

A town with military connections— Sawbridgeworth

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THE church of Great St Mary in Sawbridgeworth, Hertfordshire, is an impressive building. It is also home to several very interesting military monuments. There is a World War I memorial cross standing in the grounds, and five very different individuals with military connections are commemorated in the church itself.

At the time of writing, the latest book published on the men who charged with the Light Brigade at Balaklava is *Forgotten Heroes*, by Roy Dutton (published by the author, 2007). This is a very impressive book, if rather uneven, and builds on the acknowledged work of several previous well-known researchers and writers on this iconic subject. I researched this book because there is an impressive brass plaque in Great St Marys. It reads:

"ERECTED BY THE INHABITANTS OF SAWBRIDGEWORTH ON THE OCCASION OF THE DIAMOND JUBILEE OF QUEEN VICTORIA IN MEMORY OF JOSEPH VICK CORPORAL 4TH LIGHT DRAGOONS DIED 14TH FEB 1888 AGED 76 YEARS HE SERVED IN THE CRIMEAN WAR BEING ONE OF THE SIX HUNDRED HE DID HIS DUTY".

Dutton's entry on Joseph Vick includes basic biographical data (although there is an obvious misprint that indicates that Vick enlisted at the age of 12), confirms his status as a charger, includes an informative paragraph on the sales history of Vick's medals (apparently last sold at the Dix Noonan Webb auction of June 30, 1998, for a hammer price of £5,400), and mentions the tablet in Great St Marys which is the subject of this article. Joseph Vick is recorded in his Chelsea pension record (in WO 97/1302) as having been born at Pitten, near Salisbury (almost certainly Pitton, a small village some four miles east of Salisbury). It also shows that he gave his occupation as a labourer when he attested for the 4th Light Dragoons at Salisbury on June 24, 1834, aged 22 years and six months, and he had a relatively undistinguished military career until he was promoted Corporal on October 20, 1854, just before the "Charge". He was

as a result of chronic rheumatism. The "intended place of residence" section of the pension document is blank, but Dutton quotes the 1881 census which records that at that time the widowed Vick was living in Salisbury with his son Samuel. However, Dutton offers no suggestion as to why Vick was commemorated at Sawbridgeworth, but, by the time of his death seven years later on February 14, 1888, that is exactly where Vick was, residing in Brook Lane (now no more than a footpath in a development of mainly post-1945 housing). His death was registered by his son Alfred (with whom he was almost certainly living), and the cause of death was recorded as asthma and chronic bronchitis. He is buried in the

churchyard of Great St Mary's in what is now an almost anonymous grave.

There is a very attractive tablet commemorating Francis Charrington and his family. He was a soldier son of Spencer Charrington (of Hunsdon, between Ware and Harlow). Born November 17, 1858, he was educated at Winchester, and married Alice Maud Leith in 1885; he lived for some years at Pishiobury Park, on the outskirts of Sawbridgeworth. He was commissioned Second Lieutenant in the 2nd Battalion of the King's Own 1st Staffordshire Militia on April 4, 1880, promoted Lieutenant January 19, 1881, Captain in the 4/South Staffordshire Regiment July 8, 1882, Major April 16, 1891, and Lieutenant-Colonel September 3, 1898. He commanded the Battalion during the Boer War and, according to *The History of the South Staffordshire Regiment* (James P. Jones, 1923), the Battalion embarked for South Africa on February 11, 1900, seeing action at the taking of Fourteen Streams on May 5 and forming part of the garrison of Lindley when the Boer attack was repulsed on June 26. It was present at the taking of Bethlehem, and defended Winburg against the Boer attack on August 26. Thereafter it was used to defend the railway and communications. For these services Charrington earned the Queen's South Africa Medal with clasps for Wittebergen, Cape Colony and South Africa 1901 (WO 100/ 188 f 217). He was mentioned in despatches and made a Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George on November 29, 1900 (gazetted September 27, 1901). He died July 3, 1921, and as well as in Sawbridgeworth he is commemorated in the family church of St Dunstan, Hunsdon.

The memorial to Rowland Alston is impressive, and gives a resume of his



*In loving memory of
FRANCIS CHARRINGTON
CMG (Lt Col 4th S Staffs)
of Pishiobury Park (in this parish)
Died 3rd July 1921 Aged 62 years
and of his wife
ALICE MAUD
Died 9th June 1925 Aged 63 years
Also of their daughter
LORNA
widow of Capt H A Chisenhole-
Marsh (6th Lancers) Died
17th May 1922 Aged 29*