

The Parish of Coombe Bissett with Homington History of the Parish War Memorial

The Parish War Memorial for Coombe Bissett and Homington was erected in 1923/1924 in the churchyard of St Michael and All Angels Church, Coombe Bissett. The cost was met by donations from parishioners and parish organisations. The Memorial, of Portland stone, consists of a Cross on a rectangular pedestal and shaft which, in turn, is on square base. It is believed that it was constructed by the then Templeman's of Blandford Forum and was insured by the church for £95 at an annual premium of 10 shillings. The inscription on the pedestal reads '**In Grateful Memory of the Men of Coombe Bissett and Homington who died in the Service of their King and Country in the Great War 1914-1919**'. The fifteen names are of those who fell in that war are engraved on the north, east and south sides of the base.

In 1924 the 'Caroline, Lady Benson Trust for Coombe Bissett War Memorial' was established to provide for the repair, upkeep and maintenance of the Memorial. She was the widow of Major General Sir Frederick William Benson KCB who died in the Great War in 1916 and whose name is on the Memorial. When she died in early 1924 she left instructions for her son, Mr J R Benson, to form the Trust with the sum of £150 to be invested to provide the necessary income. In addition, the Trust specified that one guinea should be paid each year to the Vicar of Coombe Bissett provided that he preached annually at the Remembrance Service on the subject of self-sacrifice in the National Cause and Devotion to Duty as exemplified by those whose names appear on the Memorial. A further object of the Trust was to maintain a brass memorial plate in the north aisle of the church in memory of her husband.

The Trustees of the Charity were the Vicar of Coombe Bissett and the two churchwardens. The Trustees met annually after the Remembrance Service to review the condition of the Memorial and to make any necessary payments. At their first meeting in 1924 the records show that the Vicar purchased two books – for the Minutes and the Accounts respectively – for which he was reimbursed the sum of one shilling. These meetings normally took place immediately after the service in the Vestry.

After the Second World War a further five names were added in 1950 to the west side of the base at a cost of £21.10.0. However by the late 80s it was clear that the income from the Trust was insufficient to meet the maintenance costs. In 1990 the Trust was closed and the cash assets were transferred to the General Fund of the Parochial Church Council. Subsequently it was agreed between the Parish Council and the Parochial Church Council that the costs of future maintenance of this Parish Memorial would be shared on a mutually agreed basis between the two councils.