

STATEMENT TO CABINET FROM CLLR CHERRY BEATH, Liberal Democrat Combe Down Ward.

"I am delighted to see the proposal for Firs Field to gain official designation as a Centenary Field on the Agenda today. As you know this was an initiative led by the previous Liberal Democrat Administration, and one I have championed from the beginning, working with Officers and the Friends of Firs Field over a number of months. The Friends of Firs Field appreciate and support this proposed designation.

This status is a fitting tribute to, and reminder, of those who gave their lives in the Great War. The history of Firs Field is particularly poignant. In 1919 a number of discharged soldiers requested that a memorial Church Army Hut be built on the field in memory of their comrades who had died in the fighting. It was the local vicar, Reverend SweetApple, acting on behalf of residents, who arranged for the purchase of the field by public subscription. And later the stone Memorial was erected.

Many local residents remember Harry Patch, known as the 'Last fighting Tommy', who grew up in Combe Down. In 2011 his Coffin was driven at the request of his relatives, through the village not its way to the Monkton Combe graveyard. The streets were lined with residents paying their respects. Harry Patch notably took part in the service to unveil the war memorial on Firs Field on 28th May 1921.

All through the Stone Mine stabilisation Project, and during the work site placed on the Firs Field, care was taken to preserve the Memorial, amidst the busy engineering site for numbers of years. The field is much loved locally and is a focus for the Combe Down community. Residents greatly value the origins of the field and the fact that local people gave subscriptions towards the purchase. This official designation will give the field added protection and will publicly honour its links with the First World War."