

Elderly mum's tears of joy after community rally to fund Arlesey war hero's headstone

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by [Rebecca Day](#)



Grandson John Bowskill and wife Sarah visit his relative's grave alongside the war hero's nephew Jim Bowskill and wife Sam. Picture: Chris Gravett.

A headstone has been erected to honour the life of an Arlesey war hero who was left in an unmarked grave, with his elderly mum weeping tears of joy at the news.

Private John Bowskill died in 1923 from wounds sustained fighting in the First World War – just three months after the cut off date to receive a military headstone.

A wooden cross was initially placed on his grave, yet that rotted and for decades his grave was left unmarked.

Around a year ago, using some old photos of John's funeral, the position of the soldier's grave was located.

The Arlesey community has since raised the required funds to buy a headstone, which was erected by Neville Funeral Service in Shefford for free.

A commemoration event was then held for John as part of the Palm Sunday service at St Peter's Church, led by Rev Geoffrey Boulton.

Sunday's event was organised by those behind Arlesey Remembers You – a project which has seen the community rally together to lay wooden crosses on the graves of the town's fallen to coincide with the centenary anniversary of the Great War.

Jodie Chillery, a TV producer who created a documentary about the project, said: "The church was almost full on Sunday despite the rain, and a small collection of photographs and information about John Bowskill will remain in the church over the coming weeks for all to visit."

“The service on Sunday is almost a year on from when we started doing the project. It has been a fantastic year, and has really brought the community together. Arlesey is a funny place. It’s had a problematic town council for some time.

“There’s not been a brilliant atmosphere for a while and there’s been a lot of public desire for that to change – Arlesey Remembers You has played its part in that.”

John’s nephew Jim Bowskill said: “He was a caring, gentle man and John’s daughter Olive has said her one regret before John died would be to not have a headstone for her father.

“She’s 97 years old and very frail, so I took the photo to her of the headstone and she burst into tears.”