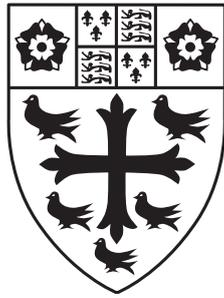


Westminster Abbey



A SERVICE AND VIGIL ON THE EVE OF THE CENTENARY OF THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME

Thursday 30th June 2016
8.00 pm

HISTORICAL NOTE

On 1st July 1916, the British and French armies launched an offensive near the River Somme, in Picardy, France. This series of battles, lasting nearly five months, would become one of the bloodiest and most important campaigns of the First World War.

It was originally conceived as part of a co-ordinated Allied strategy to put the Central Powers under unbearable pressure, but in February 1916 the German Army attacked the French at Verdun. This became one of the fiercest struggles of the war, lasting until the end of the year. Fewer French divisions were available to fight on the Somme, and so the British Empire took the leading role.

On 24th June 1916, Allied artillery began a week-long bombardment of the German defences, firing more than one and a half million shells. Yet the length and depth of the target area, along with manufacturing defects in British shells, meant that many well-constructed German dugouts and strongholds remained intact.

In the early hours of 1st July, soldiers moved into forward trenches and advanced out into no-man's land, preparing for 'zero-hour' at 7.30 am. As the bombardment lifted, the first wave of Allied troops attacked along a 40 kilometre front. In the south, the French made good progress and British units took Mametz and Montauban, but in the north—at Gommecourt, Serre, Beaumont-Hamel, Thiepval, Ovillers, and La Boisselle—the British Army suffered terrible losses for little gain.

Attacks and counter-attacks by both sides continued throughout July and August. Every village, copse, farmhouse and rise was fiercely contested, and both sides committed huge quantities of manpower and munitions to the struggle. On 15th September, after costly struggles for control of Pozières, High Wood and Delville Wood, the British Army launched its largest attack since 1st July between Courcellette and Flers, using tanks for the first time.

In October and November, the fighting continued amid deteriorating weather which transformed the battlefields into a muddy and waterlogged morass. Amid freezing sleet and snow, the British Army slowly advanced north of the River Ancre, before the offensive was halted on 18th November, 141 days after it had begun.

Those serving in the British Army came from every part of England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. Among them were professional soldiers, territorials, and volunteers—some of whom served in 'Pals' battalions formed of men drawn from the same communities, clubs, schools, and workplaces. They were joined by servicemen from across the British Empire, including units from Australia, Canada, India, Newfoundland, New Zealand, South Africa, and the West Indies.

The battles of the Somme in 1916 had significant military, political, industrial, and domestic consequences for all the countries involved. An estimated three and a half million men fought on both sides, and over one million were wounded, captured or killed. The French army sustained more than 204,000 casualties. German records documented a total of nearly 430,000, although other estimates suggest a greater number. Official figures for British and Imperial casualties numbered some 420,000 wounded, missing, or killed. Precise statistics remain impossible to calculate.

Across the Somme battlefields are cemeteries and memorials built and cared for by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Some are vast and dramatic, others small and intimate. Standing sentinel over the battlefields, the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing is the largest CWGC monument in the world. Some war graves are closer to home. Those brought back for medical treatment before succumbing to their wounds lie buried across the United Kingdom.

Every grave, every name, is an opportunity to reflect on the battles of the Somme and their human cost.

*Dr Glyn Pryor,
The Commonwealth War Graves Commission*



Image © IWM Q 1069. Selected with assistance from Dr Emily Mayhew, Imperial College London.

THE GRAVE OF THE UNKNOWN WARRIOR

The idea of such a burial first came from a chaplain on the Western Front, The Reverend David Railton (1884–1955), when, in 1916, he noticed a grave in a back garden at Armentières, with a rough cross, on which were pencilled the words ‘An Unknown British Soldier’. In August 1920, he wrote to the Dean of Westminster, The Right Reverend Herbert Ryle, through whose energies this national memorial came into being.

The body was chosen from unknown British servicemen exhumed from four battle areas: the Aisne, the Somme, Arras, and Ypres. The General Officer in charge of troops in France and Flanders, Brigadier L J Wyatt, selected one at random, and from then on it was the Unknown Warrior. The other three bodies were reburied.

