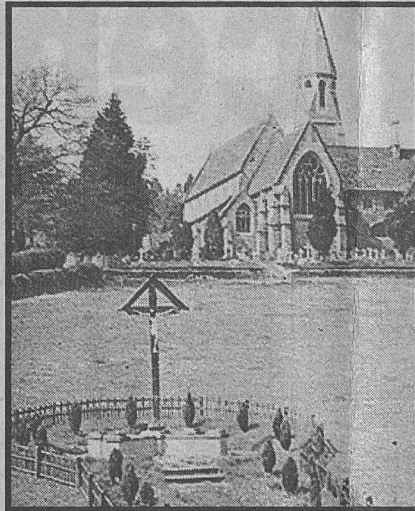


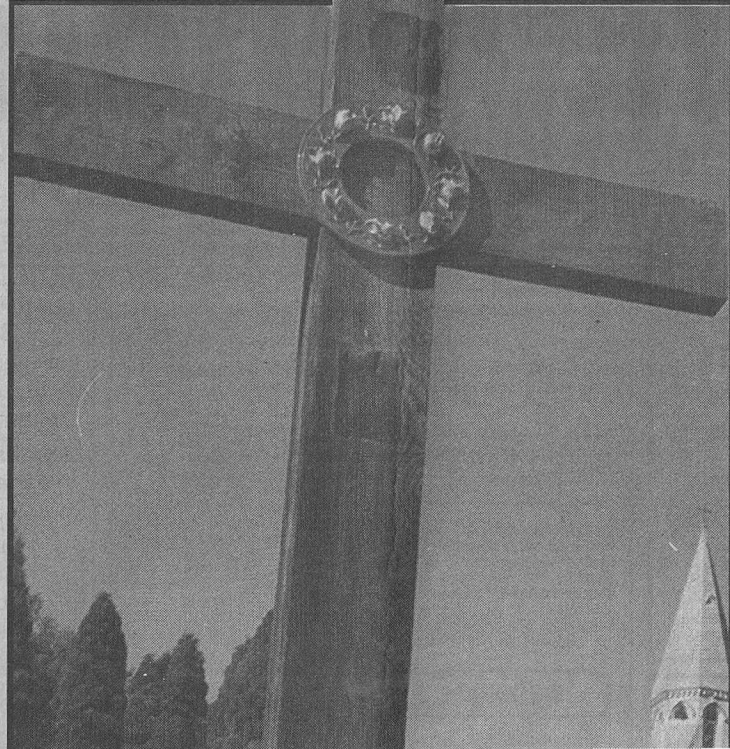
What were Lt. Dease's links with village?



■ Lieutenant Maurice Dease VC. Why is his name on the memorial? ★



■ The wayside cross in the 1920s. The figure of Christ has since vanished. ★



The Great

War hero mystery

10/11/98,

Woodchester
RC
Church

VOLUNTEERS restoring a First World War memorial have found the name of Britain's first Victoria Cross holder of the conflict engraved on it.

Lieutenant Maurice James Dease has no obvious connections with South Gloucestershire and local historians are trying to discover what his name is doing on the memorial at Woodchester.

Several other names also appear to have no connection with the area.

The mystery came to light when Soy Modelly, of Forest Green, Nailsworth, decided to improve the appearance of the memorial, which adjoins the Roman Catholic Church of the Annunciation in the village.

He arranged for new gates to be made by local timber merchant Peter Brown. And a ceramic wreath, made by Tetbury craftsman Christopher White, has been placed on the cross - which once bore a near lifesize figure of Christ.

Close examination of the plinth revealed the name of Lt Dease, of the 4th Battalion, The Royal Fusiliers, who died on August 23, 1914.

Lt Dease, from County Meath, Ireland, was fatally injured making an heroic single-handed machine-gun stand against advancing German infantry at Mons, Belgium.

by Bill Brunt

Only after he had been hit five times was he carried away from the battlefield.

Lt Dease died within weeks of the outbreak of war and was posthumously awarded with the VC, Britain's highest military decoration.

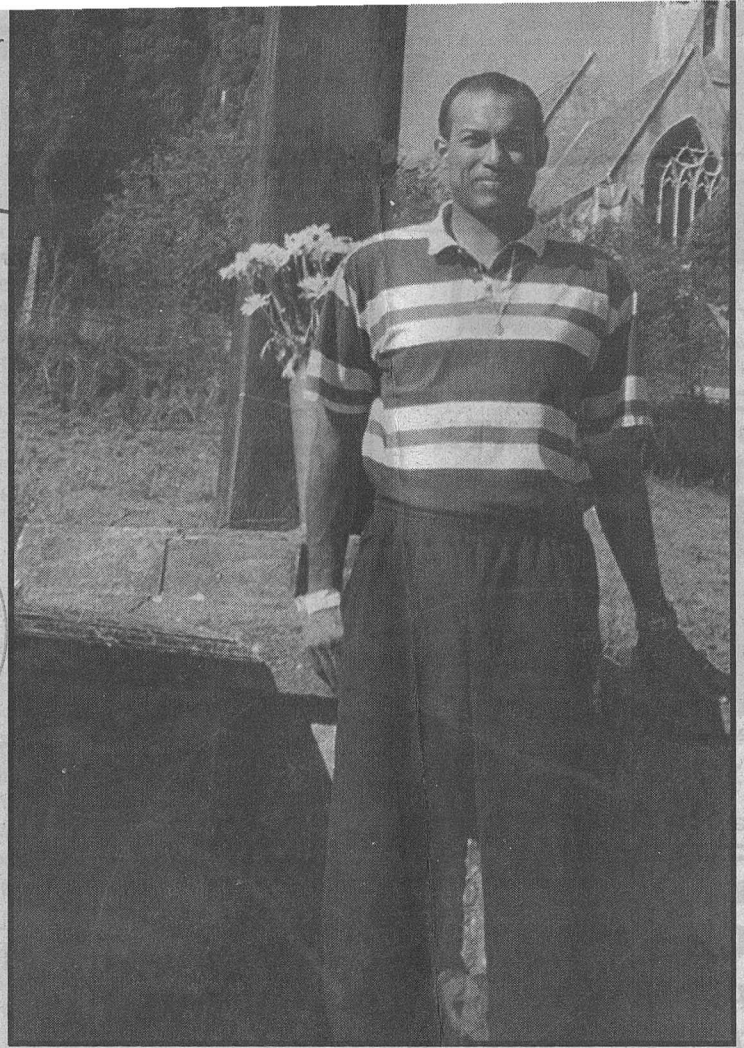
Wotton-under-Edge teacher Bill Griffiths, an authority on war memorials, cannot understand why Lieutenant Dease's name should be recorded at Woodchester.

His teaching colleague, Phil Goodwin, from Box, near Minchinhampton, and a member of the Roman Catholic church council at Woodchester, is equally puzzled.

Mr Griffiths got in touch with the Roman Catholic public school Stoneyhurst in northern England. No fewer than six former pupils of the school, including Lt Dease, won VCs during the Great War.

But neither researcher has been able to discover why Lt Dease's name is on the Woodchester cross along with those of French and Canadian servicemen.

■ Can you solve the mystery? If you can, ring the Citizen newsdesk on 01452 330610.



■ Soy Modelly pictured by the cross at Woodchester which he has been instrumental in restoring.