

ISSUE 16 - July 2025

LAST POST

Newsletter of the Leicester City, County & Rutland At Risk War Memorials Project



DEN OPFERN VON KRIEG UND GEWALTHERRSCHAFT





The Leicester City, County & Rutland At Risk War Memorials Project welcomes any information which can help or promote their work. If you have any details of any War Memorial you feel is at risk, or can help in any way, please contact us on:



Or contact the project's directors:

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www.atriskwarmemorials.co.uk



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Made possible with



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Welcome

Welcome to our summer issue no.16.
We would like to give a big
THANK YOU to all those who

have contributed to the crowd funding appeal. It is very greatly appreciated. I have emailed to all those whose addresses we have. My apologies if I have missed anyone and thanks again to all Anonymous donors.

The reason for crowd funding, is to raise a sum of money to enable us to revamp the frames upon which the memorials are mounted. They have done their job but because one can see all the timber work, it detracts from the impact of the memorials themselves and the display looks untidy.

The revamp project will cost about £11,000. We are going to apply for an NLHF/LAHS grant and the contribution to the cost which we make, adds to the credibility of our application.

I would also like to say a big thank you to Simon Whelband, who for the past seven years has tended to our website. With a full-time job and being a district councillor taking up such a huge amount of his time, he feels that he just cannot do us justice. We are extremely grateful for all he has done in particular, nursing into life our new website in 2021. Thank you, Simon and best wishes.

We are really delighted to say that Iain Smith has kindly offered to take on the task of regularly updating the website and we are exceedingly grateful to him.

To contribute to our crowd funding appeal visit: <https://gofund.me/72af0618>

Denis Kenyon
Project co-founder

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COVER IMAGE:

**Central Memorial of the
Federal Republic of Germany
to the Victims of War and
Dictatorship at Neue Wache**

NEWS

Gazebos

We are extremely grateful to Captain Bob Allen for the gift of two gazebos. One is very large at 3m x 6m, the other a standard small 3m x 3m.

It is apparent that an added attraction to an Open Day draws a considerable number of additional people and a gazebo provides not only shelter from the elements but also a focal point in the churchyard.

Botanic Gardens Open Day

We had been invited by The Friends of the Botanic Gardens to have a stand at their Plant Sale Open Day. Naturally we were keen to cement our close association to our future home.

It was an astounding day. Neither Robin nor I had time to draw breath. 54 meaningful conversations and 13 people signed up for LAST POST.

Celebration of Heritage

This event on March 22nd in the Student's Union at Leicester University attracted some 80 stallholders covering a huge range of subjects. We had two tables and it was a first outing for our two smart new personalised tablecloths with our logo and key contact details.

Also on show for the first time were the two new modern fabric backlit screen light boxes. One shows the Aylestone WMC stained glass window, the other the memorial window from St Saviour's to Lieutenant Harvey Priestman Flint MC.

Our stand looked very smart. We had a hugely successful day signing an additional 19 people to our newsletter and many other interesting and valuable conversations.

The event marked the second anniversary of the University's Heritage Hub, which brings people and organisations together to connect, explore and celebrate the rich heritage of Leicester and surrounding region.

We are grateful to Tom Bowers (pictured above right, behind the stall) and Finn Cadell for their assistance that day.



RBL event in Thurmaston

On Saturday 10th May, Robin and Denis had a stand at the RBL Club in Thurmaston.

It proved to be a most interesting day with a further 8 people signed up for LAST POST and

two leads about war memorials in possible trouble. Our stand looked splendid with the new tablecloths with our logo and also the new smaller, more easily portable light box of the Aylestone WMC window.

May Open Day and cleanup

The weather held off and the gazebo was not needed. Jack Sills of Independent Memorial Inspections, who had brought his van complete with super-heated steam boiler, had a go at cleaning the large bronze Regent Club memorial.

Well-meaning but damaging attempts

had been made in the past. After Jack had finished the steam-clean process, he applied a special sacrificial wax.

The result was a vast improvement, but still far from perfect. Too much damage had been done in the past to be cured with an hour's hard work.



