

They Played for Gloucester

Forty-one men of this club gave their lives in two world wars. This November, we name every one of them — and thirteen more who were honoured for their service and came home.

On the wall at Kingsholm there is a plaque. It carries the names of the men of this club who went to war and did not come back — thirty from the First World War, nine from the Second, with two more to be added. Most passed through Kingsholm without ceremony: a debut, a handful of seasons, a name in a team list in *The Citizen*. Then they went, and their names came home without them.

Some we know a great deal about. Others we know only by their name, the date of their first game and the number of times they pulled on the cherry and white. **All of them are here.** And after them, thirteen men who went out, did something extraordinary, and came back to Kingsholm.

*These are the men of whom we are proud,
cheered every one by the Kingsholm crowd.*

FROM THE MEMORIAL AT KINGSHOLM

THE GREAT WAR, 1914–1918

Thirty men

In the order the memorial lists them. Eleven were lost in the Somme fighting of 1916 — five of those on a single morning at Pozières, in the same attack, within a few hundred yards of one another.

Harry Barnes

Thirty-eight appearances from April 1909.

Harry Berry

Forward. 137 appearances and 24 tries, 1907–1912; four England caps in 1910. Corporal, 1st Battalion Gloucestershire Regiment. Killed at Aubers Ridge, 9 May 1915, aged 32. Le Touret Memorial.

Harry Collins

Back row. 99 appearances, 1903–1908; a veteran of the Boer War and one of four brothers who played for the club. Private, 10th Battalion Worcestershire Regiment. Killed at Ovillers, 3–4 July 1916, aged 36. Thiepval Memorial.

Ernest G. Cummings

One of the Cummings brothers of Gloucester.

George Griffiths

Forward. 111 appearances, 1907–1912. Lance Corporal, 10th Battalion Gloucestershire Regiment. Killed on the Somme, 4 April 1918, aged 34. Pozières Memorial.

James Griffiths

Second row. Private, 1/5th Battalion Gloucestershire Regiment; son of Henry and Annie Griffiths of Dynevor Street. Killed at Pozières, 23 July 1916, aged 26. Thiepval Memorial.

Ronald Grist

Twenty-four appearances from December 1886. He was forty-seven years old when he volunteered.

William H. Hancock

Four appearances from January 1910.

William D. Henderson

One first-team appearance, on 25 March 1910. Died in 1918.

Harry W. Lane

D.C.M.

Back row. 21 appearances, 1902–1905. Guardsman, 1st Battalion Grenadier Guards, and one of the “Old Contemptibles”; awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal at Lesboeufs. Killed on the Somme, 30 March 1918, aged 34. Bucquoy Road Cemetery.

Melville E. L. Lewis

Back row, 5th Battalion Gloucestershire Regiment. Killed at Pozières, 23 July 1916 — one of only four men of his battalion to reach the German trench. Thiepval Memorial.

Tom H. R. Lewis

Stand off, 5th Battalion Gloucestershire Regiment. Killed at Pozières, 23 July 1916, beside his brother Melville. Thiepval Memorial.

Sydney Millard

Second row. 130 appearances, 1909–1914, and two county caps. Sergeant, 5th Battalion Gloucestershire Regiment. Killed at Pozières, 23 July 1916, aged 32, last seen jumping into a German trench. Thiepval Memorial.

William G. Nelmes

Second row, known at Kingsholm as Jack. Thirty-seven appearances from January 1909. 8th Battalion Gloucestershire Regiment. Killed by a shell fragment at High Wood, 23 July 1916. Thiepval Memorial.

William G. Parham

Forward. Thirty-six appearances from April 1913. Lance Corporal, 1/5th Battalion Gloucestershire Regiment. Killed at Broodseinde in the Ypres Salient, 4 October 1917. Tyne Cot Memorial.

William J. Pearce

Thirty-eight appearances from October 1906.

Trevor Powell

Seven appearances from March 1913.

John Price

Back row, 8th Battalion Gloucestershire Regiment. Killed in the fighting for Ovillers that began on 3 July 1916. Thiepval Memorial.

Alfred W. Purton

Second and back row. 138 appearances, 1899–1908; captain of Gloucester A. Private, 4th Battalion Grenadier Guards. Wounded at Pilckem Ridge and died at Boulogne, 27 August 1917, aged 36. Boulogne Eastern Cemetery.

Bernard A. F. Roach

He played for the A team, and never for the first XV. He is on the memorial because he played for Gloucester, which was all the club asked.

Arthur C. Russell

Arthur Charles Russell, who played as Charles. Five appearances from October 1911.

Arthur Saunders

M.M.

Back row. 50 first-team appearances, 1912–1914. Sergeant, 8th Battalion Gloucestershire Regiment; awarded the Military Medal at Ovillers. Killed by a shell on his dug-out, 1 November 1916. Thiepval Memorial.

Percy M. Simmons

Four appearances from November 1911, recorded in the club's lists under the family name Symonds.

Frank Smith

Wing, known at Kingsholm as “Tinker”. 95 appearances from April 1906 and 53 tries; twice the club's leading try-scorer before he was twenty-two. Serjeant, 7th Battalion Gloucestershire Regiment. Killed in Mesopotamia, 21 April 1916, aged 28. Basra Memorial.

