Bartholmay appears in documents from 24 April 1918, but before this in the '7th Prisoners of War' camp BEF France. A document of 29 May 1918 records that his mother sent him cocoa, chocolate,

2 boxes of cigarettes and 8,75DM. Records from 23 Oct 1918 show that he was prisoner no. 24203 in Camp 01 Barrack 01 Comp 01 in Dorchester.

Once he returned to Germany in 1919, he resumed his job as a lecturer in Elberfeld Arts and Crafts School, where he specialised in spatial design, metalwork and furniture design. He worked there until at least 1925.

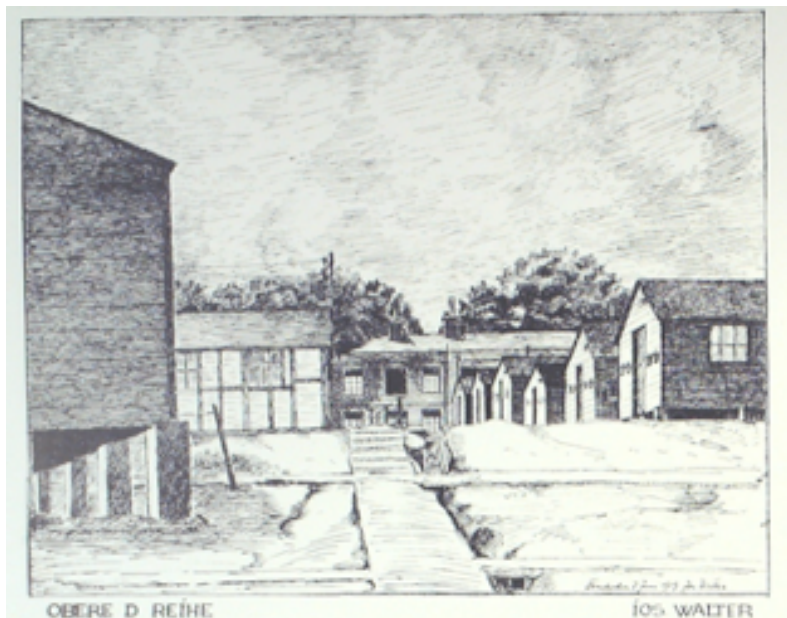
Georg Friedrich Karl Bartholmay died on 4 February 1968 in Elberfeld. (Death register no. W.-R. No. 309/1968.) His house in Nutzenberg Strasse is listed. www.wuppertal.de/denkmalliste-online/Details.aspx?id=5184&Strasse=N%C3

Josef Walter 1896 - ?

We tracked Josef Walter down through his records (and those of many other Josef Walters!) on the International Red Cross database:

Index: Josef Walter (79): Postcard 4: Wal 84334: Walter Josef: Bay Res Yuf 15/No 938: 6 Jan 1917: A 4692. Record A4692 leads to the POW list for 5.1.17 that gives his d.o.b 2/3/96. Remarks column has no. 22907 and this leads to Dorchester list 120 dated 21/9/18.

The prisoner of war list for 5 January 1917 shows that Josef Walter was born on 2 March 1896 and his father, Ignaz Walter, lived at Wartenburger Strasse 2, Augsburg, Bavaria. He was an infantryman and was captured by the British Expeditionary Force in France. The Dorchester list for 21 September 1918 showed that he was a prisoner in the Dorchester Camp.



*Drawing of the rows of huts
by Josef Walter*

Keep Military Museum

From this we were able to contact the archives in Augsburg and receive the following information: Joseph Walter was born on 2 March 1896 in Dachau, Bavaria, and had 4 sisters. His father, Ignaz (1865-1924), was a baker and later a tram conductor. The mother was called Barbara (Babette).

In 1901, the family moved to Augsburg, a large industrial town in Bavaria. The town had a university and a significant arts and crafts community, and was known for the production of textiles, silver and gold, sculpture and engraving.