LAHS History Fair, Rutland

With barely time to draw breath and deal with the previous Sunday's enquiries, we set off for Rutland Museum. While we were not as busy as the previous weekend, we still spoke to 17 serious visitors, with 9 more

signing up for the newsletter.

The event took place across both Rutland Museum and Oakham Castle, with stallholders, reenactors, and expert speakers drawing the crowd.

The fairs we have attended this year have been a great help in raising our profile. We have met so many interesting people who have expressed gratitude for what the Project is doing. Their goodwill is of great value.



Elim Pentecostal Church, Loughborough



Those with long memories will recall our "rescue" and repositioning of this wonderful triptych.

We are very grateful to Debbie Taylor and

colleagues who have researched the history of this memorial and all the men listed upon it.

This information is on our website under the "Restored to Glory" heading.

Far left: **St Peter's, Storer Road, Loughborough**
Left: **The triptych.**



New magazine for local history

Our congratulations and good wishes to Joe Hall, who so expertly sets out our newsletter **LAST POST**, for the recent launch of *Leicestershire History* magazine, of which he is the editor.

Published by the Leicestershire Archaeological & Historical Society (LAHS), the 52-page full colour magazine explores the many events, objects, people and places from the city and county's fascinating past. Joe says:

"Both the city and county, plus their many heritage-related groups and projects such as the ARWMP, can only benefit from the wider public being more knowledgeable about, and engaged with, the past all around them."

For more details visit:

www.leicestershirehistorymag.com



Left: **Front cover of issue 1, out July 2025.**
Right: **Article on Leicester's Roman curse tablets.**



A restoration story

The destruction of this window was the catalyst for Chris Stephens and I to form the At Risk War Memorials Project. Harvey's story is immensely inspiring. He was obviously a natural leader of men and a brave soldier. We knew his descendants, who were incredibly proud of his achievement. His great nephew lent us his MC and other items and kindly declared the Project open back in 2021.

What Harvey did not deserve was for some lowlife to smash through his memorial.

The abandoned church was eventually purchased by the Redeemed Church of God and to their credit, they have set about restoring it to its former glory. Below, Rachael Aldridge, a professional stained-glass creator and restorer tells us more. - Denis Kenyon

One of my main reasons for quoting to restore the many damaged windows in St Saviours was to save the 3 memorial panels sited in the WW1 Chapel.

Windows dedicated to the fallen of the First World War are a particular historic record of that time, not only recording the fallen but also the artistic and societal sentiments of that time. The subject of David fighting Goliath, as depicted in the window, was a popular theme of the time. Small acts combining to fight and defeat a larger foe.

The window, being the most damaged, was the last one in the chapel I restored, as I knew it would take some time to research, and a lot of labour.

I already had a small slide showing the extant panel from my friend, a glass researcher the late Paul Sharpling (handily he had images of all the other windows too). But this was proving rather tricky to see the detail.

Online research led me to Denis, who thankfully had rather splendid full-sized copies of all the Chapel windows as part of the At Risk War Memorials Project.

The window is made up of three panels that sit on top of one another. The top panel was fine, the middle panel had approx. 15% still existing, the bottom panel was non-existent.

The remnants of the panel had been removed from the church when we refitted the restored St George panel next to it and had been in my workshop waiting.

Rebuilding the window would take a large amount of time, so fitting the restoration in with other jobs was proving tricky...then the Pandemic solved the problem for me!

The first job in the restoration process is to record what is left, remove existing glass from the lead and use these as colour references for the restoration.

Using the dimensions of the stonework the window sits in, a full-size cartoon is then drawn showing the window as it should look. Any existing glass is especially useful for

placement.

Once satisfied the cartoon is correct, lines are drawn to signify the lead-lines between each piece of glass.

This drawing is used to cut the coloured glass sheets of the corresponding pieces.

Once all glass is cut, any painting is done onto the glass pieces and fired in the kiln. Usually the outline is first, once fired another paint layer is applied to create tone and depth. Glass paint is pigment and ground glass applied to the surface of the glass. Once fired it adheres to the glass surface.