The Unknown Warrior was placed inside a new coffin which had been sent over especially from England, made of two-inch thick oak from a tree which had grown in Hampton Court Palace garden, lined with zinc. It was covered with the flag that David Railton had used as an altar cloth during the War (known as the Ypres or Padre’s Flag, which now hangs in St George’s Chapel). Within the coffin was placed a 16th century crusader’s sword from the Tower of London collection. The destroyer HMS Verdun, whose ship’s bell now hangs near the grave, transported the coffin to Dover and it was then taken by train to Victoria station in London where it rested overnight.

On the morning of 11th November 1920, the coffin was placed on a gun carriage drawn by six black horses, and began its journey through the crowd-lined streets, making its first stop in Whitehall, where the Cenotaph was unveiled by King George V. The King placed his wreath of red roses and bay leaves on the coffin. Then the carriage, with pall bearers comprised of the senior commanders of His Majesty’s Armed Forces, followed by the King, members of the Royal Family, and ministers of State, made its way to the Abbey, where the Unknown Warrior was reburied and dedicated. This was the last burial permitted in Westminster Abbey.

The grave was filled in on 18th November, using 100 sandbags of earth from the battlefields, and then covered by a temporary stone. A year later, on 11th November 1921, the present black marble stone was unveiled at a special service. General Pershing, on behalf of the United States of America, conferred the Congressional Medal of Honor on the Unknown Warrior on 17th October 1921, and this now hangs in a frame on a pillar near the grave.

The body of the Unknown Warrior may be from any of the three services, Army, Navy, or Air Force, and from any part of the British Isles, Dominions, or Colonies. It represents all those who died who have no other memorial or known grave.

X X THE LORD KNOWETH THEM THAT ARE HIS X

X GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN THAN THIS X

BENEATH THIS STONE RESTS THE BODY
OF A BRITISH WARRIOR
UNKNOWN BY NAME OR RANK

BROUGHT FROM FRANCE TO LIE AMONG
THE MOST ILLUSTRIOUS OF THE LAND
AND BURIED HERE ON ARMISTICE DAY
11 NOV: 1920, IN THE PRESENCE OF
HIS MAJESTY KING GEORGE V
HIS MINISTERS OF STATE
THE CHIEFS OF HIS FORCES
AND A VAST CONCOURSE OF THE NATION

THUS ARE COMMEMORATED THE MANY
MULTITUDES WHO DURING THE GREAT
WAR OF 1914-1918 GAVE THE MOST THAT
MAN CAN GIVE LIFE ITSELF
FOR GOD

FOR KING AND COUNTRY
FOR LOVED ONES HOME AND EMPIRE
FOR THE SACRED CAUSE OF JUSTICE AND
THE FREEDOM OF THE WORLD

THEY BURIED HIM AMONG THE KINGS BECAUSE HE
HAD DONE GOOD TOWARD GOD AND TOWARD
HIS HOUSE

X X IN CHRIST SHALL ALL BE MADE ALIVE X X

X LIVE X WE BEHOLD WE DYING AND YET WELL KNOWN AND UNKNOWN X

The service is being televised live from 7.30 pm on BBC Two.

Members of the congregation are kindly requested to refrain from using private cameras, video, or sound recording equipment. Please ensure that mobile phones, pagers, and other electronic devices are switched off.

The church is served by a hearing loop. Users should turn their hearing aid to the setting marked T.

The service is conducted by The Very Reverend Dr John Hall, Dean of Westminster.

The service is sung by the Choir of Westminster Abbey, conducted by James O'Donnell, Organist and Master of the Choristers.

The organ is played by Daniel Cook, Sub-Organist.

Music before the service:

Matthew Jorysz, Assistant Organist, plays:

Fantasia and Fugue in C minor BWV 537 *Johann Sebastian Bach*
(1685–1750)

Prelude and Fugue in F minor Op 7 no 2 *Marcel Dupré (1886–1971)*

Daniel Cook, Sub-Organist, plays:

Elégie Op 31 no 22 *Louis Vierne (1870–1937)*

Trauerode Op 145 no 1 *Max Reger (1873–1916)*

Chorale Prelude *on Eventide* *Hubert Parry (1848–1918)*

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Her Majesty's Lord Lieutenant of Greater London and The High Sheriff of Greater London, together with the representatives of The Right Honourable The Lord Mayor of London and The Mayor of London, are received at the Great West Door by the Dean and Chapter of Westminster, and are conducted to their places in the Nave. All remain seated.

