

A History of the Wheathampstead War Memorials



**Part of the Wheathampstead
War Memorial Project
by
Terry & Margaret Pankhurst**



The first recorded mention of a war memorial in Wheathampstead is in the Vestry minutes. A memorial was requested by Mrs. Drury for her son rather than a general memorial.

'A vestry meeting was held in the Vestry on Thursday 25th April 1918 at 5.30 PM. It considered an application proposed to be made by Mrs. Drury for a Faculty for the erection of a monument in the Church yard in memory of her son, Capt Follett Drury.

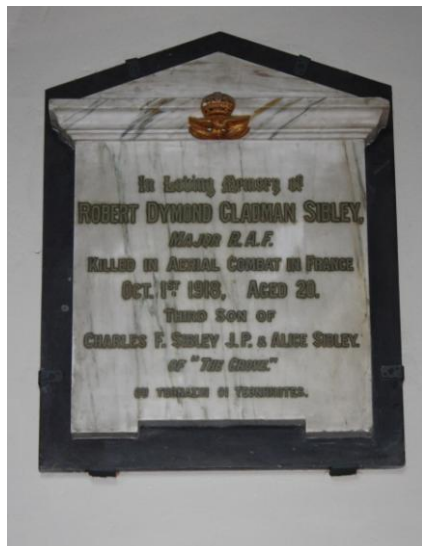
Present, Rev. Canon Nance (Rector), Mr. M. Clark Church warden, Miss B. Booth, J. Beard, F. Cobb and Rev. A. C. Waller.

It was proposed by Mr. Booth seconded by Mr. Clark and carried by three votes to one. That the consent of the vestry be given to the erection of the monument proposed by Mrs. Drury in Memory of her son, Capt. Follett Drury.'

Mrs. Drury had her son's monument built just outside the west door of the church. A further timber monument was erected outside St. Peter's Church, Gustard Wood.



The next request for a memorial was made by Mr. Sibley in memory of his son.



'A vestry meeting was held in the Vestry on Thursday Sep 11th 1919 to consider an application of Mr. C. F. Sibley to place a memorial tablet in the church to the memory of his son, the late Major R. D. G. Sibley.

There were present the Rector and Mr. C. F. Sibley. Mr. Sibley submitted the design of the proposed tablet and the following resolution was agreed to.

That this Vestry approves of the placing of a tablet to the memory of the late Major R. D. G. Sibley R.A.F. in the chancel of the Parish Church in a position to be approved by the Rector in accordance with the design as submitted to the meeting and marked "A" and that the Rector and Churchwardens to take the necessary steps to obtain a faculty for the erection of the Tablet in the church the cost of which will be paid by Mr. C. F. Sibley.'

By March 1920 the call for a village War Memorial must have intensified. The Vestry finally considered the proposal.

'A Vestry meeting was held in the Vestry on Thursday March 4th 1920 at 12.00 to consider an application for transferring a piece of the Churchyard to the Parish Council as a site for the Parochial War Memorial.

Present, the Rector, Mr. T. Clark (Churchwarden) and the Rev. E.D. Gilbert (Curate).

The Rector said that he had received a letter of protest against the application, and that he thought it would be better to adjourn the meeting to a date when an evening one should be fixed, so as to enable any person to be present who might object to the application.

Mr. Clark supported the Rector in his view and accordingly the Rector adjourned the meeting to Thursday March 11th at 7.30 PM.'

'A Vestry meeting adjourned from March 4th was held in the Vestry on Thursday March 11th 1920 at 7.30 PM.

Present, the Rector, Mr. T. Clark (Churchwarden) Mr. Cobb and Mr. Sear.

The Rector said that he had received a letter from Mr. Lane Claypon (Churchwarden) with apology for absence on account of a bad cold.

The Rector explained the objection for which the meeting had been called.

Mr. Cobb proposed and Mr. Sear seconded the following resolution, that the consent of the Vestry be given to an application for a faculty being that a portion of the Churchyard 12 feet long by 10ft. 6 inches deep lying between the lych gate and the corner of the St. Albans road and Church Street be transferred as a gift to the Parish Council as a site or the proposed Parochial War Memorial. This was unanimously carried.'

'Vestry Minutes April 6th 1920.