Once all paint has been applied and fired any silver stain (the stain that 'stained glass' gets its name from) is applied to any necessary areas on the exterior side of the glass, in this case the halo around David's head. When fired a residue forms and has to be removed once cooled to reveal the yellow stain beneath.

Once all glass has been painted/stained it is ready to lead up. The glass fits into the grooves of the lead H shaped "came", cut to follow the shape and size of the glass. Once all pieces are encased in the lead the joints are soldered on both sides.

Leadlight 'cement' is then brushed into the grooves of the lead. Once the excess is cleaned off and the 'cement' dried the panel is weatherproofed, and ready to refit.

It was very satisfying to see the panels back in the Chapel in Spring 2021.

Sitting the new panels under the existing top panel meant that, for the first time, I could see the completed window in situ.

It was a privilege to restore the window for such a courageous son of Leicester, knowing that members of his family still nurture and value their connection to him and the church where he is commemorated.

My hope is that his memorial window is there for all to see for many years to come.

-Rachael Aldridge



Above from top: Remains of the broken window; finished painted pieces; completed panels

In Trust for the Future

Shiela Banyard offers a glimpse into the life of a Leicester craftsman whose skill helped commemorate the service and sacrifice of the Great War.

On Tuesday 11th November 1919 the Belgrave and District Working Men's Club and Institute in Leicester held a special gathering to welcome back members who had served in the Great War and to commemorate those who had not returned. Over 300 men sat down to supper on that first anniversary of the Armistice: the occasion was marked with speeches and an entertainment, the men who had not come home were solemnly remembered and gratitude was expressed to all who had served.

A centrepiece of the evening was the unveiling of the Club's magnificent Roll of Honour. Measuring 65" high and 45" wide in its oak frame, with an Arts and Crafts-inspired inlay of copper, colourful shields of Allied and Commonwealth countries and six vellum panels upon which the soldiers' names were inscribed, it commemorated all 485 Club members who had served. Amongst them 35 had been killed, 4 later died and 8 men were

awarded medals. In tiny letters at the lower edge of the Roll was the maker's mark: 'JSH Bates, Leicester'.

A Leicester craftsman

James Samuel Hewitt Bates was a printer, bookbinder, teacher and author who lived all his life in the city. Born to Henry and Sarah Bates (née Hewitt) of Conduit Street on 20th August 1864, James was the third child in a family of six and was baptised at Christ Church, Bow Street, on 2nd October. His father was a cigar sorter, hosier and draper, later keeping a shop and post office in Sparkenhoe Street. By 1880 James was at Leicester School of Art (as it became known), winning certificates in 1881 and 1882, and at 16 he was already working in book binding.

Whilst little is known of his training he was clearly a gifted student: when in 1917 he gave a well-received lantern slide lecture to Leicester printers on the theme of 'Artistic Bookbinding' a report detailed his prestigious background: "Mr Bates, ... with First Class



Honours, is a first prize winner and silver medallist of the City and Guilds of London Institute ..." The skills these awards represented would be recognised throughout his career.

In September 1890 James married Edith Taylor, also from Leicester, at the church of St John the Divine. Her father was an organ builder and she taught the violin. They lived initially in Melbourne Road and then in Evington Street. James' interests in this period included amateur dramatics: in March 1893 the Westbury Amateur Dramatic Society entertained employees of the Leicester Gas Company; James performed in two plays, with the press concluding: "All the performers were possessed of exceptional talent for amateurs, and the entertainment was a decided success". In January 1900 he shared in producing the Bohemian Dramatic Club's 'A

Below: **Belgrave and District Working Men's Club and Institute, 21 Checkets Road.**





James Bates was also the artist behind the memorial for the Countesthorpe Cottage Homes

Game of Bluff' and this crowded event, in aid of St Peter's Cricket Club, was deemed another success. We might wonder whether his musical wife contributed to these events too.

