



ELLESMERE PORT WAR MEMORIAL PROJECT

Private 29568 Samuel Hardwick

South Lancashire Regiment/ 2nd/6th Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment

The Hardwick Boys – Seven brothers gone to war

The Hardwicks came from Tipton in Staffordshire, where William Hardwick, was born into a family of iron workers in the industrial heartlands of the Black Country. The area where he lived and worked betrays this heritage with a concentration of canal-side street names such as Factory Street, Furnace Parade, Brick Kiln Street. Like many of his friends and neighbours he saw brighter prospects opening up at the expansion of the canal town in Ellesmere Port, especially once the Wolverhampton Iron Works had led the way, moving their operation north to the Port's canal side. He was doing what he felt was best for his large family. He may have had nine children, but seven of them were boys and would need gainful employment.

They arrived in Ellesmere Port probably around 1910, as a year later on the 1911 census all are still at home, unusual for four sons in their twenties in a tiny terraced cottage, but understandable if they had recently moved there. *(right: 8 Woodfield Road, grey front with sign)* They would soon begin to marry and flee the nest.

William quickly found employment in the new Wolverhampton (Mersey) Iron Works, continuing his trade as a brick burner, where he was in charge of the kiln and responsible for ensuring the correct temperature during the firing process. He was followed into the iron works by Reuben (aged 27), William junior (25) David (23) and Joseph (18). James (20) was a gardener and Harry (16) a stonemason. The youngest, Samuel (14), was still at school, but he too would soon find work at Burnell's Iron Works.



Shortly after the start of the war, the Hardwick boys began to enlist, and by September 1918, news of this band of brothers had finally reached the local press, who featured them in their columns. William, at the time of his enlistment (who was now married with a young child) had been working as a bar dragger at Burnells. *(left: bar dragger in the Iron Foundry)*

He joined the 1/8th Irish Battalion, King's Liverpool Regiment, but was taken prisoner at the Battle of the Somme in 1916.

David was also a bar dragger, but at the adjacent Mersey Iron Works, and he too joined his brother in the 1/8th Irish, and was in France from 1915. During the German Spring Offensive of March 1918, he was gassed, wounded and badly burned, and was brought back to England to convalesce in a London hospital.

Jim joined the Scots Guards and having been in the town's Surveyors Department at the time of enlistment. He was in France for three years and wounded three times. He was back at his depot in England after leave in September 1918, awaiting another draft to France.

Harry, who had been working as a marker in the Wolverhampton Mersey Ironworks, was the last to enlist. Up until then he was carrying out essential munitions work in the factory and a letter of exemption from service dated December 1915 was sent to the Army to that effect. As this was a voluntary enlistment, it may have been sent from the factory keen to retain essential workers. Whatever the reason, Harry signed on for the Royal Field Artillery on 9 December 1915, and after initial training was posted to France on 29 July 1916. The following year on 25 October 1917, he suffered internal injuries following a gas attack, and on his discharge which finally came through on 16 May 1919, he was pensioned on medical grounds due to chronic bronchitis caused by the attack.

12485

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TELEGRAPHIC ADDRESS:-
"CORRUGATED, ELLESMERE PORT."

MERSEY IRON WORKS,
ELLESMERE PORT,
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TELEPHONE:-
32 ELLESMERE PORT.
PRIVATE BRANCH EXCHANGE
4 LINES.

This is to certify that **Harry Hardwicke,**
of **8, Woodfield Road, Ellesmere Port.** is employed by
us on Munitions of War under the control of the Ministry
of Munitions.
December, 1915.

31616

Joe, now married with two children and formerly a marker at Burnell's, was also taken prisoner by the Germans after the intense opening of the Spring Offensive and Allied retreat.

The eldest son Reuben, aged 35 by the end of the war, was the only one of the brothers not to serve abroad, and although he had volunteered and served, he was given an honourable discharge. He was keen to wear his silver badge as evidence of this, especially with respect to those women who were only too eager to pin a white feather on a man they suspected of not enlisting.