The Rector submitted a resolution to approve of an application for a faculty to erect the War Memorial in the churchyard according to the design passed by the Parish Meeting. The former application had been refused by the Chancellor, who said that no part of the Churchyard could be given up to the Parish Council without an Act of Parliament.

Mr. Lane-Claypon proposed and Mr. Clark seconded a resolution that the application for a Faculty be made and this was passed.'

Following a request for a Faculty in April 1920, it did not take long to erect the new memorial. It was ready for an official dedication ceremony on the 31st October 1920. A very full Herts Advertiser report details the event in the following week's newspaper (6th November 1920, page 6).

Wheathampstead Heroes

Memorial Cross unveiled. Lord Cavan's Message to Mourners.

Erected in an enclosure in the eastern portion of the Parish Church and adjacent to the main road the Wheathampstead War Memorial has been erected. It consists of a Portland stone cross of simple but dignified design. Near the base of the stem of the cross encircled in a bronze victory wreath is the inscription "Pro Patria" while on the front panel of the octagonal base under a metal tablet bearing the date 1914-1918, is the inscription "In memory of our glorious dead who fell in the Great War 1914-1918. Erected by the inhabitants of Wheathampstead." Men who paid with their lives the price of victory.



They are as follows:- F.E. Allen, H.S. Allen, W. Allson A.T. Ansell, C. Archer, C.F Benslyn, R Bozier, J. Brazier, A.C. Bruton, T. Bull, W.F. Button, C. Carter, W. Chamberlain, W. Chapman, E.A. Chennells, J. Cordell, H. Croft, F. Cutting, A.F. Dawes, F. Drury, W. Field, A. Freeman, R.S. Goodman, J. Hall, F. Hanwell¹, A.C. Hyett, C. Hills, G.R. Hyde, F.C. V.F. Ivory, V.C. Ivory, F.T. Izzard, H. Izzard, A.W. King, B. Lawrence, H.E.C. Martin, J.J. Morgan, W. Mumford, A.E. Munt, E.A. Newberry, A.W. Odell, W. Parsons, A.J. Pearce, C.J. Pearce, H. Pearce R.C. Racher, F. Randall, W.A. Ray, B. Rolph, F. Russell, G. Saunders, W. Shadbolt, D. Tebb, C. Tilbury, G. Tilbury, G.F. Tillett, G. Upton-Robins, J. Webb, H. G. Wilson, F.D. Wootton, and H. T. Worrall.

The cost of the memorial has been approximately £400. The designer and contractors are Messers. White and Sons, Pygthyle Works, Bedford, the erection of the surrounding wall and ornamental iron railing being the work of Messers. Westwood Brothers of Wheathampstead.



Sunday 31st October 1920 at 3.00pm was chosen as the day and time for the unveiling and dedication of the memorial and the ceremony was participated in by a large representative body of inhabitants of the village and district.

Assembling at the station, the Ex-Servicemen were addressed by Lieut Gen. the Earl of Cavan. A procession was then formed to the scene of the unveiling, including representatives of the Parish Council, the Fire Brigade under Capt. A. Westwood, special constables under District Section Leader Saunders and members of the Friendly Societies. They lined in the roadway in front of the memorial, the general public occupying the space behind them. Behind the cross on the higher ground of the churchyard, a space was specially reserved for relatives of the fallen who formed one side of the square, many of them bearing wreaths and other floral tokens of remembrance. The choir, the local pack of Wolf Cubs and schoolboys formed two other sides of the square.

Within the actual enclosure at the foot of the monument were the Rector (the Rev. Canon Nance), the Earl of Cavan, the Rev E. D. Gilbert (curate of Wheathampstead), the Rev G. W. Berry (Congregational minister), Mr. A. S. Devereux, of St. Albans (representing the Local Wesleyan Church), and others taking part in the service.

¹ The correct spelling is F. Hannell.

Mr. G. L. Whately, Chairman of Wheathampstead Parish Council, briefly explained the arrangements for the dedication and later on invited Lord Cavan in the name of the inhabitants of Wheathampstead to perform the unveiling ceremony, expressing his pleasure in doing so by reason of the fact that Lord Cavan was a near neighbour and also on account of the distinguished part which his lordship played in the war.

Lord Cavan then pulled the cord which released the Union Jack that had hidden the cross from view.