Recognition at home and abroad

From the late 1890s James taught bookbinding at the School of Art whilst also building up his own business. By 1909 the Belvoir Bindery, the firm of JSH Bates & Co, was at 24 Belvoir Street and James' home was now 67 Knighton Church Road. The bindery flourished, but in 1919 he was appointed a full-time teacher, describing himself in 1921 as a craft instructor at the City of Leicester School

“*The men who had not come home were solemnly remembered*”

of Arts and Crafts. He and Edith were now living at 22 South Knighton Road where they remained for the rest of their lives.

James' skill was in the public eye in May 1905 at the opening of the new City Library. For this significant event he had been commissioned to print and bind the three commemorative works presented by the Mayor to the

Library's benefactor, Andrew Carnegie. The press described the volumes' sumptuous materials and fine detail, noting Mr Bates had displayed "... much artistic taste and high-class workmanship". His work was also on show in London in 1906 and 1916 with entries in the prominent, initially annual, Exhibition which championed the Arts and Crafts Movement so influential to James' style. He explained his approach in Bookbinding for the Book-Lover, an article published in 1908, accompanied by photographic examples.

His work received further recognition when he designed the binding for the illuminated address presented to King George and Queen Mary marking their visit to Leicester in 1919, and according to a later news item he was much sought after for similar undertakings: "At one time or another, he has designed illuminated addresses for all the crowned heads of Europe".

With many institutions seeking to commemorate the Great War, James' skills were employed on other memorials besides that of the Belgrave Club. One was a Roll of Honour for Bridge Road School, unveiled there in July 1920, whilst he was also noted as the artist behind the memorial for the Countesthorpe Cottage Homes, unveiled in June 1922.

His students were fortunate in such an accomplished teacher: lecturing at Derby Training College's summer school in 1926 it

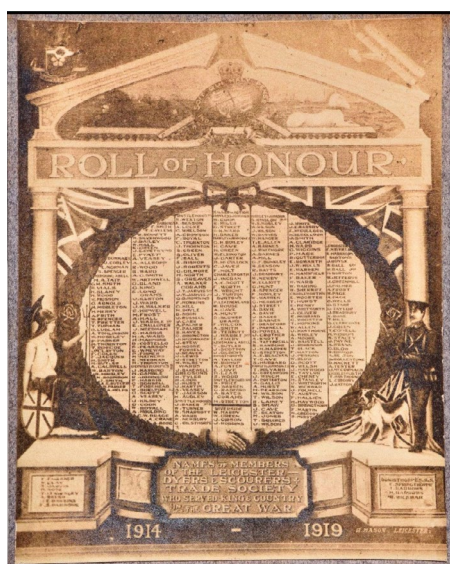
was reported that: "Mr Hewitt-Bates' students at the Leicester College of Art were recently awarded the gold medal for bookbinding at the International Exhibition of Modern Decorative Industrial Art, held in Paris". At this time too he was producing educational material for the Dryad Press in Leicester with leaflets on marbling and gold tooling and there was a larger work in 1927, Bookbinding for Schools, which ran to several editions into the 1960s.

James died on 9th April 1950, aged 85, his funeral taking place at Gilroes Crematorium on 13th April, and Edith died two years later.

Unlike the major memorials of the Great War, countless local tributes were created by people now often unknown or unsung. Their craft honoured those the war had claimed and helped successive generations remember their story, giving substance to King George's solemn words to each bereaved relative: "Let those who come after see to it that his name be not forgotten". The Roll of Honour of the Belgrave Working Men's Club is a fine reminder of James Bates' contribution to Leicester's cultural and civic life, but its significance also lies in its embodiment of the Club's intention, echoing the King, that there should be a permanent record to tell of the "valour and services" of their comrades in the Great War. James' craftsmanship was instrumental in realising this heartfelt vision.