After his release from behind the German lines, William arrived home and was interviewed about his experiences,

Private W. Hardwick (Victoria Road) of the 1/8th Irish Regiment, has returned to civilisation after 28 months absence and has had a very rough time. He was in the Sprotten Camp, where thousands of Russian troops died from starvation. He was struck three times with a rifle butt, and was once knocked unconscious for 36 hours. One offence was stealing potatoes, which they used to eat raw. When asked on what date he first thought the British would win the war, Private Hardwick said that 'no British prisoner ever thought the British would lose it, but the Germans knew it all right early in 1917'. He was once working with a blacksmith, and in order to get out of the job he 'accidentally' hit him on the hand with a sledge hammer, and was dismissed for inefficiency. For an 18 hour day on a farm in summer they received 1d. No drink was provided no matter what the heat, and the men had to drink water from the ditches. In camp the coffee was made of burnt barley. Prisoners were employed catching frogs in the marshes and then these were served out for food after being put into water. The doctor at Sprottan was a veterinary surgeon and in Private Hardwick's opinion had no idea how to treat the prisoners.

Chester Observer, 11 January 1919

But most tragic of all, the youngest of the boys, Samuel, did not return. Private 29568 Samuel Hardwick had enlisted under age, like many other eager teenagers, and he no doubt didn't want to be left at home by his older brothers. He joined the South Lancashire Regiment, before being transferred to the 2nd/6th Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment. The Warwickshires had been formed at Coventry, before moving to Chelmsford for training, then onto the Salisbury Palins by August 1915. In May 1916 they were mobilised for war and posted to France where they were engaged in various actions on the Western Front, before being moved north to the Ypres Salient in Belgium to take part in that most horrific of engagements, the Third Battle of Ypres (July-November 1917). It was here that Samuel was killed in action on 5 September 1917 losing his life at the age of only nineteen. His body was never recovered and his name is recorded on the Memorial Panels to the Missing at Tyne Cot.

Apart from young Samuel, the Hardwick brothers survived the war, although it was clear they had not emerged unscathed. David, who was the most poorly, died in 1929 aged forty-one. Harry, who had been severely gassed in the war, died in 1943 aged 47 and Rueben in 1935 aged 50, while Jim, William and Joe lived long into retirement.

There were not many other families who had sent seven sons to war.

| Summary of service | | |
|--|--|---|
| William Hardwick | 1/8th Irish Battalion, King's Liverpool Regiment | Taken prisoner at the Battle of the Somme in 1916. |
| Private 3962 David Hardwick | 1/8th Irish Battalion, King's Liverpool Regiment | In France from 1915. During the German Spring Offensive of March 1918, he was gassed, wounded and badly burned, brought back to England to convalesce in a London hospital. |
| Private 12859 Jim Hardwick | Scots Guards | He was in France for three years and wounded three times. He was back at his depot in England after leave in September 1918, awaiting another draft to France. |
| Gunner 131616 Harry Hardwick | Munitions worker then Royal Field Artillery | Signed on for the Royal Field Artillery on 9 December 1915. Posted to France on 29 July 1916. On 25 October 1917, he suffered internal injuries following a gas attack. Discharged May 1919, pensioned on medical grounds due to chronic bronchitis caused by the attack. |
| Joe Hardwick | | Taken prisoner by the Germans after the intense opening of the Spring Offensive and Allied retreat. |
| Reuben Hardwick | | Although signed on and served, he was the only one not to serve abroad. Given an honourable discharge. |
| Private 29568 Samuel Hardwick | South Lancashire Regiment/ 2nd/6th Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment | Killed in action in Third Battle of Ypres, 5 September 1917 aged nineteen. His body was never recovered and his name is recorded on the Memorial Panels to the Missing at Tyne Cot. |

PATRIOTIC ELLESMERE PORT FAMILY.

SEVEN SONS GIVEN TO THE ARMY.

Of the many patriotic families in Ellesmere Port the record of Mr. and Mrs. Hardwick, of Ashfield-road, stands out prominently, for they have given each of their seven sons to the service of King and country. Of the number the youngest son was killed twelve months ago. Before he joined the Army—in the first days of the war, as in the case of his brothers—he worked at Burnell's, and was a well-known youth. The eldest son, Reuben, aged 35, wears the honourable silver badge of a discharged soldier, and although he volunteered his services for the cause of freedom he was the only one of the seven brothers who did not go into action. William, aged 33, joined the 8th Irish, and was captured prisoner in the battle of the Somme in 1916. A married man, he left one child behind, and was formerly employed as a bar dragger in the mills at Burnell's. David, who also joined the 8th Irish, like William, was a bar dragger, but employed at the Mersey Ironworks. He was in France almost three years before the German spring offensive, in which he was wounded, gassed, and severely burned. He is now in a convalescent hospital in London. Jim joined the Scots Guards, and formerly was employed under the Surveyor's department. He, too, has seen three years' service in France, and has been thrice wounded. He has just returned to his depot after spending a well-earned leave, and is awaiting another draft to France. Harry left his work as a marker at the Mersey Ironworks, and has been in France three years, where he was on one occasion seriously gassed. Joe, another married son with two children, also employed as a marker at Burnell's, was taken prisoner by the Germans at the opening of their offensive in March.