The "Last Post" was then sounded and the buglers took their departure to perform a similar service at the unveiling of the Welwyn War Memorial which was taking place simultaneously

Lord Cavan proceeded to say:- 'My friends and neighbours, I am very proud to belong to this village today and to have borne my share with you in winning of the Great War. No village has a better record than Wheathampstead in this war, and no county has a finer record either. I want you today to rejoice in this memorial as I do and not be sad. These memorials are erected all over England and Scotland "Lest we forget." Every time you pass this memorial give a thought to those who died for you. I want you to lift up your hearts, you mourners, and be proud. Listen while I read from a translation I have made of the proclamation of Marshal Foch to the Allied Armies on Nov. 11th 1918. He said, "Officers, non-commissioned officers and soldiers of the Allied Armies after having resolutely checked the enemy, you have attacked him without respite with enduring faith and energy; you have won the greatest battle of history and for most sacred cause, the liberty of the world. Be proud. With immortal glory you have decked your colours. Posterity will keep for you her remembrance and her thanks – Foch, Marshal of France." That tells you, my friends, very much better than I could tell you of the fine men who died for you and whose memory we perpetuate today. I have dwelt a good many times on unveiling memorials to the horrors and devastation that their great deeds saved you from. Today I would like to speak for a moment of what they have gained for you. I doubt whether in the whole history of Great Britain she ever stood higher or was ever greater than she is at this minute. That position has been won for you by the bravery and endurance of those whose names are on this stone. It would be a pity, would it not, if we let that greatness go. Whenever anybody became great he always makes enemies and we are bound to have enemies inside and out. I speak no politics. I only ask to bear in mind that greatness is worth preserving. I don't think you could have a finer example of the right spirit that should prevail throughout this country than the spirit in which this great danger of a coal strike has been averted. I think the greatest credit is due to both sides for coming to what I hope will be an amicable and permanent arrangement and lastly I would not enter in any way into parish politics but I see that there is already a little misunderstanding as to the upkeep of this beautiful memorial. All I would say is this; I am perfectly certain that there is no man or woman in this village who would grudge his or her small share of what may be necessary to keep it worthy of those whom it commemorates. Once more I tell you from my heart I am proud to belong to you. I am leaving you now for a period of command of four years but it is not far away and I hope I may pass this monument and as I pass it remember, and that that remembrance may help me to do my duty where I am going.'

After the singing of the hymn "O God our Help in ages past" Lord Cavan placed a wreath of laurel at the base of the memorial, which he saluted.

In the service of dedication which followed the Rev E. D. Gilbert read a portion of Scriptures from the Book of Wisdom. Mr. A. S. Devereux at a later stage reading from Romans. The service of dedication was read by the Rector who in prayer commended to God's mercy the souls of our brothers departed, concluding "Accept O Lord the offering of their sacrifice and grant to them with all thy faithful servants a place of refreshment and prayer where the light of Thy Countenance shineth for ever and all tears are wiped away."

Prayers for those who mourn and for Christian unity were offered by the Rev G. W. Berry and the service was brought to a close with the hymn "For all the saints" the Lord's Prayer and the Blessing pronounced by the Rector.

The mourners then passed from the Churchyard through the lych gate and placed their floral tributes around the base of the monument being followed by official representatives and the general public, who filed slowly past this silent tribute of the people's grateful remembrance.



So numerous were the floral tributes that the enclosure was thickly carpeted with them and the base of the monument was completely enshrouded. There was a handsome floral cushion in white chrysanthemums relieved with pink and the date 1914-1919 in purple and attached was a card bearing this tribute, "From the Ex Service men of Wheathampstead in memory of our comrades who fell in the Great War 1914-1919". There were also handsome tributes from the Folly Ex-Service men, "Loving memory of our fallen comrades" a similar token from the Wheathampstead Fire Brigade "In Loving memory of a late comrade". The Working Men's Club and the Wheathampstead Pack of Wolf Cubs were also among those who sent flowers.

Lord Cavan spoke briefly about a parish dispute as to who was to look after the memorial. To what did he refer? The Parish Council were making plans to take over the upkeep of the memorial.



Five months later the memorial at St. Peter's Church, Gustard Wood was unveiled.

Herts Advertiser Saturday 2nd April 1921. Page 5.