According to a communication by the father on 17 January 1914, Joseph was already at this point a sculptor in Munich. His war service included several battles, including Verdun, and he won the Iron Cross class 2. After his return from English captivity as a prisoner of war on 31 October 1919 he lived for a while in Augsburg again, and married Karolina Brater, a book-keeper, there on 27 August 1921.

In 1921 Joseph lived for a short while in Munich and attended the Art School there. On 25 July 1929, the family stated it had 'gone travelling'. We don't know what happened to him after that.

The Soldiers' Home in North Square

"The Soldiers' Home, in North Square, was founded in the year 1885 in memory of Major Gen. Sir Herbert Stewart KCB. It is open to all soldiers, who are provided with a coffee bar, reading room, library, bath room, lavatory, recreation and smoking room, bible class and mission room. There is also a public coffee bar intended specially for market people and working men, with stables and accommodation for their horses. Besides this there are bedrooms and coffee and smoking rooms for the general public. Gospel or temperance meetings are held nearly every night in the mission rooms, and are well attended. The management of the house is in the hands of a committee. The institution is partly supported by subscriptions."

Kelly's Directory for Dorsetshire, 1895.



The Soldiers' Home

Dorset County Museum

Broken Glass

by George Symes.

Originally published in the Yesterday Today column in the Dorset Echo magazine, 2002

It was a common sight to see the German and Austrian prisoners-of-war being marched off for various duties in and around the town, but a select group left the holding camp at Poundbury and were escorted to one of the old houses in West Walks. Exactly what they did there was shrouded in secrecy for some time.

In charge of the mysterious goings-on there was Kennedy Ellis, a man well known around the town, who kept a tight lid on what was going on in the West Walks house.

Ellis was, in fact, in charge of a business that had been set up by the then Ministry of Munitions. There, in the big house, the PoWs were occupied carrying out skills that they had learned at home before the war. These particular prisoners were all professional glass-blowers. The PoWs each occupied a workbench fitted with a blowlamp where they spent each day twisting long glass tubes imported from France into a range of instruments that included dairy thermometers, hydrometers and clinical thermometers. Other prisoners inserted mercury into the thermometers before sealing them up. In yet another room, more PoWs tested the finished products in ice and in boiling water before packing them into cardboard containers.

The Ministry of Munitions had built up a large market throughout Britain and Ireland, but made it known that, when the war ended, their usefulness would be at an end. But in order to keep the fledgling Dorchester business working, a private meeting was called and on 15th February 1919 a company called the Dorset Glass Co. Ltd. was registered. Dr WB Cosens was elected Chairman and 20 Dorchester men were appointed shareholders. Secretary of the new firm was Mr Edwin Stevens who promptly negotiated with the Ministry to buy up all the assets of the business. Stevens also wanted to secure German labour to continue the output of goods while new employees were being trained.

The Germans advised Stevens that it would take six to nine months to train newcomers,

and to this end a number of discharged British soldiers and a handful of local girls were taken on. The Germans were nothing if not efficient, and the business began to flourish and the large house in West Walks began to prove inadequate for the job. The Dorset Glass Co. looked for new premises and found what it was looking for in Victoria Road.

The future looked promising. Not only were the Germans willing to continue lending their expertise to the company, but the balance sheets showed that the output of the Dorset Glass Co. had increased since privatisation. Then Kennedy Ellis gave the company an even greater shot in the arm. He reported that a new business had been established in France for the manufacture of artificial glass known as La Cellophane. One of the Dorchester company's directors, Ernest Ling, travelled to Paris and returned home having secured the sole rights to manufacture the material not only for Britain but for the Dominions and the colonies as well. But just as the Dorset Glass Co. seemed set to become a major industry in Dorchester, it received a crushing blow from the Government who ordered the company to stop using German labour. It was the result of a protest sent to Whitehall by the Glassblowers' Union against British ex-servicemen working alongside Germans. Unless the German labour was withdrawn, said the union, all glassblowers in the UK would go on strike.

