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Bringing the past to the present



The two war memorial's at Elsrickle, South Lanarkshire.

by Tam Ward 2018.

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Elsrickle

The wee village of Elsrickle, in South Lanarkshire was recently made famous as being the village near the oldest known place of human activity in Scotland; Howburn Farm where people arrived from Denmark, by following reindeer over what is now the lower North Sea, and 14,000 years ago. They left their mark by leaving hundreds of flint tools on their camp site, in what is now a field. The Biggar Archaeology Group discovered the site (Ballin, Saville, Tipping & Ward 2010 and Saville and Ward 2010).

However, Elsrickle has another unique distinction, that of having two war memorials in the village. One is beside the now unused church at the bottom of the village, and commemorates four Privates (PI's 1&2), killed in various battles in WW I, while the other much smaller memorial is at the top of the village beside the main road for all to see, but one suspects few people will ever notice the fact, or wonder why this should be. The second memorial remembers a further two soldiers killed in WW I, but also another who was killed in WW II (PI's 3&4)

It is a sad story, as any memorial is, but here is a strange tale and one that reflects badly on the community and its leading dignitaries, including the minister of the time – apart from one man.

Two young lads, not locals but who worked on local farms were not considered to be 'of the Parish' and consequently when they were killed in the War, their names were *not* to be recognised as the 'fallen' from Elsrickle. They would therefore remain for evermore anonymous, as to their ultimate sacrifice for their country.

One man, refused to accept the situation and paid for a special little cenotaph for the two soldiers who were excluded from the main commemoration. A poem was written about the disgraceful situation and it is given here, in it the author expresses views which are more in common with the humanity one would have expected from such a business, and clearly castigates those uncaring voices, which included, incredibly, the local 'man of God'; the minister.

Elsrickle lost a single man in WW II and somehow the decision was taken to commemorate his name on the wee monument at the top of the village. Probably that was because of the two stones, only the wee one had space for the other name, and so the forlorn two now have company.

Of interest on the 'official' monument is the spelling of the village in old form as Ellsridgehill, and at the base of the inscription are the words "They died that we might live", while on the wee monument the words at the bottom are "They also died for us", seemingly as a reprimand to the uncaring community. It was poignant to note that of the two monuments photographed in May of 2018, it was the wee one which retained a poppy wreath, firmly tied to the cross shaft, clearly and thankfully, earlier attitudes no longer prevail in Elsrickle.

The present writer is unaware who wrote the poem and who the generous and compassionate man was, who erected the second memorial, they may be one and same. If anyone knows the answers, or any other supplementary information regarding the matter, they may like to contact the writer who can revise this tale.

References

Ballin T B, Saville A, Tipping R and Ward T 2010. *An Upper Palaeolithic Flint and Chert Assemblage from Howburn Farm, South Lanarkshire, Scotland, First results*. Oxford Journal of Archaeology 29(4) 323 – 360. 2010.

Saville A & Ward T 2010. *Howburn Farm, Excavating Scotland's First People*. Current Archaeology, Issue 243, 18 – 23. 2010.



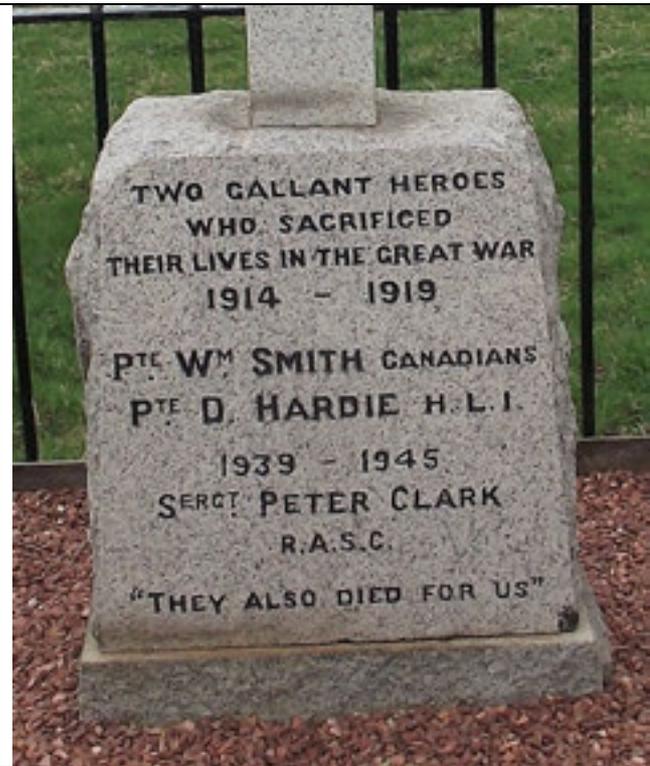
The main war memorial beside the church.



The wee memorial.



The main memorial.



The wee memorial.

The two war memorial's at Elsrickle

There's a wee auld fashioned village

That lies off the beaten track

And I want tae tell a story

That my memory brings back

For in that we auld village

Is a sicht that's quite unique

For you'll find a war memorial

At each end o' the street

**In that wee auld fashioned village
Were twa puirhouse bairns brocht up
Twa lads that gied their labour
For a bed, and bit and sup
But when they grew tae manhood
The great war it broke oot
And wae a when o' ithers
They donned the khakie cloot
Frae oot that awfie carnage were some that ne'er came back
Tae the wee auld fashioned village
That lies aff the beaten track
No in the quiet kirk yaird their last resting place was found
But far frae Bonnie Scotland they lie in foreign ground.
In memory o' thae gallant lads
A monument was raised
On which their noble sacrifice, commended was and praised
Their names were also written there
But sad it was to see
Nae mention o' the puirhouse weans
Surely that couldna be
For they along with others had laid their young life's doon
And juist the same as others, deserved fair honours croon
No muckle wealth nor gear had they but what they had they gied
Their very life blood they poured oot and for their country de'ed
The meenisters attention was drawn untae the fact
But he just dismissed the maiter and quite refused tae act
But in that wee auld village there was a man who refused to stand**

**Tae see in ony measure Man's inhumanity tae Man
And sae tae richt the wrang, that his kindly hurt felt sair
A monument for their ain twa sels he had erected there
Richt at the ither end o' the street, the tapmost end forby
It stands tae tell the story tae every passer by
The words engraved upon its stane are plain and clearly tell
That it's for two gallant heroes, who in the Great War fell
And underneath their honoured names, withoot display or fuss
The vital fact it simply states, they also died for us
Oh may we like that honest man, gie honour where its due
Extending character and truth be pockets tim or fu
Praise humble as true riches whenever they abound
For in the mansions o' the rich, they scarcely can be found
Let us think o' anither ane wha gied hissel for us
And ask oorsels the question, what does it mean tae us
Surely it canna be that we wi cauld herts can despise
The Love Devine that bore our sins in Calvary' sacrifice
But may we like that honest man, wi every word and act
Let oor lives be a memorial tae that great and glorious feat.**



They will be remembered