Gustard Wood War Memorial Unveiling by Lieut. General Lord Cavan

On Sunday afternoon at St. Peter's Church, Gustard Wood the unveiling of the War Memorial tablet by Lord Cavan took place. The pretty little church which was quite full, had been charmingly adorned with flowers. Mr. W. Lane-Claypon conducted the service and delivered a very impressive address on the subject of "Faithfulness." He dwelt upon the faithfulness

of Christ, even unto death, and said that the noble "boys" whose names were inscribed on the tablet about to be unveiled were also faithful, even unto death. They had given the most precious thing it was in their power to bestow – they had sacrificed their lives for them. In years to come, when the present generation had passed away, that tablet would be a permanent memorial recording the names of those who belonged to Gustard Wood, had fallen in the Great War and who, like their Saviour, had been "faithful even unto death".

The hymn "On the resurrection morning" was sung after the address.

Lieut General, the Earl of Cavan then unveiled the tablet, and the National Anthem was sung. Canon Nance read the dedicatory prayer used at the dedication of the village war memorial at Wheathampstead on October 31st 1920. The hymn, "For all the saints who from their labours rest" was sung, after which the Rector pronounced the blessing. Mrs. Robins presided at the organ, and was responsible for the musical arrangements.

The tablet which is of oak affixed to the north wall of the church nearly opposite the south main entrance, and contained the following inscription:- "In Glorious memory of the men of Gustard Wood who fell in the Great War 1914-1918. Capt. G.U.Robins. Capt. F. Drury. 2nd Lt G. Birdwood, Sgt. Maj. H.E.C.Martin. Lance Corpl. C. Archer. Lance Corpl. R.S.Goodman. Lance Corpl. W. Parsons. Pte. T. Ansell. Pte. B. Rolph. Pte. F. Russell. Pte. W. Shadbolt. Pte. C.. Tilbury. Pte. G. Tilbury.

Underneath the tablet, which was designed by Mr. Aubrey Hammond of Gustard Wood, an "old boy" of Wheathampstead School, was hung a laurel wreath, at the bottom of which were camellia blooms; the wreath was made of leaves from the laurels at Delaport, the former home of the late Captain G.U. Robins. It was presented by Mrs. Robins who was present at the ceremony.



One year after the war was a time to celebrate.

(Picture by courtesy of Ruth Jeavons)

Soon, more families felt the need to have memorials inside the church.



In loving memory of Lieut Frances Edward Allen & Gunner Harold Sidney Allen. Killed in action October 21st 1918, and October 19th 1918. Ages 25 and 19 years.



The Robins family had a further memorial placed inside St. Helen's church. One was for George Upton Robins, killed in the First World War, alongside a plaque dedicated to his father's memory.



Further memorials were erected in the Congregational Church, remembering the soldiers who were active in the congregation and church activities.

Herts Ad. 15th May 1915. Page 5.

Stained Glass Window Unveiled

On Sunday at the Congregational Church a stained glass window was unveiled to the memory of G. Reginald Hyde, who was killed at Neuve Chapelle on March 12th (as reported in the Herts Advertiser at the time). The Rev E. C. Morgan unveiled in the presence of a large congregation. The ceremony was most impressive.

The note on the window reads:

'In Loving Memory of George Reginald Hyde. Killed in Action at Neuve-Chopelle, France on March 12th 1915 aged 20. This window was erected by his parents.'



Congregational Church, Wheathampstead

Window dedicated to Aubrey Julian Pearce. Plaque reads:

To the Glory of God
And in ever loving memory of a dear son and brother.
Aubrey Julian Pearce. Aged 20 killed in action near Iries (France) on February 26th 1917.
He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.
The above window was erected by his parents.

The Folly Methodist Chapel, Wheathampstead.



The chapel opened on 17th October 1887. It was a simple square building which later housed a First World War Memorial Window dedicated to the men of the Folly who died in The Great War.



