



# Boxley War Memorial





This is a tale about Boxley War Memorial but it is a story that could be told about the majority of similar memorials throughout the country.

## War Memorials

War memorials are so much a part of the background to everyday life that most people no longer see them, let alone reflect, as they pass by. However, for some they are a precious reminder of a lost spouse, family member or friend. For others they are a constant reminder that even today communities around the world still live with conflict and the loss of loved ones.

It is estimated that there are over 100,000 war memorials in the UK. The Memorials come in various forms such as crosses, arches, stained-glass windows, plaques, cairns, statues etc. They are small or large, ornate or quite simple (like Boxley's). Most people will have seen or know of the Cenotaph in London's Whitehall but fewer possibly the similar memorial in Brenchley Gardens near Maidstone East station. How many of you have noticed the memorial where the Tonbridge and London roads divide or actually stopped to look at the one in Boxley village? But all these silent sentinels have one thing in common, in recording the names of the fallen they remind us of the loss of real people and all their futures. War memorials - seen but not seen; but we should never forget.

Although regimental and similar war memorials had been erected after previous conflicts, the idea of local community memorials originated during the Great War after the



Government announced that, owing to the huge number involved it had reluctantly decided not to repatriate the dead for burial. This decision was probably taken for a number of reasons, not all disclosed at the time:

- Political – the Government was concerned about the impact of thousands of coffins being returned to Britain. In a time of few telephones, let alone radio, TV or the internet, and rigorous control of the press, the terrible overall cost in human lives was not at first widely known.
- Financial – the cost of repatriating the bodies was more than a heavily-indebted and nearly bankrupt Britain could possibly afford.
- Military – army units recovering bodies from the Front would suffer additional deaths and entail the withdrawal of vital troops from the fight.
- Logistical – the shipping of thousands of bodies back to Britain and other countries would tie up resources that would be better utilised in the movement of essential supplies.
- Such were conditions on the Western Front that in many cases there were no identifiable remains to be repatriated. This would cause added distress.



The Government's decision to leave sons and husbands in a foreign land enraged their families. For the first time the victims, sometimes counted in the tens of thousands in a single battle, were ordinary people from all walks of life, many of them conscripted against their will. With no grave to visit, families felt unable to properly grieve and, with no headstone, felt there was no public record of the life sacrificed by their loved one.

MPs were forced to take action by an increasingly bitter and demanding campaign. A sustained attack against the Government's stance, led mainly by women who did not then have the vote, ensured that the issue was forced into public debate. This eventually resulted in the Government creating the Imperial (now Commonwealth) War Graves Commission (CWGC) in 1917 to establish cemeteries overseas where the dead would be interred at the

Commission's expense and memorials erected. The first three sites were commissioned in 1921 and the CWGC now has cemeteries, burial plots and monuments in 153 countries across the world.

At the same time, as it was unlikely that most family members would be able to afford to travel abroad to see a loved one's grave, local communities in this country were encouraged to erect and pay for memorials to their fallen. With the slow resumption of normal life at the end of hostilities, this practice was widely adopted. War Memorial Committees were organised to arrange events and collect funds to erect a memorial in a suitably prominent and accessible public place. In subsequent years this would become the focus of the annual Armistice (now Remembrance) Day service, as in Boxley village.

### **Boxley War Memorial**

Boxley War Memorial contains 34 names from the Great War (or First World War) of 1914-1918 and 14 names from the 1939-45 Second World War.



The War Memorial stands on the village green adjacent to the entrance to the churchyard of St Mary and All Saints (ME14 3DX). It is thus at the heart of the village conservation area yet in sight of the rolling downs with which those commemorated would have been very familiar.

It was erected after the Great War by a parish committee which agreed on a commemorative Cross designed by Harold T Barnald. The cross was set upon two stone drums reflecting the tradition that in times of conflict makeshift altars are set up on a drummer's drums. The stone was sourced from the Forest of Dean at a cost of £286 7s (£11,000 in today's money) met by donations from local people and a grant from the parish council. The War Memorial was dedicated on 1 November 1925.

After the Second World War, a further 14 names were added to the 28 already commemorated (personal histories, where

available are in The Fallen of Boxley section of this document). In 1967/8, as the only two surviving trustees were by then quite old and unable to continue, they gave it over to the care of the parish council, whose responsibility it has remained ever since. Essential major refurbishment, paid for by the council, was undertaken in 2013. In 2014 a small plaque was erected nearby to mark the centenary of the outbreak of war on 4 August 1914 (and two trees planted in Grove Green that will serve as a memorial to the war's end four long year's later).