In Memory of

Private

Samuel Hardwick

29568, 2nd/6th Bn., Royal Warwickshire Regiment who died on 05 September 1917 Age 19

Son of William and Caroline Hardwick, of 8, Woodfield Rd., Ellesmere Port, Birkenhead.

Remembered with Honour

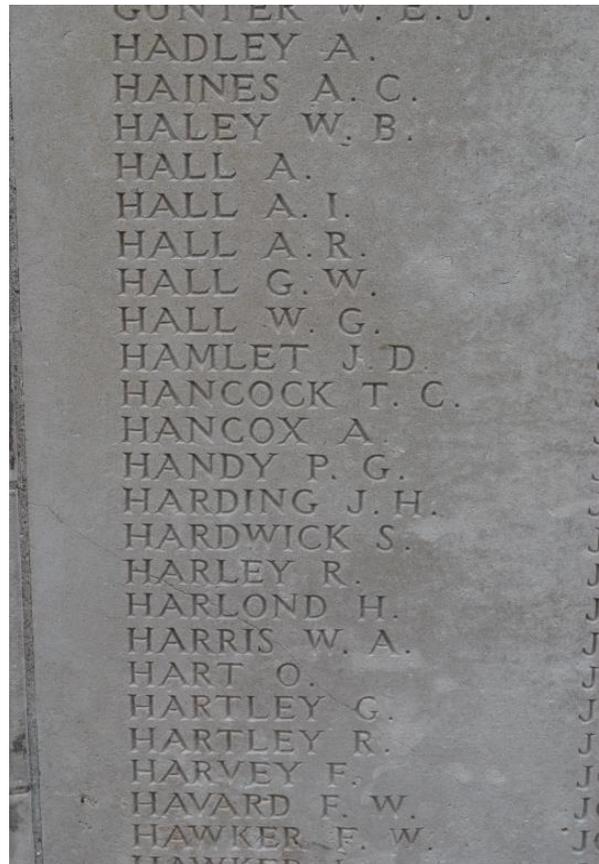
Tyne Cot Memorial



Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission



Samuel Hardwick recorded on the Memorial Panels to the Missing, Tyne Cot Cemetery, near Ypres, Belgium.



TYNE COT CEMETERY and MEMORIAL

Tyne Cot Cemetery

'Tyne Cot' or 'Tyne Cottage' was the name given by the Northumberland Fusiliers to a barn which stood near the level crossing on the Passchendaele-Broodseinde road. The barn, which had become the centre of five or six German blockhouses, or pill-boxes, was captured by the 3rd Australian Division on 4 October 1917, in the advance on Passchendaele.



One of these pill-boxes was unusually large and was used as an advanced dressing station after its capture. From 6 October to the end of March 1918, 343 graves were made, on two sides of it, by the 50th (Northumbrian) and 33rd Divisions, and by two Canadian units. The cemetery was in German hands