A Union's Tribute: The Dyers and Scourers War Memorial

The Dyers & Scourers Trade Society memorial has long intrigued us. When the offer came from the University of Leicester about the opportunity to apply for an Economic & Social Research Council (ESRC) grant we accepted with alacrity. The grant was given and a student at Nottingham University, Finn Cadell applied and was duly appointed. He has carried out some deep research and uncovered a large amount of information. We are very grateful to him. The quest is now on to find it. - Denis Kenyon



In the aftermath of the Great War, the Leicester Dyers and Scourers Trade Society - a small local trade union - commissioned an unusual memorial in two forms: a postcard and an oil painting. Such commemorations by trade unions were uncommon, making this tribute all the more notable. The memorial honours 334 male members of the union who served King and country during the conflict. The central column lists 42 men who lost their lives, under the solemn heading 'killed in action.' Flanking this are three columns on either side, bearing the names of 292 men who returned home.

The memorial features a prominent central wreath, set against a backdrop of the Union Flag and flanked by Tuscan pillars. Surrounding the wreath are symbols of patriotism, including the Royal Coat of Arms above the inscription 'ROLL OF HONOUR,' flanked by a lion and a unicorn. To the right of the wreath stands a British Army soldier, rifle in hand with a fixed bayonet, accompanied by a British bulldog. On the left, Britannia is depicted, helmeted, holding a trident and a Union Flag-adorned shield. In the top right corner, a British biplane soars above the broken pediment. These traditional symbols of British patriotism were designed to evoke national pride. In the top left corner, the city of Leicester's Coat of Arms, featuring a central cinquefoil and the Latin motto *Semper Eadem* ('always the same'), reinforces a sense of local civic pride. Beneath the central wreath, clasped hands symbolise trade unionism and working-class unity. The imagery on the Roll of Honour, therefore, reflects not only British national identity but also local pride and

working-class solidarity.

A war memorial in the form of a postcard is highly unusual. Most memorials took more permanent forms - plaques, panels, statues, monuments, buildings, books, or even public gardens and scholarships. By contrast, a postcard format would have allowed the memorial to be widely distributed - sent to members of the Dyers and Scourers Union and to the families of those killed.

An oil painting version of the memorial is believed to have been identical to the postcard design, though whether it still exists remains a mystery. The last known reference to the painting appears in a 1926 article from the Leicester Mail, which described how the artwork was displayed in the bar-parlour of the Horse and Jockey Hotel at 10 Northgate Street, Leicester. There, each year on Armistice Day, union members gathered in a moving act of remembrance, decorating the painting with ornate flowers (see image bottom left). What became of the painting after that is unknown. The Horse and Jockey closed in 1956 and has since been demolished. If anyone has information about the painting's fate, they are warmly encouraged to come forward.

The memorial, in both forms, was designed by Arthur Mason, a lithographic artist, whose initial and surname, 'A. Mason, Leicester,' can be found in the bottom right of the memorial.

The memorial holds particular significance through its connection to Leicester's industrial heritage. At the outbreak of the Great War, the Leicester Dyers and Scourers Union represented around 350 workers in the dyeing and scouring trades - key components in Leicester's thriving hosiery industry. Hosiery, which involved the production of all kinds of knitwear through framework knitting - including socks, stockings, gloves, scarves, jumpers, jerseys, cardigans, and both outerwear and underwear - was Leicester's second-largest industry in the early twentieth century. By 1923, it employed over 25,000

A Union's Tribute: The Dyers and Scourer's War Memorial

people, with more than 2,000 working specifically in dyeing and scouring.

Because hosiery was a fashion-driven industry, colour and pattern were crucial, making dyeing an integral part of the manufacturing process. Scouring, the preparatory step before dyeing, involved cleaning raw fabrics, whether wool, worsted, or cotton, before they were immersed in vats of boiling dye for cotton, or baths of dye for wool and worsted. Alternatively, already-knitted hosiery items, particularly those made of cotton, could be 'piece dyed' during the hosiery 'finishing' stage. Dyers often acted as intermediaries, receiving spun yarn or finished knitwear from other firms to dye as part of

the broader hosiery production chain.