## Poppies

When you think or see a war memorial, bright red poppies often spring to mind. It would not therefore be right to leave this account without a mention of their role.



Poppies grow freely on land that has been turned over and the barren churned-up shell-cratered battlefields of Flanders in northern France provided an ideal environment for them. Soldiers on the front-line marvelled at the sea of red that opened up before them when they came into flower. Naturally the colour of the blooms reminded them of the blood of fallen comrades, leaving them with an indelible memory. It is now an instantly recognised symbol in Britain of the foremost ex-servicemen's charity and familiar around the world due to the 2014 *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red* project. For this 888,246 ceramic poppies were planted in the moat of the Tower of London to mark the Great War Centenary.

However, it was in America that the poppy was originally used to raise funds for returning soldiers and the families of fallen soldiers. The idea came to an American professor, Moina Bella Michael, after reading the Canadian John Alexander McCrae's poignant poem

## **In Flanders Fields:**

In Flanders fields the  
poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row  
on row,  
That mark our place; and  
in the sky  
The larks, still bravely  
singing, fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.



We are the Dead. Short days ago  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,  
Loved and were loved, and now we lie  
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:  
To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch; be yours to hold it high.  
If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders fields.

A visiting Briton took home the poppy idea and the sale of poppies soon became the main fund-raising source for the Royal British Legion.

## **Thankful villages**

Some 800,000 British service personnel died in the Great War and a further 380,000 in 1939-45.

Of 16,000 communities in England and Wales only 53 are Thankful (or Blessed) Villages, there being no need for a memorial because all the villagers who went off to fight in the Great War returned safely. Thirteen of these are Doubly Thankful because nobody was lost in the war of 1939-45 either. There is only one Thankful Village in Kent – the hamlet of Knowlton near Deal and there are none in Scotland or Ireland.

## **Armistice Day**

The cease-fire on the Western Front in 1918 took place at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour of the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the 11<sup>th</sup> month (although tragically

soldiers and sailors were still killed after this as it took time for the news to circulate. Fighting elsewhere continued into 1919). The two minutes silence which is still observed each 11<sup>th</sup> November marks this time.

The annual remembrance services at the Cenotaph in Whitehall and elsewhere used to take place on 11<sup>th</sup> November when traffic everywhere would stop for two minutes and workers would down tools. Eventually the disruption to people's working lives and the traffic congestion caused became unacceptable and the services were moved to the nearest Sunday to 11<sup>th</sup> November (Remembrance Sunday). In recent years Armistice Day (11<sup>th</sup> November) has become informally observed specifically to remember those who died in the Great War (whereas Remembrance Day commemorates those who died in both world wars).

## Remembrance Sunday

On the Sunday closest to 11<sup>th</sup> November the Monarch leads the nation in remembering the dead of both world wars at a wreath-laying service at the Cenotaph in London. Similar services take place throughout the UK and in many Commonwealth countries.



Normally at these services the following words are spoken by the leader, often the local vicar, just before 11.00 am:

*They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old;*

*age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.*

*At the going down of the sun and in the morning we will remember them.*

And those present respond: *We will remember them.*

At this point the two minutes silence is signalled by a bugler playing of *The Last Post*. The completion of the silence is signalled by the playing of *Reveille*.

The service normally includes hymns and prayers and also The Kohima Epitaph

*When you go home tell them of us and say, for your tomorrow we gave our today.*

**The Last Post** – before modern technology, bugle calls and drum rolls kept soldiers informed of what was expected of them. The Last Post was the last bugle call of the day and it told soldiers that the camp was being secured for the night and it was time to turn in. This bugle call is used to mark that the fallen soldiers are now at rest.

**Reveille** – this is the first bugle call of the military day. It is included in the Christian service to remind everyone that there is the promise of resurrection.

## The Unknown Warrior

Such were the conditions in the Great War that many bodies could not be identified and were buried with tombstones that state baldly “An Unknown Soldier” (sadly the bodies of an even greater number could not even be found). It was therefore decided to bring back to Britain the unidentified remains of one of these soldiers for a State Funeral with full military



honours to represent all the fallen who have no known grave. This is the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior which lies very prominently just inside the entrance to Westminster Abbey.

## The Fallen of Boxley

Mrs Tracey Winter-Biggs has kindly allowed the Parish Council to reproduce her research, as part of the Imperial War Museum (UK) Lives of the First World War Project, on the military histories of parishioners named on the War Memorial. With grateful thanks to Mrs Tracey Winter-Biggs a resident of the parish.

