



Press Release concerning

The Wayside Cross Centenary Rededication Service

10<sup>th</sup> June 2017

The Wayside Cross at Woodchester, Stroud was the first War Memorial in this country. It was built to pay tribute to those that had sacrificed their lives in the Great War and was first conceived by Prior Hugh Pope of the Dominican fathers in Woodchester in 1915. It was originally intended merely for those in the village but it was soon realised that there many more who had made the ultimate sacrifice for whom there would be no memorial. There would be nothing by which to remember them. If the Woodchester Cross had been built exclusively for Catholics, as originally intended, it would have another private memorial but it was for all classes and all creeds. While many of the names on the memorial lived in Stroud there were many others from London, Birmingham, Canada, South Africa and Australia. Mariners, soldiers and Air Force names are on the memorial. Many from local County regiments as you would expect with over 50 Gloucesters.

The search is on to find the relatives of those whose names are on the memorial because on 10<sup>th</sup> June it is the first centenary of the dedication of the Wayside Cross. In 1917 the opening ceremony was led by the Rt. Revd. Dr Burton, Bishop of Clifton. This year the rededication service is being led by the present Bishop of Clifton, Bishop Declan. He will be assisted by other clergy to celebrate an ecumenical service attended by HRH the Princess Royal and other local dignitaries. Schoolchildren from all, the local schools, local bands and members of the all the services have been invited. County Regiments will be sending representatives.

In 1917 the service was attended by five thousand or more. Some have suggested ten thousand. No-one had dared expect the enthusiasm of the crowd. The crowds stretched as far as the eye could see. The following year 1918 the first Remembrance Day was held on St Dominic's Day 10<sup>th</sup> August which was auspicious being the anniversary of the day war was declared and also Trinity Sunday. The Stroud News estimated the crowds at this service to be four to five thousand but the army who attended estimated it to be ten thousand.

**We desperately need your help to find as many relatives as we can and invite them to be our Guests of Honour at this service. A full list of those names is on the Woodchester Village website [www.woodchesterparish.org.uk](http://www.woodchesterparish.org.uk)**

If you can help us please contact the Event Co-ordinator

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Ends.