

The Waterloo Memorial at Cossall

Introduction

The village of Cossall lies north of the main road from Ilkeston to Nottingham, situated on a hill overlooking the Erewash Valley. It still retains a rural charm having surprisingly survived the ravages of the industrial past and modern urban sprawl which has scarred the surrounding area.

I had always been under the mistaken impression that Sergeant Ewart of the Scots Greys, who captured the Eagle of the French 45th Line Regiment at Waterloo, was buried at Cossall. So I was pleasantly surprised to find out this was not the case. For upon investigation I found that in the ancient churchyard of Cossall stands a monument erected as a memorial to three men from this small Nottinghamshire village, who fought for the British army at Waterloo.

This article then, started out as a brief description of the supposed whereabouts of Ewart's grave at Cossall. Instead it turned into a description of the Cossall Memorial and then as I started investigating the facts surrounding the soldiers the memorial commemorates. I found I had gathered enough information to expand the article to include short biographies of the three men. Then finally to conclude with some thoughts which might shed some light onto the mystery of the third French Eagle taken at Waterloo The one that got away.

The Duke of Wellington himself warned aspiring historians, that inquiring too much would lead to bewilderment rather than truth. Thus I found out, the facts becoming quite a tangle at times particularly the information relating to John Shaw and his participation in the battle of Waterloo. With this in mind, I have had to add notes at the articles finish to give the different views.

The story I suppose starts with the Memorial at Cossall

The Cossall Memorial

During the summer of 1875 there died in Cossall an old man, an event which received the following comment in a local newspaper.

"On Sunday week was buried at Cossall, Samuel Waplington, the last of fifteen children, and the last of the name, for generations known in the place, born in 17 98.

Richard Waplington (Dick Wap), a brother, enlisted with Jack (John) Shaw the Lifeguardsman, into the Royal Horse Guards, and Tom Wheatley into the 23rd Light Dragoons under Lord Portarlington. All were born at Cossall, and all fought at Waterloo. The fate of Shaw is a matter of history. Too impetuous he fell, and his ashes moulder there; and in one of the terrific and sanguinary charges made by the Blues, poor Dicks saddle was emptied, and on that nights roll call Dick answered not. With his village mate and comrade he died fighting for home and country.

Tom came through unhurt and now lies in the hallowed enclosure of his native village, where the rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep, without a stone to mark the spot. Would it not be an act of grace to place some memorial in the beautiful village sanctuary, or in 'God's acre' to these humble, noble heroes"?(1)