The names listed on the memorial are arranged under headings representing 14 companies where the 334 individuals were employed. All of these firms were based in Leicester and active in the dyeing and scouring trades (see table below). These companies were major employers in the city and played a key role in Leicester's growth and prosperity from the mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth century. All were based along the banks of the River Soar or the Grand Union Canal. One can now only imagine the vivid colours of the waterways, tinted by the regular discharge of dyed water from the factories into the canal and river.



Above: All of the companies names on the memorial were based along the River Soar or the Grand Union Canal. The map above shows just how tightly-packed many of these companies were.

Company name	Founded	Ceased trading	Employees*	Main trades*	Premises*
Thomas Bowmar and Sons	1796	1968	210 (1930)	Bleachers of cloth, fullers of cloth, finishers of cloth, dyers of wool	Northgate Street & Canal Side, Frog Island
W. Burton and Sons	Pre-1876	1994	70+ (1911)	Dyers and mercerisers of cotton	Western Road & 282 Belgrave Gate
T. Charlesworth and Son	Between 1863 and 1870	2007		Dyers of wool and cotton; dyers and finishers of hosiery	Castle Mill Dye Works, Western Boulevard
N. Corah and Sons	1815	1988 (acquired by Charterhall)	2,500 (1911)	Hosiery manufacturers	St Margaret's Works, Canning Street
Donisthorpe and Co.	1739	1988 (bought out by DMC)	387 (1908)	Spinners of wool and worsted, hosiery dyers and finishers	4 Frog Island & Friars Mill, Sarah Street / Bath Lane
T. Forsell and Sons	1835	c.2000 (spinning dept.)	170 (1933)	Spinners of wool and worsted	20 Frog Island & 12 Littleton Street
E. Gregson and Co.	Between 1914 and 1921	1937		Worsted spinners, dyers and finishers of hosiery, and hosiery manufacturers	Spinonia Works, Slater Street
S. Harding and Sons	1860	1982 (dyeing dept.)		Dyers and finishers of wool	Bath Lane
Hawley and Johnson	1879	c.1980		Dyers and scourers of wool and worsted	North Bridge Dye Works, 2 Woodgate & 10 Frog Island
Kershaw and Abell	1886	1940	400+ (1911)	Dyers, bleachers and finishers of hosiery	Aylestone Dye Works, Granby Road, Aylestone
Oram Bros.	Between 1877 and 1880	1952		Dyers of wool and worsted; dyers and finishers of hosiery	Bay Street Dye Works, 44 Friday Street, Leicester
Shuttlewood and Fanshawe	1899	1930	160 (1912) c.400 (1926)	Dyers of wool; dyers and finishers of hosiery	Western Road (1899-1916) then Saffron Works, Saffron Lane, Aylestone (1916-1930)
Riverside Dyeing Co.	1914 - 1916	c.1930		Dyers and scourers (general)	Greenhithe Road, Aylestone
Ward Brothers	c.1878	1931		Dyers of wool, cotton and worsted	Friday Street Dye Works, Friday Street

*c.1920

GERMANY

In the second of a series of articles, **Denis Kenyon** looks at the approach taken by other countries to commemorating their own war dead.

Given the complex history of Germany in the last two hundred years, it is not surprising that memorialisation of war dead is a very vexed subject.

The ill-conceived attack by France, launched on the German Confederation on 2nd August 1870, which effectively ended with the fall of Paris on 28th January 1871, set in train hideous consequences for the whole world. The outcome was that Prussia was reinforced as the leading power of the Confederation and under Bismarck's leadership, the German Empire was established.

The first great memorial, the Niederwald Memorial (erected 1877-1883), was a celebration of the creation of German Empire following victory over France and shows a

strong martial pride.

The militaristic attitude of Bismarck greatly influenced Kaiser Wilhelm II, who although Queen Victoria's grandson, was determined to become at least the equal in world power to the British Empire. Germany's encouragement of Austro-Hungary in their dispute with Serbia, started the chain reaction that led to the Great War and the disastrous defeat of Germany, harsh reparations, the Weimar Republic, the rise of Hitler, the Nazis and defeat again.

Hence a confusing mixture of pride and guilt.

The Great War

The German approach to memorialisation after the Great War changed dramatically.