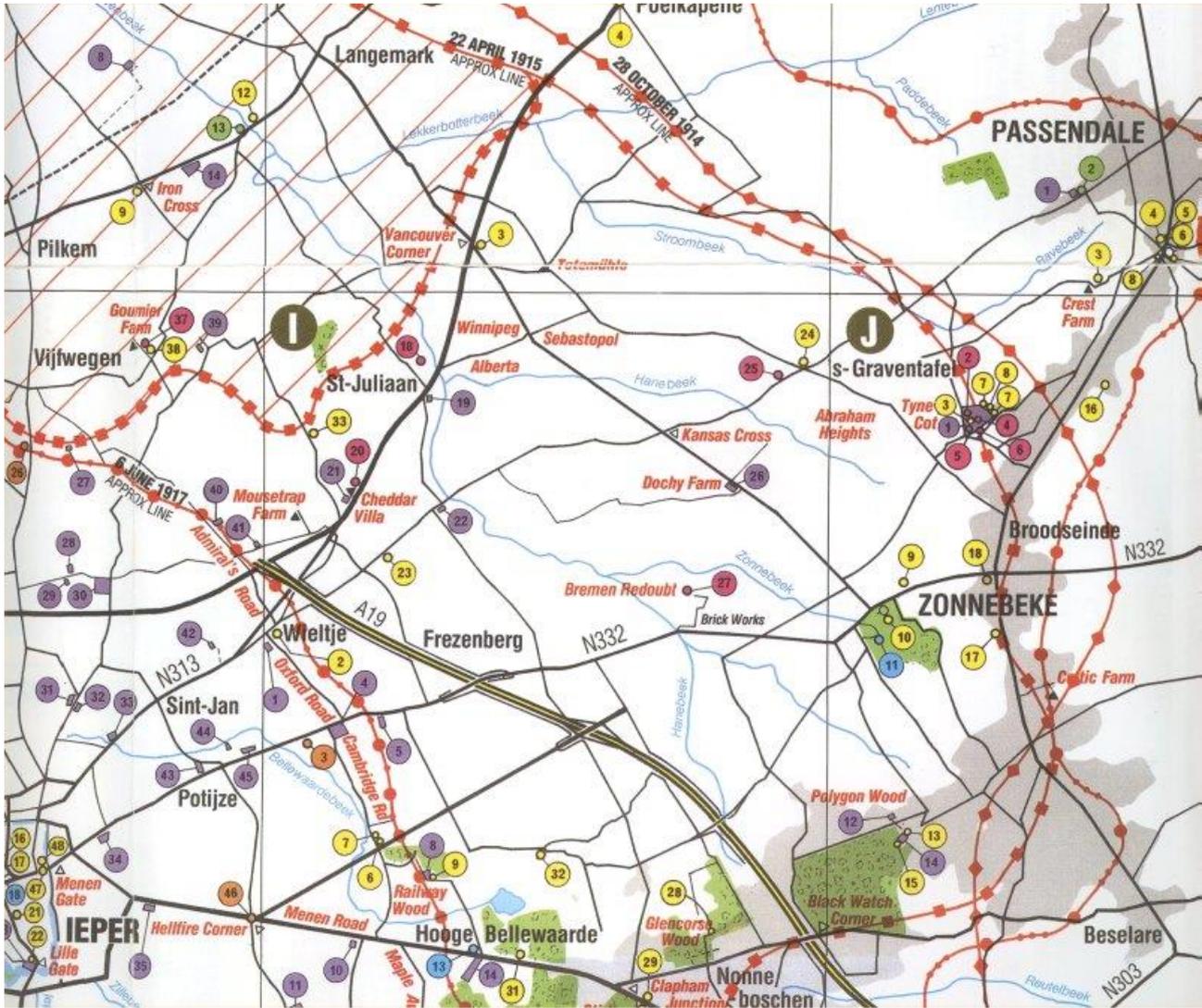
again from 13 April to 28 September, when it was finally recaptured, with Passchendaele, by the Belgian Army.

Tyne Cot Cemetery was greatly enlarged after the Armistice when remains were brought in from the battlefields of Passchendaele and Langemarck, and from a few small surrounding burial grounds. It is now the largest Commonwealth war cemetery in the world in terms of burials. At the suggestion of King George V, who visited the cemetery in 1922, the Cross of Sacrifice was placed on the original large pill-box. There are three other pill-boxes in the cemetery.

There are now 11,956 Commonwealth servicemen of the First World War buried or commemorated in Tyne Cot Cemetery. 8,369 of the burials are unidentified but there are special memorials to more than 80 casualties known or believed to be buried among them. Other special memorials commemorate 20 casualties whose graves were destroyed by shell fire. There are 4 German burials, 3 being unidentified.

The cemetery was designed by Sir Herbert Baker.

