

Sarratt Local History Society – Exhibition to commemorate the end of the 1914-18 War

'Death in the Afternoon'. Not a novel by Hemingway, nor yet another episode of Midsomer Murders watched in comfort in our cosy houses round The Green. This was an afternoon of memories and celebration, in the Sarratt School, of the lives of the young Sarratt men who fought and died or were badly wounded in the First World War.

From the 650 or so inhabitants of Sarratt in 1914, 98 of the most able-bodied, who indeed represented the very future of the village, were called up. Within a very short time 10 were already dead, 25 badly wounded or missing and the rest left to continue their, literally, shaken lives. But these men were not statistics of names for a soon-to-be-forgotten memorial stone. Many of their family names live on today: Adams, Biggerstaff, Clutterbuck, Saunders and so on. They attended, as 'our' children do, the Village School; they played cricket and football for Sarratt; and they lived in the houses and lanes we all know – Plough Lane, Deadman's Ash, Red Lion Lane, North Hill, Church Lane, Rose Hall, Goldingtons, Valley Farm, The Cricketers.

They fought and died in places I suspect they had not learned about in their little village schoolroom – Ypres, Salonica, Mesopotamia – all a long, long way from their beloved Chess Valley. Their families were left with a few precious photographs, postcards, medals, plaques, buttons and insignia. It was these treasured objects, together with old posters, diaries and news cuttings that Dawn Pitts (Adams) and her SLHS team gathered together 'lest we forget'. Those who saw them did so with tears in their eyes.

We now, in Sarratt, are proud of our efforts to save the Post Office, our pretty views, our historic buildings. The young Sarratt men gave their very lives to save their and our heritage and future. May the present generation of children never be required to do the same. But may they also be made aware of the debt they owe to those earlier pupils of their school.

Angela Coleman