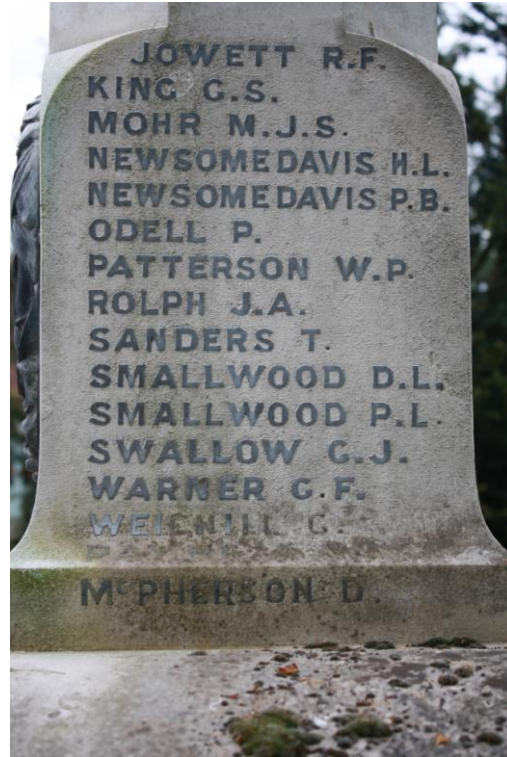
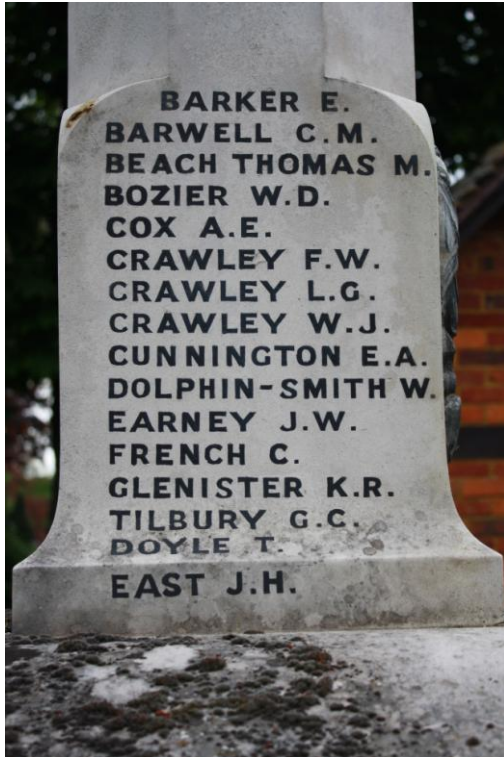
Some of the names are remembered on other local memorials. G. Minal is remembered on the Harpenden War Memorial. C. Carter, A. Munt, B. Lawrence, A. O'Dell (Odell), C. Pearce, G. Upton-Robins and H. Wilson are all remembered on the Wheathampstead War Memorial.

Three other soldiers are not remembered on any local memorial. These are S. Bandy, F. Gray and M. Harrison. Their names should therefore be included on the revised Wheathampstead Roll of Honour.

Sadly the chapel was demolished in 2006. The windows were saved and were offered for sale on the internet and sold for £120. The windows are now in the St Albans City Museum.

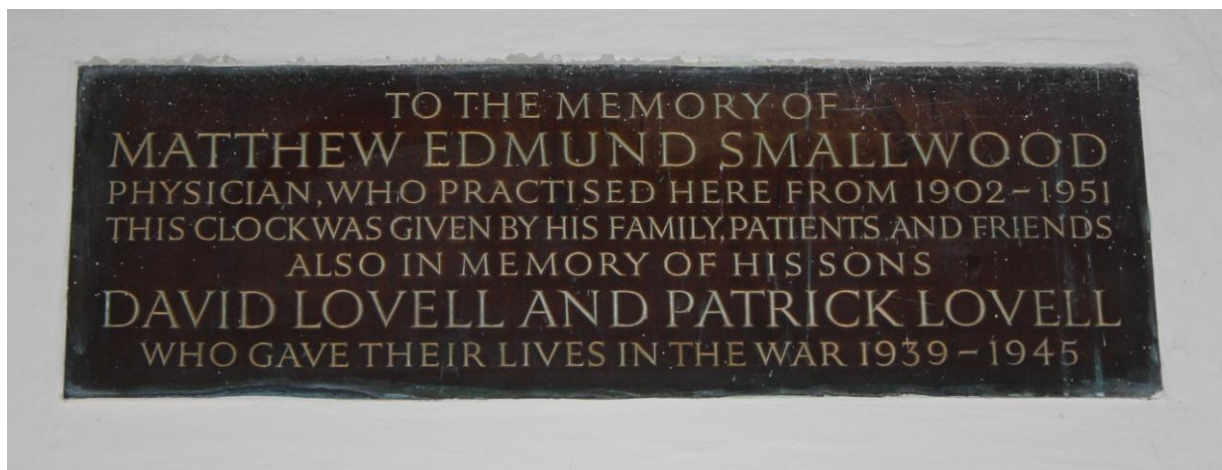
World War II Memorial

After World War II, new plaques were placed on the upper sides of the War Memorial.