The withdrawal of the skilled German workers left the Dorset Glass Co. with partly-trained staff. Various remedies were sought – a representation to the Government and an application for special girl labour – but all pleas fell on deaf ears. The Dorset Glass Co. had full order books for its thermometers, but when existing stocks ran out, requests for more stock had to be turned down. On 27th October 1919 the Dorset Glass Co. was forced to shut down. Because of its brief existence, the Dorset Glass Co. is now little more than a blip in Dorchester's history, but even today it is fascinating to speculate on how it would have fared had it not been the victim of such tactics.

The War in Local Newspapers

A selection of extracts from the Dorset County Chronicle. These are stored on microfilm at the Dorset History Centre.

13 August 1914

German Prisoners Arrive

The Dorset Chronicle reported that the first German Prisoners of War arrived in Dorchester on the 10th August 1914. The first batch numbered 18 men who arrived at the Great Western Railway Station at 1.50pm from Falmouth. They were received into the custody of the Royal Scots Fusiliers, who, with fixed bayonets at the slope, escorted them to their quarters. Hundreds of people lined the road to watch and the children cheered. A second train arrived at 6.00pm the same day on the S.W R. and again handed them into the custody of the Royal Scots Fusiliers.

20 August 1914

Early on Sunday morning, at 12.30 another large body of prisoners arrived at the South Western Station, having been brought from Devonport by the roundabout route via Templecombe. Numbering 93, they represented the crew of one of the enemy's mercantile vessels brought into that port as a prize of war.

Several of the men brought musical instruments with them, which enabled quite a credible wind and string band to be formed, so that the prisoners can now solace themselves with instrumental as well as vocal music. On Sunday afternoon and evening, when the public of Dorchester flocked on Poundbury curious to catch a distant glimpse of the captives, quite a concert was given within the barbed wire enclosure. The sonorous air of the Austrian National Anthem was recognised towards the close, and apparently in grateful recognition of the considerate and generous hospitality with which these hostages are being treated, the selections closed with the English National Anthem.

Further prisoners arrived steadily during the following days and it was anticipated that a total of 1,000 will be held, although the camp could accommodate 1,400.

17 December 1914

For the past three months the grounds of the old Artillery Barracks have been so teeming with prisoners of war that it was strange on Monday to observe their vacuity. A clean sweep had been made at the weekend of nearly 1000 captives. They had been dispersed to three several destinations from the habitat at Dorchester to which they had become well accustomed. On Monday morning not a single German was left at the Barracks, and the sentry boxes, perched aloft on their commanding scaffolding, were empty. The Prison Guard of the Dorset National Reserve were having a holiday, because there was nobody to guard. It is, for certain reasons, not supposed to be a good thing to allow prisoners of war to stay too long in one place, and so, the authorities decided to move away all who have been at Dorchester the last few months. But the Barracks are not to remain empty as it is expected they will be replaced by about 2,500, approximately a quarter of the population of Dorchester.

17 June 1915

Dorchester detention camp received prisoners of war who were saved from the submarines U8, U12 and U14 as a proposed deal with the German government which would see 39 British officers who are now under barrack arrest transferred to ordinary detention camps.

14 October 1915

Wounded soldiers arrived at the S.W.R. station and transferred to the Dorset County Hospital and the Masonic Hall, which was used as an annex to the main hospital.

March – April 1917

Colliton House Hospital Extension. An appeal was made to raise £400 to extend and equip the Red Cross Hospital at Colliton House. Donors were acknowledged each week in the Dorset Chronicle.

26 April 1917

House of Commons announced that instructions have been given to stop all issues of potatoes to prisoners of war in the United Kingdom.

Weekly entertainment for wounded troops at Colliton House Red Cross Hospital. This was mainly singing and poetry recitations by local ladies and gentlemen as well as soldiers who were locally barracked.



Winifrede Marsden, Commandant of the Colliton House Hospital and later Dorchester's first woman Mayor. Imperial War Museum.

Dorchester's First World War Heritage Sites

The German Prisoner of War Camp



Huts built from the end of 1914 to house German prisoners of war



The site today. Now an industrial estate.



