

THE UNKNOWN WARRIOR

IN days of old, kings, chiefs and famous men were often buried in magnificent tombs. The pyramids, mausoleums and great barrows or earthworks stand as their memorials.

After a great battle the victors would set up a trophy of arms, helmets and armour and even a cenotaph or empty tomb, but the idea of an unknown man being buried with honour is a comparatively recent one.

It sprang from the imagination of an army Chaplain, the Rev. David Railton, M.C. During the First World War, near Armentieres he noticed a grave bearing a pencil inscription "An Unknown soldier of the Black Watch." It was this which gave him the idea that later became a national memorial.

It was not until 1920, however, that he was able to put forward the plan which had been developing in his mind. He approached the Dean of Westminster, the Right Rev. Bishop Herbert Tyle, with the suggestion that an unknown soldier should be buried among the nation's illustrious dead in Westminster Abbey, and the Dean was able to persuade the government to accept this.

A committee, headed by Lord Curzon, recommended that the Foreign Minister should arrange for a unknown soldier to be disinterred in France and brought to Westminster Abbey. It further recommended that the burial should be on Armistice Day of that year, and that King George V should be asked if, after he had unveiled the Cenotaph in Whitehall, he would follow the gun carriage bearing the body, to Westminster Abbey.

And so an unknown soldier was brought from the battle fields of France and buried with ceremony among the tombs of the most illustrious in the land.

THE FACTS

The British authorities gave very little information about the selection of the "Unknown Warrior" and it was not until Armistice Day 1939, 19 years later, that Brig.-Gen. L.J. Wyatt, D.S.O. in a letter to the Daily Telegraph, gave the facts.

The Brigadier-General, as General Officer in charge of troops in France and Flanders, and director of the War Graves Commission, was given instructions that the body of a British soldier, which it would be

This story has been compiled from sources at the British War Office Library, the Imperial War Museum, the British Legion and contemporary Press reports, in the sincere hope that people of today can know all about this emblem of sacrifice and not regard it merely as one of the many monuments to be seen at Westminster Abbey.

impossible to identify, should be brought in from each of the four battle areas — the Aisne, the Somme, Arras and Ypres, on the night of November 7 and placed in the Chapel of St. Pol.

The party bringing in each body was to return at once to its area so that there should be no chance of anyone knowing on which the choice fell. Working parties carried out these instructions, and the bodies, carried in ambulances, were received by the Rev. George Kendall, O.B.E. at the chapel, and a guard was set on the door.

In front of the altar was the shell or the coffin which had been sent out from England to receive the remains.

NO IDEA

At midnight on November 7-8 the Brigadier-General, with Colonel Gell, entered the chapel. The bodies had been placed in a row, on stretchers, each covered with a Union Jack. He selected one, and with the help of Colonel Gell, placed it in the shell, and screwed down the lid.

To quote, "I had no idea even of the area from which the body I selected had come, and no one else can know it." The other bodies were re-buried in the military cemetery at St. Pol.

The following morning the chaplains of the Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church and nonconformist Churches held a Service in the chapel. On the same day, at noon, the body was sent under escort, to Boulogne.

At 3.30 p.m. after passing through troops lining the outskirts of Boulogne, the ambulance drew up at the ancient castle, the local headquarters of the French Army.

Here to meet it were Colonel Bradstock, Colonel Gell, Major Fitzsimons, Major Diebold of the French Army, and M. Labeau, sub-Prefect of the District.

Eight soldiers, believed to be a Sergeant-Major of the Royal Army Service Corps, a Sergeant of the Royal Engineers, a gunner of the Royal Field Artillery, an Australian Light Horseman, a private each from the Canadian Infantry, Machine Gun Corps, and a rifleman from the 21st London Regiment (first Surrey Rifles) stepped forward as bearers.

CHAPELLE ARDENTE

The library of the castle had been turned into a chapelle ardente. Into this, through corridors lined by poilus, the body was taken. A French company furnished the guard throughout the last night on French soil. No British troops were with them.

At noon the next day the rough wooden shell was placed in a plain oak coffin which had arrived from England the previous night. This had wrought-iron bands, through one of which was passed a Crusader's sword from the Tower of London collection. The coffin, of Hampton Court oak, presented by the British Undertakers' Association, and bearing the inscription "A British Warrior who fell in the Great War 1914-1918 for King and country", was placed on a French military wagon, drawn by six horses, and under escort of French troops was taken to Boulogne Quay, where a Destroyer was waiting.

The Admiralty had sent H.M.S. Verdun as a special tribute to the French Nation and the gallant defence of that city: The cortège was a mile long.

The French Government sent a Division of all arms to pay their last tribute. Marshal Foch, who represented the French nation, made a touching speech and Lieutenant-General Sir George Macdonagh, representing King George, replied. General Weygand, and many distinguished French and British officers were present.

YPRES SOIL

Aboard the destroyer the same bearer-party laid the coffin on the deck abaft the stern gun platform on the port side. Six

ARRAS-BAIRNSFATHER SHELLHOLE OVERSEAS AIR TRIP COMPETITION

The winning ticket was **BLUE TICKET No. 517** to Mrs. G. J. Marais (a widow and pensioner) who elected to accept the cash R1 000.

Arras-Bairnsfather wishes to convey their sincere and grateful thanks to all Moths and non-Moths for their support and may we request all ticket sellers to be so kind to advise all ticket holders of the result.

The delay in publishing the result is regretted. Unfortunately our original advertisement went astray in the post.

barrels of earth from the Ypres salient were put on board, to be placed in the tomb in Westminster Abbey, so that the body should rest in soil on which so many of our troops gave up their lives.