Above: **The Niederwald Memorial, near Rüdesheim am Rhein in Hesse, shows a strong martial pride.**

The fundamental difference between British and German war memorials, was that the British wished to vindicate the appalling loss of lives. This was achieved by the group of leading architects, such as Lutyens, Blomfield and Baker, creating thought provoking and majestic memorials such as Thiepval and the Menin Gate and serenely beautiful and



impressive cemeteries such as Caberet-Rouge Cemetery. Other lesser-known architects achieved the same result in the many poignant, small war cemeteries incorporating the Stone of Remembrance and Cross of Sacrifice, with row upon row of elegant, beautiful headstones, and a carpeting of flowers, which dot the French and Flanders landscape.

The Germans, grappling with being the "losers", their focus was on loss, grief, guilt with a mix of deep sorrow, and heroic pathos.

This difference is immediately apparent on entering a German war cemetery. There is a grim, sombre, even agonised appearance of

committed by German politics and warfare, especially during the Second World War. The victims of war and tyranny deserve sympathy and remembrance. The death of every human being in war is a reminder for peace. The dead who incurred guilt also have the right to a grave. Therefore, we document all German war dead."

Part of its remit is to advocate through its work, understanding and reconciliation with former enemies and encourage young people to help with work in war cemeteries in order to make them understand the terrible consequences.

At the end of the Great War, in Flanders alone, there was a scattering of 270 small German cemeteries which in the 1950s, the VDK consolidated into three large cemeteries – Langemarck - 44,292 graves; Vlaadslo (25664) and Menen (47,864), leaving two smaller German cemeteries at Hoogdele (1314) and Zeebrugge (175). and a further four in France with over 220,000 graves.

Between the wars

The widespread feeling in Germany after the Great War ended, burdened by harsh reparations, was the humiliation of defeat brought about by "a stab in the back" by politicians back home, this gave powerful impetus to the National Socialists and in 1933 the VDK had no choice but to submit itself to the Nazi regime.

In the late 1930s the Nazis erected several memorials to the soldiers of WW1. These had a very defiant, militaristic appearance. Curiously there was also a strong movement depicting the naked Aryan male body in various attitudes.

World War 2

It is difficult to give precise figures for the number of German casualties, military and civilian in the Second World War. Official figures state 3.1 million dead and 1.2 million missing, presumed dead. But some historians put the total as high as 5.3 million.

An enormous number of German civilians

“**WW2 memorials illustrate a different message - the grim reality of defeat**”

their memorials.

By the end of the Great War, over two million German soldiers had perished (with nearly the same number again for her allies Bulgaria, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Turkey), creating the need for an organisation to oversee the construction of cemeteries and memorials to the missing.

"Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge" (VDK) or the German War Graves Commission was formed on 16th December 1919 as a private charity recognised under article 225 of The Treaty of Versailles. It is funded by a combination of state grants, private donations and street collections. It was charged with the task of locating, burying, maintaining the graves and recording the names of German service and associated civilian personnel who perished during World War 1. It had largely the same intent and purpose as the British CWGC. However, unlike the CWGC, the VDK has seen many changes since its inception due to national political turbulence around that time, together with significant political and territorial changes following WW2 and German reunification in 1991.

This struggle between pride and guilt manifests itself in wording on their website. "We know that inconceivable crimes were



Top: **Ettlingen WW1 memorial, Württemberg, Gutach, Baden.** Middle: **Sculpted by Käthe Kollwitz, Hoogdele Belgium (1867-1945)Vlaadslo West Flanders.** Bottom: **Erected in Hamburg by the Nazis in 1936 commemorating the fallen of The 76th Regiment. The inscription reads - "DEUTSCHLAND MUSS LEBEN AUCH WENN WIR STERBEN MÜSSEN" which translates as "Germany must live, even if we must die." Murg, Baden Württemberg, Sandkamp, Lower Saxony.**

were killed from bombing, forced labour, murder of Jews and other specific groups. The estimate varies from 500,000 to 2 million. Where memorials to civilians exist, they are also looked after by the VDK.