These plaques were dedicated on 30th January 1949, and unveiled by Mrs. Smallwood.

Further memorials were added inside the church.



The plaque remains but the clock quoted in the text no longer exists.



A small window memorial commemorates the loss of the two Newsome Davis sons, Lawrence and Peter. Pilot Officer Henry Lawrence Newsome Davis was in the 59 Sqdn. Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. Wing Commander Peter Brian Newsome Davis was in the 299 Sqdn. Royal Air force Volunteer Reserve.

The Memorial Hall

Presiding at the Easter Vestry Meeting 1944, the Rector A. M. Baird-Smith stressed the importance of work for the young, and expressed the hope that after the war, when the provision of a memorial to those who had fallen was considered, it should take the form of an institute or village club.

Another idea was to build a Services Club. Fortunately this was outvoted at a parish meeting by 25 votes to 16.

The ultimate memorial to those killed in the two World Wars must be the Wheathampstead Memorial Hall. A letter, circulated but undated, tells how the hall was to be financed. The letter conveys a very positive and determined attitude.

Wheathampstead Memorial Hall

There has been talk of a Village Hall in Wheathampstead for long enough. From now on there is going to be steady, continuous action, until it is a reality.

As a result of earlier efforts, a site has been obtained and paid for, and there is nearly £1,000 in hand. The cost of the Hall — when it can be built — will be around £10,000, towards which we hope to obtain a substantial grant, leaving us, say, between £5,000 and £6,000 to raise.

That will take time. And more houses must be put up before we start on Village Halls. But if we begin collecting now, we should have the money by the time we feel justified in building. All sorts of plans are afoot. Here is a concrete one, in which we urge you to play your part.

In just over a week from now, a volunteer collector will call upon you and ask you to buy a couple of sixpenny stamps (we are having them specially printed). The same collector will call upon you once a month afterwards.

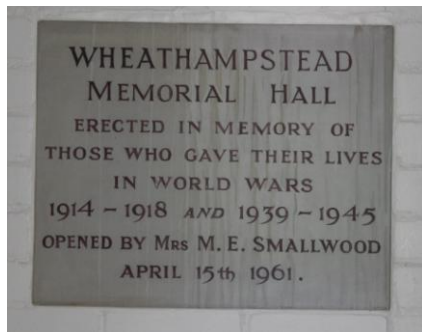
We ask no one to buy more than two stamps at a time. If anyone cares to buy more, we shall be grateful, but a shilling a month is all we ask. It's not a lot, is it ?

Will you help, and so hasten the day when, at long last, Wheathampstead can have a Hall it needs and which will, at the same time, be a worthy memorial to those who gave their all to save us?

Thank you. From the
WHEATHAMPSTEAD MEMORIAL HALL APPEAL COMMITTEE

The amount villagers were asked to pay was just 12 shillings per year in pre-decimal coinage. In modern coinage, this equals 60 pence per year.

Parish Council Minutes for October 1948 shows that fund-raising was not going well. The chairman gave a stern rebuke saying. "It was a pity that the memory of the men from the village who fell in the last war should appear to have been so short-lived". By November 1948 local organizations were being asked to help with a view to obtaining more support for the Memorial Hall. By September 1950 little had changed; a notice board was to be erected on the site to help support. Eventually, after much effort, sufficient money was raised and the Memorial Hall finally opened on 15th April 1961.



The memorial plaque reads:

Erected in memory of those who gave their lives in World Wars 1914-1918 and 1939-1945.

Opened by Mrs. M. E. Smallwood. April 15th 1961.

The Memorial Hall has been well used by the community and is in constant use both by day and in the evenings. Several extensions have been added over the years to enhance the facilities. There is now an extra small hall, a library and the Parish Office. It is a hall that the village is proud of and a lasting tribute to the 105 men and one woman who died in two World Wars.



Wheathampstead Memorial Hall

We appreciate the help given by Herts County Record Office, and Kris Schug, military historian.

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