The Prime Minister, The Right Honourable David Cameron MP, and Mrs Cameron are received at the Great West Door by the Dean and Chapter of Westminster, and are conducted to their places in the Nave. All remain seated.

The Lord Mayor of Westminster is received at the Great West Door by the Dean and Chapter of Westminster. Presentations are made, and he is conducted to his place in the Nave. All stand, and then sit.

All stand.

Her Majesty The Queen and His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh are greeted by the Dean of Westminster at the Great West Gate.

ORDER OF SERVICE

All remain standing. All sing

THE NATIONAL ANTHEM

GOD save our gracious Queen,
long live our noble Queen,
God save The Queen.
Send her victorious,
happy, and glorious,
long to reign over us:
God save The Queen.

All remain standing. The Very Reverend Dr John Hall, Dean of Westminster, gives

THE BIDDING

THE Battle of the Somme was an offensive by the British and French against the forces of Germany. The battle lasted almost five months. No more than six miles of German-held territory were regained. On all sides there were a million casualties, killed or wounded.

This evening, we seek to recall the experience of those waiting to go into battle. This whole night will be a time of vigil; a watch will be maintained at the Grave of the Unknown Warrior, changing every quarter of an hour, and representing all the forces involved in the Battle. The watch will conclude at 7.30 am when, a hundred years ago, whistles were blown to signal the moment of advance.

Tonight we shall remember the courage and the sacrifice of those preparing to face their enemy, and we shall pray that we may continue to learn the lessons of history to build a world at peace.

All sit. Luke Thompson, actor, reads

A TRENCH NARRATIVE

FROM here I could see the maze of lines extending to both sides, following the rise and fall of the downs. On the left, the opposing trenches bent back and then rose up to a crest and disappeared; on the right I could follow the line which went in a vague sweep right down to the Somme at Bray. But it was a hazy evening and I was only able to trace out the lines by the thick murky smoke which everywhere spurted up in spouts of yellow or grey or brown (according to the light or the explosive) and then spread away into wide smudges. All the while, at different points, the air above was spattered with multitudinous white wisps of shrapnel. It was indeed an immense and terrible sight, and it seemed especially so when I turned around to see the beautiful contrast behind me. Long green ridges, thick with cornfields along their lower slopes, with, here and there, bright splashes of colour—the gold of mustard, or bright scarlet of the poppy. And all these gentle hills, which were bright blue at the horizon towards which the sun was hastening, enfolded lovely wooded valleys and pretty villages set in the more secluded folds. This was a view far more wonderful and dear in its beauty and peace, and it seemed that, with all that wilful crashing and panting of guns, it would remain for long a veiled vision to us, in its full meaning and message of smiling peace, because it was all so insecure while the passions and ambitions of men continued to find vent in mutual slaughter.

*Second Lieutenant Jocelyn Buxton (1896–1916),
6th Battalion, The Rifle Brigade
Killed in action on the first day of the Somme*

All remain seated. The choir sings

THE PSALM

WHOSO dwelleth under the defence of the most High : shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

I will say unto the Lord, thou art my hope, and my strong hold : my God, in him will I trust.

For he shall deliver thee from the snare of the hunter : and from the noisome pestilence.

He shall defend thee under his wings, and thou shalt be safe under his feathers : his faithfulness and truth shall be thy shield and buckler.

Thou shalt not be afraid for any terror by night : nor for the arrow that flieth by day;
for the pestilence that walketh in darkness : nor for the sickness that destroyeth in the noon-day.
A thousand shall fall beside thee, and ten thousand at thy right hand : but it shall not come nigh thee.
For he shall give his angels charge over thee : to keep thee in all thy ways.
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son : and to the Holy Ghost;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be : world without end. Amen.

