

## SCRAPBOOK OF REV. J.E. FIELD

Happily for historians, Rev. Field made up a scrapbook of pages from his magazine and this scrapbook is now held in the archive at Oxford History. The scrapbook is not totally comprehensive but it is pretty exhaustive, especially in covering matters concerning WW1. What follows are items of interest extracted from the book.

Each month Rev. Field recorded the names of those who had joined the armed forces, and the names of those who were killed in action, reported missing (and presumed dead) or taken prisoner. More sobering, however, are the numbers of those who died on active service and or were reported missing. 18 of our young men lost their lives in the course of the war whose deaths were officially established, and another 11 were reported missing and subsequently presumed dead.

A happier note is provided by the number of promotions achieved and military honours awarded to our parishioners, which are also recorded in the magazine. Our servicemen gained 4 Military Crosses, 5 Military Medals, 1 DCM, 1 DSO, and amongst these, five were promoted to commissioned ranks, including John H. Bridcutt who achieved the rank of Major, acting Lt Colonel. Rev. Field did not confine himself to recording the activities of village men. In January 1915, amongst other items of interest, was this entry;

*“Numerous consignments of woollen scarves, socks and other garments have been, and are still being, sent from Benson to our servicemen and their families, the work of the needlework guild, our girls’ club and of several ladies and children. The Reverend Cuthbert Field, Chaplain of ‘HMS Blake’, expresses grateful thanks for what he has received for himself and for those to whom he ministers.”*

Obviously, however, military matters were almost exclusively a male concern. The bare statistics do not reveal some of the details of the pointless waste of human life during these years. For example the sad death of Edward Hutchings, a former member of the church choir.

The fates of Thomas Haines and Robert Seaton are an example of a rather happier irony. Seaton had been rescued from a torpedoed Royal Navy ship in December 1916, but while crossing the Atlantic in a merchant vessel was torpedoed again. He drifted in an open boat for three and a half days and then, almost miraculously, reached dry land. Thomas Haines’s experience was equally hair-raising. He was one of the survivors of the torpedoed transport ship ‘Arcadia’ and was eventually picked up by a French gun-boat and taken in a hospital ship to Malta. He was on his way home from Malta in the hospital ship ‘Dover Castle’

when, almost unbelievably, it too was torpedoed. Amazingly all the patients were rescued and taken to Gibraltar.

Throughout the war Rev. Field's feelings alternate between pride at recording the names of those who volunteered for service, and sadness and compassion when recording deaths and serious injuries. His final entry, in January 1919 records his joy at the return of the Prisoners of War who had survived their ordeal.