View from Pilgrims Way  
(2014) looking towards  
Allington.



[www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org](http://www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org)





Frederick Chapman Royal West Kent Regiment (RWK 1911 India)	Oct 1914 M
Robert Henry 'Robin' Chapman 'The Buffs' East Kent Regiment	G/5397 KIA 12 Oct 1917
Herbert James Clifford King's Royal Rifle Corps	KIA 20 Sep 1917
Walter Alfred Costen	HMS Diamond Nov 1914 M
William George Costen Northumberland Fusiliers.	48397 DoW 26 Apr 1917
Harry Curtis Yorkshire Regiment	33119 KIA 23 Sep 1916
Albert William Danes 'The Buffs' East Kent Regiment	G/271 KIA 13 Oct 1915
Thomas Samuel 'Tom' Dennis Kent Cyclist Battalion	265820 Died 7 Nov 1918
Christopher Gower Army Service Corps	T4/211183 Drowned at Sea 2 Jun 1917
Frederick 'Fred' Green 'The Buffs', East Kent Regiment	G/1290 KIA 18 Nov 1916
Sidney James Green London Irish Rifles -	592830 KIA 7 Apr 1917
Percy Charles Hallett The Prince Consort's Own	45996 DofW 4 Jun 1918
Bertram Baker Hills (Relf-adopted) Kent Cyclist Battalion	265981 Died 7 Nov 1918
Charles Wilfred Howlett Yorkshire Light Infantry	KIA 2 Jul 1916



William Larkin Royal Defence Corps	27386 KIA 8 July 1916
William Edward Luckhurst 'The Buffs' East Kent Regiment	L/9920 KIA 20 Dec 1914
Cecil Henry Gossett Lushington Worcestershire Regiment	Died 3 Jul 1916
Robert George Mannering Royal Garrison Artillery John Martin Royal Sussex Regiment.	73903 /186425 KIA 24 Jun 1917 G/12530 DoW 10 Apr 1917
John Percy May Northumberland Fusilier	4/9044 DoW 23 Nov 1916
Henry E C (Harry) Mercer Royal West Kent Regiment	200373 KIA 11 Nov 1917
Eric John Morris Royal West Kent Regiment	GS/9322 KIA 9 Oct 1916
Albert Marsh Neale Canadian Light Infantry	13025 KIA 23 May 1915
Edgar James Paine Royal Engineers	616555 (61655) Died 22 Oct 1918
John (Jack) Poole 'The Buffs' East Kent Regiment	L/9834 KIA 9 Aug 1915
Harry Pound Royal West Surrey Regiment	G/40275 DoW 27 Mar 1918
Percy Prince The Buffs' East Kent Regiment	T/271000 ' KIA 8 Dec 1917
Garrett 'Bob' Saveall Royal West Kent Regiment.	KIA 13 July 1916
Maurice George Trousdell Royal Army Service Corps	KIA 6 Aug 1917

Arthur Whitehead  
Royal Garrison Artillery

26935  
KIA 30 Aug 1918

Edgar Whitehead  
Royal Horse Artillery & RFA

74860  
KIA 7 Nov 1916

RSV Hadlow, name added to War Memorial November 2018.  
TW Sales, name added to War Memorial November 2018.

## **World War 2**

Francis 'Frank' William Balston  
Kent Brigade Army Service Corps      Nov 1914 M  
A.K. Brook  
J.W. Bray  
S.G. Hawkes  
T.H. Hill-Walker  
G. Hunt  
W. Neale  
L. Norman  
H.D. Poole  
R.W. Robinson  
L.G. Sage  
D.S. Scott  
R. Swaffer  
R.G. Yardley

F Dennis, name added to War Memorial November 2018.

As investigations continue this booklet will be updated.

For people wishing to undertake further research the following website will be of interest

Imperial War Museum. [www.iwm.org.uk](http://www.iwm.org.uk)

To add to the personal histories of any person who served in WW1

[www.livesofthefirstworldwar.org](http://www.livesofthefirstworldwar.org)

Mrs Winter-Biggs and Boxley Parish Council will be happy to hear from anyone connected to the War dead of the parish.

Mrs Tracey Winter Biggs - [Boxley.wartime@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:Boxley.wartime@yahoo.co.uk)

Boxley Parish Council enquiry@boxleyparishcouncil.org.uk

Rudyard Kipling was appointed literary advisor for the language used for memorial inscriptions. Today his simple words are available for all to read and reflect on.

Lest we forget

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