Walter Alcock (1861–1947)

Psalm 91: 1–7, 11

All remain seated. Brigadier Timothy Hodgetts CBE, Medical Director, Defence Medical Services, reads

ROMANS 8: 35–39

WHO shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, ‘For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.’ Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

All remain seated for

THE ADDRESS

by

The Right Reverend and Right Honourable Dr Richard Chartres KCVO
Bishop of London and Dean of Her Majesty’s Chapels Royal

All remain seated. The choir sings the anthem

WATCH WITH ME

THEN Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, ‘Sit here, while I go yonder and pray.’

*Our brains ache, in the merciless iced east winds that knive us...
Wearied we keep awake because the night is silent...
Low drooping flares confuse our memory of the salient...
Worried by silence, sentries whisper, curious, nervous,
But nothing happens.*

And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, ‘My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me.’

*Watching, we hear the mad gusts tugging on the wire,
Like twitching agonies of men among its brambles.
Northward, incessantly, the flickering gunnery rumbles,
Far off, like a dull rumour of some other war.
What are we doing here?*

And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, ‘My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.’

*Judith Bingham (b 1952)
Commissioned for this service
by the Dean and Chapter of Westminster
through the generosity of the
Department for Culture, Media and Sport*

*St Matthew 26: 36–39 and extracts from
Exposure by Lieutenant Wilfred Owen MC (1893–1918)
2nd Battalion, Manchester Regiment*

All remain seated for

THE PRAYERS

The Reverend Christopher Stoltz, Minor Canon and Precentor, says:

Let us pray.

O LORD of the nations, giver of joy in every generation and faithful companion to all who call upon thee: accept, we beseech thee, our prayers through the hours of darkness; hallow our remembrance of those who, a century ago, gathered on the Somme; bless all who keep vigil this night, across this nation and in other lands; and grant thy people comfort in time of trial; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Reverend Professor Vernon White, Canon in Residence, says:

ALMIGHTY God, King of kings and Lord of lords, hear us as we pray to thee for this nation: guide with thy eternal wisdom Elizabeth our Queen and Her Majesty's counsellors; make us strong in faith and righteousness and in the love of freedom; and grant that we may always fulfil our duty in leading the nations of the world into the paths of peace; for the honour of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Right Honourable David Cameron MP, Prime Minister, says:

O GOD, who art the author of peace and lover of concord, in knowledge of whom standeth our eternal life, whose service is perfect freedom: defend us thy humble servants in all assaults of our enemies; that we, surely trusting in thy defence, may not fear the power of any adversaries; through the might of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Precentor concludes:

Let us unite our prayers in the words our Saviour Jesus Christ taught us:

OUR Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

All stand to sing

THE HYMN

during which the Dean, together with Her Majesty The Queen and His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh, moves to the Grave of the Unknown Warrior



LEAD, kindly light, amid the encircling gloom,
lead thou me on;
the night is dark, and I am far from home,
lead thou me on.
Keep thou my feet; I do not ask to see
the distant scene; one step enough for me.

I was not ever thus, nor prayed that thou
should'st lead me on;
I loved to choose and see my path; but now
lead thou me on.
I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears,
pride ruled my will; remember not past years.

So long thy power hath blest me, sure it still
will lead me on
o'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till
the night is gone,
and with the morn those angel faces smile,
which I have loved long since, and lost awhile.

Sandon CP 495ii
C H Purday (1799–1885)

John Henry Newman (1801–1890)

All remain standing for

THE WREATH-LAYING AND FIRST WATCH

*Her Majesty The Queen places a wreath at the Grave of the Unknown Warrior.
The first Watch takes up its position at the Grave of the Unknown Warrior.*

All remain standing. Lance Sergeant Stuart Laing, 1st Battalion, The Welsh Guards, playing a bugle that was issued to the 1st Battalion, The Welsh Guards, in 1915, and used at the Battle of the Somme, sounds

THE LAST POST

Her Majesty The Queen and His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh depart the Abbey Church.

Members of the congregation are invited either to remain for the Vigil or to depart the Abbey Church in silence. Those wishing to depart are asked to remain in their seats until invited to move by the Stewards.

The Vigil is mounted, with the Watch changing every fifteen minutes, until 7.15 am.

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