Sidney Sysum

Centre, 5th Battalion Gloucestershire Regiment. Killed at Pozières, 23 July 1916, on the parapet of the German trench. Thiepval Memorial.

Hugh G. Thomas

Back row, 8th Battalion Gloucestershire Regiment. Killed at High Wood, 30 July 1916. Thiepval Memorial.

Thomas A. Truman

Two appearances from March 1907.

Oscar Walwin

Full back, 2nd Battalion Worcestershire Regiment, who joined the club in the last season before the war. Wounded at Le Transloy and died at Rouen in November 1916. Alone of the eleven lost in the Somme fighting of 1916, he has a known grave.

Tom West

Six appearances from March 1907.

Edwin F. Wootton

Scrum half. 23 appearances, 1913–14. 9th Battalion Gloucestershire Regiment, Salonika. Killed on 25 April 1917, aged 28, turning back under heavy fire to bring in a wounded comrade. Doiran Memorial.

WHAT SOME OF THEM DID

Ronald Grist first played for Gloucester in December 1886. When the war came he was forty-seven, and he volunteered anyway.

Harry Collins had already fought in South Africa. After losing his trigger finger in a trench accident he was discharged as unfit in April 1915; he taught himself to shoot and use a bayonet left-handed and returned to service in February 1916.

Melville and Tom Lewis were brothers. On the morning of 23 July 1916 the 5th Gloucesters attacked at Pozières and only four men reached the objective. Two of them were the Lewis brothers. Both were killed.

Edwin Wootton had been discharged in 1914 with a bad knee and re-enlisted within months. At Salonika in 1917 he went back into heavy fire for a wounded man and was last seen bringing him in.

Oscar Walwin's parents were sent for by the War Office and were boarding the ship at Southampton when a telegram reached them to say their son had died.

Kit Tanner, an England wing and later priest in charge at Haslemere, got all sixty wounded men out of the sick bay when H.M.S. *Fiji* went down off Crete, then swam back again and again until some thirty men were saved. He died of exhaustion as he was about to board H.M.S. *Kandahar*.

Peter Brown and William Hughes both played their first game for Gloucester on the afternoon of 18 February 1939. Neither survived the war.

Peter Walker made his debut at Kingsholm in November 1940, aged seventeen. In the spring of 1944 he played for England against Wales on the same ground. He landed in Normandy that June and was killed three weeks later, aged twenty-one.

THE SECOND WORLD WAR, 1939–1945

Eleven men

The nine named on the memorial, and two more found since.

Peter Brown

Sixteen appearances from 18 February 1939.

Clifford J. Dibden

Thirty-four appearances from September 1937.

Nigel A. Gidney

MENTIONED IN DESPATCHES, TWICE

Centre. Five first-team appearances, 1938–39. Flight Lieutenant, No. 223 Squadron RAF. Shot down over the Western Desert on 27 June 1942, aged 23, with his three crew. El Alamein War Cemetery.

William D. C. Hughes

Eleven appearances, beginning on 18 February 1939 — the same afternoon as Peter Brown.

Sydney W. R. Mabbett

Sixty-three appearances from October 1937.

Fred Mustoe

Thirty-five appearances from March 1937.

William H. Stephens

One appearance, on 4 November 1939.

Christopher C. Tanner

ALBERT MEDAL

Wing; five England caps, 1930 and 1932; ordained 1935, with curacies in Farnham and Gloucester, then priest in charge of St Christopher's, Haslemere. Temporary Chaplain, R.N.V.R., H.M.S. *Fiji*. Died off Crete, 22 May 1941, aged 32, after saving some thirty men from the sea. The Albert Medal was awarded posthumously.

Peter N. Walker

Forward; fifteen appearances from 2 November 1940; played for England against Wales at Kingsholm in 1944; an Oxford Blue. Lieutenant, 4th Battalion Royal Welch Fusiliers. Killed in Normandy, 18 July 1944, aged 21. Brouay War Cemetery.

Edwin Lovegrove

MENTIONED IN DESPATCHES

Outside half and centre; seven appearances, 1929–1930. Lieutenant, 9th Battalion Sherwood Foresters. Killed on 1 June 1940, aged 32, defending the beaches at Dunkirk. Dunkirk Memorial. *To be added to the memorial.*

Harry Ricketts

Thirty-three appearances, 1934–1940. Second Lieutenant, Royal Welch Fusiliers. Taken prisoner in Tunisia; killed by a mine on 22 December 1943, aged 31, trying to reach Allied lines. Sangro River War Cemetery. *To be added to the memorial.*

Thirteen men

Not every Gloucester man who did something remarkable was killed doing it. Arthur Saunders, Harry Lane, Kit Tanner and Nigel Gidney were honoured too, and are named among the fallen above.

Frank Moxon Stout

MILITARY CROSS

ENGLAND CAPTAIN · D. 1926

Temporary Second Lieutenant, 20th Hussars, attached Motor Machine Gun Corps (later Captain). He took a corporal and a light machine gun up to a saphead, and with each man in turn standing on the other's shoulders to fire, put some 150 rounds into an enemy party thirty yards off. Fourteen dead were counted the next day.