One of the huts re-used as an auction saleroom.



The military hospital serving the barracks and the camp.



The former military hospital building on the industrial estate.



German prisoners of war held at Dorchester PoW camp.



The German War Memorial at St George's Churchyard, Fordington, Dorchester. Erected in 1919 to commemorate those German prisoners who died in the prison camp.



The graveyard also contains British casualties.





Colliton House VAD hospital



Casualties were also housed in tents in the grounds.



Colliton House today.

Now owned by the County Council and used as a staff social club.



The Keep

Now the Keep Military Museum, the regimental museum for the Devon and Dorset Regiments.

Top o'Town House - once the house of the Commandant of the Dorchester Depot



The former parade ground and barracks

The garrison at Dorchester occupied an extensive area of the town and was a significant part of the town's history and economy.

The buildings are now occupied by the Territorial Army, the Post Office sorting office and a number of local authority offices.



Dorchester's War Memorials

War Memorial to Dorchester Post Office workers who died in WWI.

This memorial was designed by the writer, Thomas Hardy.



The main War Memorial.



War Memorial at Holy Trinity Church, formerly the Garrison church.





The Soldiers' Home
in North Square,
now demolished and replaced by
Kwik Fit.



The Corn Exchange,
used on occasions for recruiting events
and accommodation



Shire Hall,
where Thomas Hardy sat as a Magistrate
during WWI, serving on an anti-
profiteering committee.



Centenary Field - new site at Poundbury commemorating the centenary of the First World War, donated to the town by the Duchy of Cornwall as part of the Prince of Wales' Poundbury development.



Further photographs of Dorchester's WWI heritage can be found here:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-dorset-34744136>

<https://www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk/memorial/121497>

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/13706945@N00/28229633530>

<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~fordingtondorset/Files2/WWIMemorials.html>

The Dorchester Poppy Trail Project

This project was created to mark the centenary of the First World War and to explore Dorchester's largely hidden First World War heritage.

Information panels can be seen at the most important sites and additional sites are marked by poppy plaques. You can download a map leaflet or collect one from the Dorchester Town Council office in North Square, and explore Dorchester's WWI history.

As well as drawing attention to some little-known but important sites, the project aimed to involve volunteers in researching their history and then in writing up their findings. It was hoped that in doing so the volunteers would learn more about research methods and continue to explore local history, going on to make their own personal discoveries.

Credits

The Poppy Trail was developed by the Dorchester Heritage Committee and the Keep Military Museum, in conjunction with Common Heritage and Wallis Agency.

Funders

We are grateful to the Heritage Lottery Fund and Dorchester Town Council.

Picture Credits for leaflets and panels

The Keep Military Museum

Dorset County Museum

Imperial War Museum

Surrey History Centre

Wikimedia Commons

With thanks to those enabling us to use photographs without charge.

Staff and Volunteers

We are grateful to our fantastic project volunteers:

Ann Connell, Malcolm Davenport, Anita Harries, Marc Johnson, Jean Lawson, David Milner, Jane Rayner, Ernie Thomas, and other volunteers at the Keep Military Museum. Thanks also to Valerie Dicker and Martin Graham for finding and scanning photographs and to Ralph Teversham for looking for photographs of his uncle William Ralph Teversham, who was the first Dorchester man to be killed in the First World War. And to Steve Newman and Emma Scott, Dorchester Town Council; Chris Copson, Curator, Keep Military Museum, Nick Morris, Wallis Agency, and Jacqui Halewood, Dorset History Centre.

We are also grateful to the staff of the state archives of Augsburg and Wuppertal and the German military archives.

Finally, we owe a considerable debt of gratitude to Brian Bates for his help and for inspiring the people of Dorchester to rediscover their First World War history.

Project Co-ordinators

Kate Hebditch and Judith Stinton

Common Heritage 2018



*Dorset recruits 'spud bashing' in 1914
You can read about one of the soldiers, Will Sanders (front row, second left), [here](#).*