



Little Sodbury

A Thankful Village

During World War I there were few villages that sent soldiers off to war, and received them all back again, alive.

Since the 1930s, at least, these have been referred to as 'thankful villages'. Little Sodbury was one of them. Typically, these villages have no memorial, but may have something expressing their grateful thanks. Such can be found in Little Sodbury church, where six names are inscribed.

Of the 50 or so thankful villages identified so far three were in Gloucestershire, the others being Coln Rogers and Upper Slaughter. Also Little Sodbury is unusual in that its soldiers in World War II also all came back alive. A 'doubly thankful village', therefore!



The Church of St. Adeline

The returning six Here are a few facts from the 1911 census – ages given as at 1914. They give a picture of the families that were left behind to cope without often key family members during the war years:

William Gowen - 31, a railway labourer, probably doing maintenance work on the relatively new lines, leaving a wife with 3yr.old twins

Charles Grivell - 14, 2nd son of a farm labourer of Ball's Cottages, which housed the family of 6 plus an elderly uncle

William Leach - 23, eldest son of a presumed widow with 8 children, plus a 12 year-old 'boarder' from Yate

Leonard Taylor - 38, farmer from Lancs., (and secretary to the Beaufort Hunt), owner or tenant of The Great House, with 5 servants in residence, along with his wife and 3 yr-old son.

Ernest Warren – 29, coachman from Devon, living at The Lodge with his wife and 2 children, plus an older lodger who was a farm bailiff

John Weare, 31, a groom from Gillingham, sharing the Great House Stables with his younger brother, a farm labourer. It appears he accompanied his employer to war

Not all were born and bred in Little Sodbury – those in service had clearly come a fair distance to work there. We don't know when young Charlie Grivell joined up, but since he was only 14 in 1914, it was either at the end of the war, or he managed to join before the age limit of 17 was set, as many did.



Baron de Tuyll This is the slightly exotic title of Francis Charles Owen. His aristocratic family background has links with local families such as the Beauforts, and the Harfords. Hendrika Amelie, the third daughter of the Dutch Baron Vincent de Tuyll, had married into the family in 1874. The Baron served with distinction in non-combatant service in the Great War being awarded the *Croce di Guerra* by the King of Italy, which finally entered the war in 1915 on the side of Britain and France. He moved to Little Sodbury Manor just after WW1. This explains why he has a separate plaque. The style of the three church memorial plaques reflects the fact that both rich and poor went to war.

Little Sodbury Manor was fairly derelict by 1914. Its new owner, **Lord Hugh Grosvenor**, had not yet lived there, but had plans in place to restore it before moving in when he returned from the war. But he never did, being killed in 1914 near Ypres, aged 30. He is listed on the Old Sodbury memorial.



Bronze plaque in the Church of St Mary the Virgin on the Grosvenor family estate at Eccleston in Cheshire.

Must say
goodbye to
all of
this...all
delights that
I shall
miss