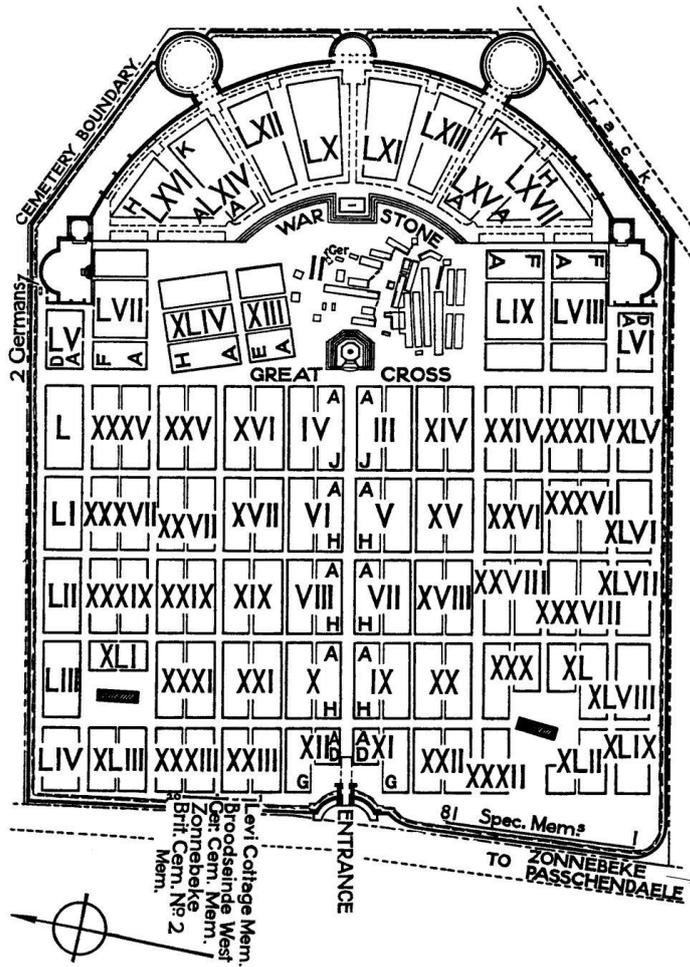




Tyne Cot is located north of Zonnebeke (No.1)