Percy Wyfold Stout

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE ORDER, 1917 · MENTIONED IN DESPATCHES, FIVE TIMES

ENGLAND · BROTHER OF FRANK · D. 1937

Temporary Lieutenant (Acting Captain), Motor Machine Gun Corps. The London Gazette of 16 August 1917 cited his "conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty": when a number of armoured cars were in danger of being cut off, he led the attack to their relief and, after two hours of heavy fighting, gained the objective. The brothers had scored tries in the same England match against Wales in 1898 — the first time two brothers had done so — and were decorated in the same war.

Alexander "Alec" Lewis

MILITARY CROSS AND BAR, 1916 AND 1918

84 APPEARANCES, 1910–1914 AND 1919–20

He enlisted as a private in the 1/5th Gloucesters in 1914 and ended the war a Major in the Intelligence Corps. The first Military Cross was for taking over command of his company and reorganising its bombing sections; the Bar for reconnaissance under heavy shell and rifle fire. He was wounded three times.

Gilbert Faraday Collett

D.S.O., 1918 · MENTIONED IN DESPATCHES, THREE TIMES

48 APPEARANCES · BRITISH LIONS, 1903

Lieutenant-Colonel commanding the 1/5th Gloucesters. The King's Birthday Honours cited distinguished service under fire. He stayed in the Army until 1934.

Cornelius Carleton

D.S.O. · MENTIONED IN DESPATCHES, FOUR TIMES

20 FIRST-XV APPEARANCES, 1909–1911

Lieutenant-Colonel, 2nd Welsh Regiment, cited for daring and successful reconnaissance — on one of which he was severely wounded.

Albert Edward Barnes

DISTINGUISHED CONDUCT MEDAL, 1 NOVEMBER 1918

SERGEANT, ACTING COMPANY SERGEANT MAJOR

2/5th Gloucesters, in a night attack at Maresches ten days before the Armistice. He rushed a strong enemy post with his commander, bayoneted two Germans and knocked out a third with his fists.

Charles Cook

MILITARY MEDAL, 1917

143 FIRST-XV APPEARANCES · 341 POINTS

1/5th Gloucesters, at Passchendaele on 16 August 1917 — family recollection has him rushing a machine gun in a farm cottage and firing his Lewis gun up through the ceiling. He lost an eye at Broodseinde that October, and came back after the war to play fourteen more matches.

Hubert "Bert" Barnes

MILITARY MEDAL, 1917

SERGEANT

1/5th Gloucesters, in the attack on La Paurelle, 4–5 April 1917. Wounded that October; later transferred to the RAF.

William "Quedge" Washbourne

MILITARY MEDAL, 1916

169 FIRST-XV APPEARANCES · 77 TRIES

Corporal, 1/5th Gloucesters and a trench mortar battery. He would never say how he won it, even to his family, and when a formal presentation was offered in 1917 he asked for the medal to be sent by registered post instead.

William "Bill" Egerton

MENTIONED IN DESPATCHES, 1918

37 FIRST-XV APPEARANCES, 1908–1912

Sergeant, 1/5th Gloucesters, on the Italian Front — gallant and distinguished services in the field.

Charles Winston A'Bear

MILITARY MEDAL, JUNE 1942

BACK ROW · D. 1985

Sergeant, Royal Gloucestershire Hussars, at the Battle of Knightsbridge in Libya, where he rescued his troop leader under fire. He was commissioned the following year.

Peter Cotton Hordern

AIR FORCE CROSS

ENGLAND, FOUR CAPS · D. 1988

Royal Air Force. He won his last England cap as a Gloucester flanker in 1934; he was the brother of the actor Sir Michael Hordern.

Grahame Wilshaw Parker

M.B.E., LATER O.B.E.

ENGLAND, TWO CAPS 1938 · 63 APPEARANCES

Major, 521 Company RASC, through North Africa and Italy — Salerno, Anzio, Monte Cassino — and Palestine. Later a schoolmaster at Blundell's.

Several of the men here are still only a name, a date and a number of appearances. Somewhere there is a photograph of each of them, and a story someone once knew. **If your family has a photograph, a letter, a medal or a story of any Gloucester man who served, we would be very glad to hear from you.** Every one of these lives came back into the record because somebody spoke up.

Almost everything on this page was recovered by the Gloucester Rugby Heritage team and its researchers. It was Martin and Teresa Davies who found Edwin Lovegrove and Harry Ricketts, eighty years after the wars that killed them, and it is hoped their names join the others on the wall.

They played the game and gave their all.

The memorial at Kingsholm records thirty players who died in the Great War and nine in the Second World War, with Edwin Lovegrove and Harry Ricketts to be added. Details of service, dates and places are drawn from the Gloucester Rugby Heritage archive at gloucesterrugbyheritage.org.uk — from battalion war diaries and service records, from Gloucestershire Archives, from letters printed in *The Citizen*, and from families — and checked against published transcriptions of Commonwealth War Graves Commission records. Playing records are taken from the club's register of player numbers. Compiled November 2026.