

Section 361

Cemeteries

Commemoration

After the war there was a concerted effort to ensure that the sacrifices of the men who died would never be forgotten. The Imperial War Graves Commission was established to ensure that all known graves were properly registered, marked and cared for. They were also responsible for memorials to commemorate men for whom there was no known grave.

In towns and villages across the world local communities erected memorials and plaques to record the names of their local heroes. They will be found in churches, by the wayside and within cemeteries. Many schools, offices and factories also erected memorials to their workers and alumni. Very few communities do not have a memorial of some kind. In most cases only the names are recorded, but occasionally much more detail can be found, rank, army number, unit and date of death. Many churches also have Books of Remembrance.

In this section we record the major memorials of interest to the history of the Royal Berks.

The Regimental Cenotaph

The Regimental Cenotaph, commemorative of the Royal Berkshiremen who fell in the war, stands in the grounds of the Regimental Depot, in Brock Barracks at Reading. It was designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens RA and closely follows, in smaller proportions, the pattern of the National Cenotaph in Whitehall. It is surmounted by an urn; and the King's and Regimental Colours - each hung with a gold laurel wreath - are sculptured in stone on the west and east sides respectively.

The Cenotaph is carved from Portland stone; it stands 17 feet 9 inches high and the base covers a space of 18 feet by 12 feet. It was built by Messrs CE Wallis & Sons, of London using as far as possible local labour. The Colours which include the detail of Battle Honours are painted.

The figures MCMXIV+MCMXVIII are carved high on the original north side of the Cenotaph. Below the Roman dates is carved the inscription: *To the Memory of Officers, Warrant Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers, and men of The Royal Berkshire Regiment.* On the opposite side is carved the inscription: *This Memorial was erected by Past and Present Officers and Men of the Royal Berkshire Regiment, and their relations, in Memory of the 353 Officers and 6375 Other Ranks of*

the Regiment who fell in the Great War 1914-1918. The carving was carried out by Mr RE Broadbent of Fulham Rd, London.

A niche was made in the column on the original north side to contain the Roll of Honour which was placed there at the unveiling ceremony. The niche was then sealed up. A second niche and inscription were added after the Second World War. A copy of the Roll of Honour was printed and was made available to the Project team.

The original estimate of the cost was £2500 but by the time it was completed over £3000 was needed. It was unveiled by the Colonel of the Regiment, Maj Gen ET Dickenson on Tuesday September 13th 1921 and dedicated by the Archdeacon of Berkshire. In the 1980s when part of the Barracks site was sold off for housing, the Cenotaph was moved to its present position.

The Memorials in France and Belgium

6688 men of the Royal Berkshire Regiment had died. They are mainly buried in the massive war cemeteries close to where they fell. But for many there are no known graves. Often this was because after they had been temporarily buried close to where they fell the site was later fought over again and all markers lost. These men are commemorated on memorial plaques all along the western front. The more important ones for the Royal Berkshires are:

POZIERES - Commemorates the men of the 4th and 5th armies who died during the German attack of March 1918 and who have no known grave.

THIEPVAL - The largest British war memorial in the world. It lists the names of over 73,000 men who fell on the Somme between 1916 and 1918

DUD CORNER CEMETERY - Records men from the Royal Berks who fell at the Battle of Loos.

ARRAS MEMORIAL - records the names of men who fell in the Battle of Arras.

MENIN GATE MEMORIAL - this is in the form of a triumphal arch close to the centre of Ypres. It includes the names of men who fell in all three battles of Ypres. It is also notable that every evening at 8pm a bugler from the Ypres police or fire brigade still sounds the last post in a very moving ceremony of remembrance.

TYNE COT MEMORIAL - This is within the largest British War cemetery in the world. 11,871 men are buried here. But also the names of some 35,000 men who fell at the battle of Passchendaele

CAMBRAI MEMORIAL - men from the battles around Cambrai

LE TOURET - mainly men from the 1st and 2nd Battalions who fell in the fighting in early 1915

PLOEGSTEERT - mainly men from the 2nd Battalion who fell in May and September 1915.

VIS EN ARTOIS - men of all Battalions who fell during the final advance in 1918

Other Memorials on the Western Front

There are many other memorials erected either by the veterans of individual units or by private individuals. Two of particular interest are noted below.

18th DIV MEMORIAL - An obelisk giving the order of battle of the 18th Division

TRONES WOOD MEMORIAL - This consisted of a wooden cross mounted upon a 3-stepped platform. It was made and erected by the Royal Engineers after the battle on 27th August 1918 when the 53rd Brigade captured Trones Wood with very heavy losses. In 1926 a controversy arose between the owner of the land on which it stood and the British Government. Eventually the 10th Essex had it removed and brought back to England to be re-sited by the Essex Regimental Chapel at Warley [China Dragon]

War Cemeteries on the Western Front

There are 418 cemeteries on the western front containing bodies of Royal Berkshire men. Many have only a few but there are some which contain large numbers. Some of the more significant are:-

Becourt - 32 men

Bethune - 40 men

Boulogne Eastern - 44 men - mainly men who died of wounds at Boulogne Base Hospital.

Dernacourt - 40 men

Etaples - 71 men - mainly men who died of wounds at the Base Hospital there.

Faubourg D'Amiens - 35 men

Fauquissart - 42 - mainly from the 2nd Battalion

Hebuterne - 38 mainly from the 1st/4th Battalion

Laventie - 51 mainly from the 2nd/4th Battalion

Ovillers - 63 mainly from the 2nd and 5th Battalions

who fell in early July 1916.

Peronne Road - 47 almost all men of the 5th Battalion who fell in August 1918

Regina Trench - 41 mainly from the 6th Battalion who fell in February 1917.

St Sever - 100 mainly men who died of wounds at the Base Hospital at Rouen

St Venant - 39 mainly men from the 2nd/4th Battalion who fell in Spring 1918.

Tyne Cot - 34 - mainly 2nd and 2nd/4th Battalion men who fell in the latter half of 1917

Vermelles - 58 mainly 2nd and 5th Battalion men who fell in Autumn 1916

Memorials and Cemeteries in other parts of the world

Cemeteries and memorials including Royal Berkshire men can be found all over the world, including Russia, Turkey, Italy, Bulgaria and Greece where contingents fought and places like India where they died before coming to battle. There are also 247 cemeteries in the United Kingdom, mostly the burial place of men who died of wounds at home. Two in particular are noteworthy.

Karasouli (Greece) - 75 men from the 7th Battalion

Reading (England) - 25 men who died of wounds after reaching home.

Memorials in Berkshire

Many men are also commemorated in war memorials in churches across the county and in various Books of Remembrance. There are also major memorials at the following towns:-

Faringdon - The town memorial is in the centre of town

Hungerford - The names of everyone from the town who fought as well as those who fell are recorded on boards inside the Town Hall

Maidenhead - a cross opposite the public library has plaques around the base listing those who fell

Newbury - The town war memorial is in a corner of Nicholas Churchyard facing Bartholomew Street. Names of the fallen are recorded on bronze plaques

Reading - as well as the Regimental cenotaph (see above) there is also a memorial cross just outside Forbury Gardens but no names are inscribed. Reading University Memorial is at the London Road site and the names of alumni are inscribed upon a bronze plaque beneath the clock tower.

Windsor -