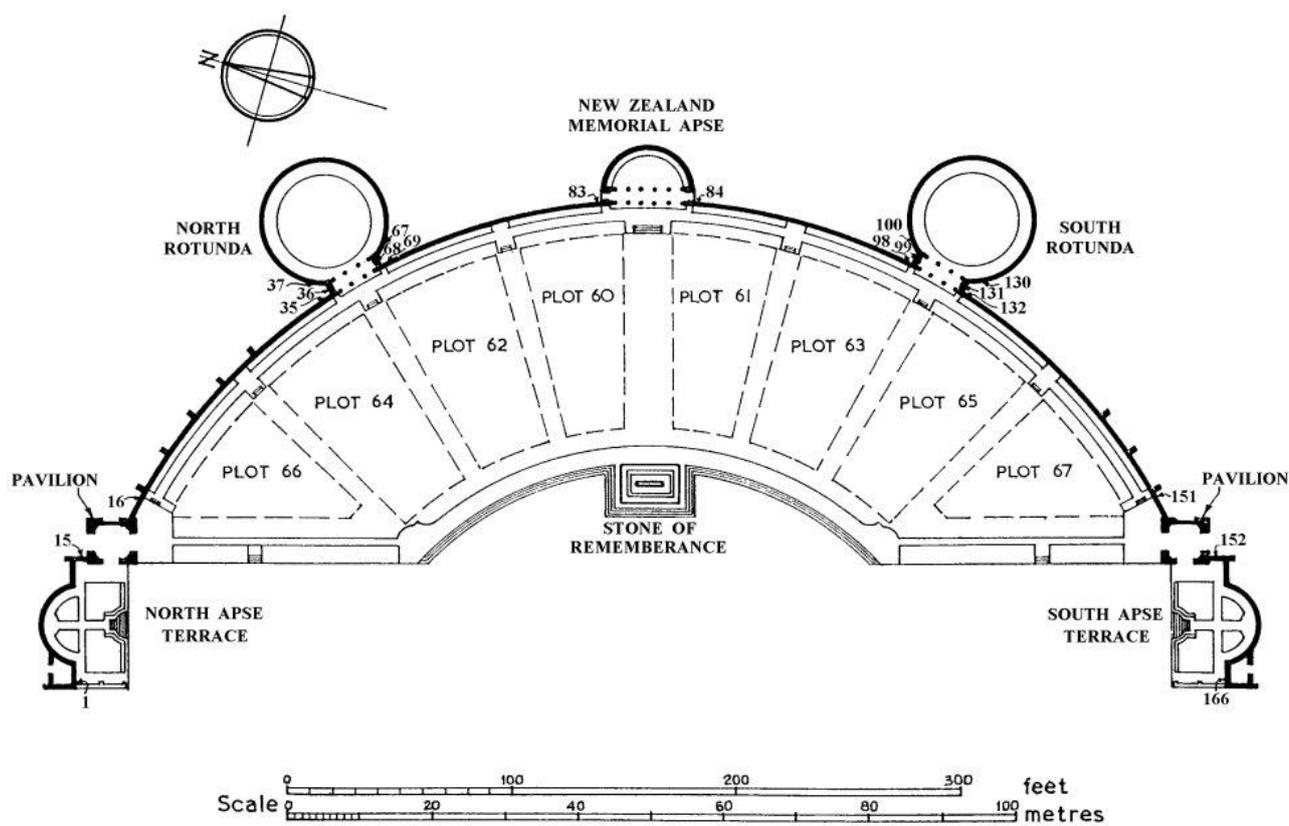




TYNE COT CEMETERY PASSCHENDAELE.

Tyne Cot Memorial Panels to the Missing

The Tyne Cot Memorial forms the north-eastern boundary of Tyne Cot Cemetery, which is located 9 kilometres north east of Ieper town centre, on the Tynecotstraat, a road leading from the Zonnebeekseweg (N332), and commemorates nearly 35,000 servicemen from the United Kingdom and New Zealand who died in the Ypres Salient after 16 August 1917 and whose graves are not known. The memorial stands close to the farthest point in Belgium reached by Commonwealth forces in the First World War until the final advance to victory.



LAYOUT OF THE TYNE COT MEMORIAL PANELS

The Tyne Cot Memorial is one of four memorials to the missing in Belgian Flanders which cover the area known as the Ypres Salient. Broadly speaking, the Salient stretched from Langemarck in the north to the northern edge in Ploegsteert Wood in the south, but it varied in area and shape throughout the war. The Salient was formed during the First Battle of Ypres in October and November 1914, when a small British Expeditionary Force succeeded in securing the town before the onset of winter, pushing the German forces back to the Passchendaele Ridge. The Second Battle of Ypres began in April 1915 when the Germans released poison gas into the Allied lines north of

Ypres. This was the first time gas had been used by either side and the violence of the attack forced an Allied withdrawal and a shortening of the line of defence.



There was little more significant activity on this front until 1917, when in the Third Battle of Ypres an offensive was mounted by Commonwealth forces to divert German attention from a weakened French front further south. The initial attempt in June to dislodge the Germans from the Messines Ridge was a complete success, but the main assault north-eastward, which began at the end of July, quickly became a dogged struggle against determined opposition and the rapidly deteriorating weather. The campaign finally came to a close in November with the capture of Passchendaele.

The German offensive of March 1918 met with some initial success, but was eventually checked and repulsed in a combined effort by the Allies in September. The battles of the Ypres Salient claimed many lives on both sides and it quickly became clear that the commemoration of members of the Commonwealth forces with no known grave would have to be divided between several different sites.

The site of the Menin Gate was chosen because of the hundreds of thousands of men who passed through it on their way to the battlefields. It commemorates those of all Commonwealth nations

except New Zealand who died in the Salient before 16 August 1917. Those United Kingdom and New Zealand servicemen who died after that date are named on the memorial at Tyne Cot, a site which marks the furthest point reached by Commonwealth forces in Belgium until nearly the end of the war. Other New Zealand casualties are commemorated on memorials at Buttes New British Cemetery and Messines Ridge British Cemetery.

The memorial, designed by Sir Herbert Baker with sculpture by Joseph Armitage and F V Blundstone, was unveiled by Sir Gilbert Dyett in July 1927.

The names of those from United Kingdom units are inscribed on Panels arranged by Regiment under their respective Ranks. There are several panels dedicated to the memory of men of the Cheshire Regiment.



**Researched and written
by
Mike Royden**

Photographs in France also by the author

www.roydenhistory.co.uk