H.M.S. Verdun moved off slowly, a guard of bluejackets at "The Present", and guns on shore firing a salute. An escort of six destroyers joined her.

H.M.S. Verdun steamed slowly into the Dover Harbour and a salute of 19 guns was fired from the castle.

Six warrant officers from the Royal Navy, the Royal Marines, Army, and the Royal Air Force acted as bearers, and six officers from all services brought the body ashore.

It was followed by Sir George Macdonagh, the officers of the garrison, and the Mayor and Corporation of Dover to the Marine Station, where it received a salute from a Guard of Honour furnished by the 2nd Connaught Rangers, and the Duke of Yorks Military school.

The saloon in which the body was placed was that which had carried home Nurse Cavell and Captain Fryatt. There was an interval of more than an hour before the train started, during which time four sentries, one from each Service stood on guard. An escort of one officer and 15 men travelled in a second saloon. The body remained in the train during the night at Victoria, and was then taken over by the 1st Battalion, Grenadier Guards.

STEEL HELMET

The coffin, covered by a Union Jack, on which had been placed a steel helmet, side-arms and a webbing belt, was put on a gun-carriage and drawn by six horses, started in slow time by a long route to reach the Cenotaph.

Led by the firing party and the Bands of the Coldstream, Scots, Irish and Welsh guards, came the gun-carriage. Troops from all the services followed. The pall bearers were Sir Hedworth Meux, Earl Beatty, Sir Charles Madden, General Gatliff, Sir Henry Jackson, Lord Byng, Lord Horne, Sir Henry Wilson, Earl Haig, Lord French, Lord Methuen and Sir Hugh Trenchard.

The gun-carriage drew up at the Cenotaph. King George stepped forward and placed his wreath of red roses and bay leaves on the coffin. After "the Silence" the gun-carriage again moved forward. King George as chief mourner took his place

immediately behind it, followed by the Prince of Wales, the Duke of York, Prince Henry, the Duke of Connaught, the Marquis of Milford Haven, the Speaker, Mr Asquith, Mr Lloyd George, Lord Curzon, Mr Bonar Law, and the Ministers of State.

As the coffin approached the north door of the Abbey, the clergy came forward to meet it.

The coffin borne by N.C.O.'s of the Guards passed through two lines of 100 wearers of the Victoria Cross, some in uniform, some in plain clothes, under the command of Colonel Freyberg, V.C. Behind these were widows and mothers of the fallen.

FOUR QUEENS

The Queen, Queen Alexandra, the Queens of Spain and Norway and the Princess Royal had been driven from the Cenotaph to the west door of the Abbey, and had already taken their places.

The service was conducted by the Dean. The music was by English composers, and included Kipling's Recessional. During the singing of "Lead Kindly Light" the bearers came forward, removed from the coffin the helmet and side-arms, and lowered it into the tomb.

At the committal the King scattered earth from the battle-fields from a silver shell. After a long roll of drums the poignant notes of the Last Post rang out, followed by the Reveille. Finally the two lines of the holders of the Victoria cross filed past on either side of the grave.

The service was the mourning of the nation.

The honours that had been paid were those due to a Field Marshal.

"They buried him among Kings, because he had done good towards God, and towards His House."

By November 27 it was estimated that 1 500 000 people had passed slowly by in homage. They knew, they understood; Today thousands pass by. Do they know? Time has elapsed; this has been written to give you the chance of knowing too.

NOTE:

From a letter to the British Legion Journal about the Rev. David Railton: "The Unknown Warrior's coffin was draped in his own large Union Jack, which he used as an altar cloth in France throughout the First World War. When the body was taken to Boulogne it was wrapped in this flag of his.

Mr Railton won the M.C. for saving an officer and two men under heavy fire, and after the war devoted himself to the poor in the slums. He was killed in an accident in 1955 when travelling to his home in Scotland. It is not generally known that he suggested the words now engraved at the foot of the Unknown Warrior's tomb."

While writing this the compiler chanced to meet the one-time officer's servant of Mr Railton, who was subsequently commissioned and severely wounded: He said he had frequently spread the Union Jack over table or box as an altar cloth, and that Mrs Railton had embroidered either the Divisional or Brigade number in one corner.

On October 17, 1921, General Pershing laid a United States Congressional Medal on the tomb. This is in a case near the tomb under the Union Jack, fixed to a pillar.

The stone over the tomb is of Belgium Marble.

Lowveld Moths in London

MANY MOTHS from the UK and South Africa, renewed their friendships, when Lowveld DOB Jacques Jensen, OB B Friedlander, Moths W Joubert, N Johnson, Scotty McKeachie, Legogotu, Nelspruit and their good ladies, Dorothy, Peta, Gloria, May, and Dorothy, accompanied by Moths H Turner, Field Marshall Montgomery, A Saunders, Hill 60, L Britten, General Browning, were present at The Royal Albert Hall, London, for the Royal British Legion, Festival of Remembrance.

This was a presentation of excellent and superb entertainment, by Muster of the Royal British Legion Standard bearers, bands of the Guards Division, Royal Green Jackets, Royal Marines, Royal Air Force, and an outstanding display of playing and marching by the Women's Royal Army corps Band. A fantastic gymnastic display by the Royal Air Force and many other events of a very high standard. but the greatest applause was for the Chelsea Pensioners. A very moving service was given by the Bishop of London and the Reverend M J Williams. In all a memory, a contingent of 56. Moths, headed by SOB P Padwick, VSOB H Friend of 56. Moths, headed by SOB P Padwick, VVSOB, H Friend.

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