As we have seen, German World War 1 memorials vary from the agonised realism at Ettingen, to the arrogant Aryan superman erected by the Nazis several years post WW1, through to the agony of parental loss of Kätte Kollwitz.

WW2 memorials illustrate a different message – the grim reality of defeat.

From 1945 to 1946 the Wehrmacht (German Armed Forces) took over the construction of military cemeteries. The VDK was allowed to operate in the three Western zones of occupation within Germany. From 1946 the VDK created over 400 war cemeteries in the still united Germany.

This became impossible with the partition of Germany in 1949 into the German Federal Republic (FRG May 23rd) with its capital in Bonn and the German Democratic Republic (DDR/GDR 7th October) with its capital in the eastern part of a still divided Berlin.

The GDR under the control of the Soviet Union totally disassociated itself from the

defeated Nazi regime and the VDK was regarded as a revanchist organisation and totally banned. The exhumation of bodies, identification and the consolidation into existing civil or military cemeteries was left very much to the local authorities.

The Lutheran Church did make a major effort - Abteilung Gräberfürsorge – Kanzlei der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland – Berliner Stelle, (Department for the Care of Graves of the Chancellery of the Lutheran Church in Germany). They faced considerable hostility and suspicion from the avowedly atheist communist state.

On October 3rd 1990 the two Germanys were united and VDK could continue to carry out its role over the expanded territory.

An interesting footnote

Despite the animosity between the two nations, both in Britain and Germany, in the early years of conflict, enemy personnel who died on foreign soil were as a rule buried with dignity by local people who “adopted” and looked after the grave. This was particularly the case with the crew of downed aircraft.

With the advent of mass bombing of German cities this attitude turned completely.

In Great Britain there were some 4,500 Germans dead, of whom 2,700 were from WW1. Other deaths were the result of wounds received before capture and the killer “Spanish” flu.

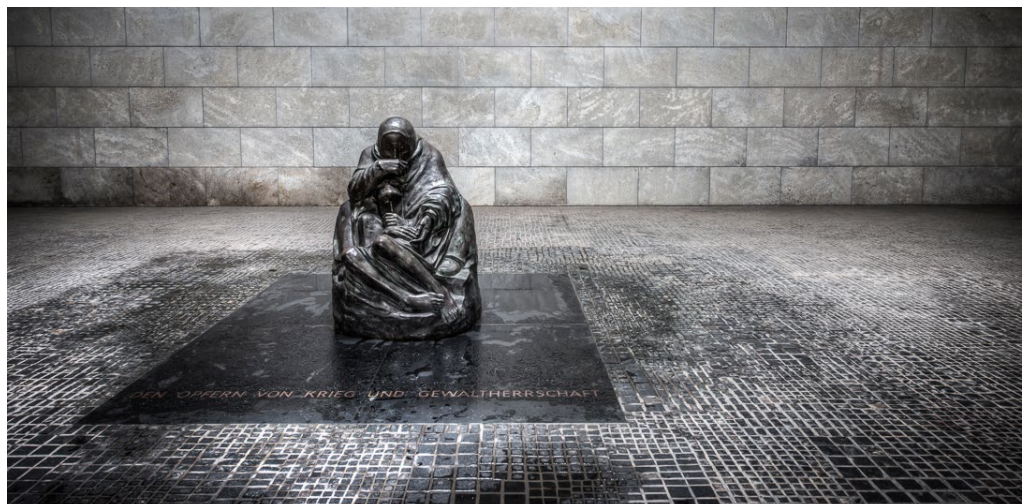
In 1959, it was agreed that any graves of German or Austrian personnel not in a CWGC cemetery would be interred centrally at a new German War Cemetery at Cannock Chase, containing nearly 5,000 graves. Neat but unrelievedly grim.

In Germany there were some 6,500 WW1 British and Commonwealth casualties buried. And in WW2 the far greater number of 20,500.

CWGC started operating in Germany immediately after WW1 ended and created four main cemeteries, Kassel, Berlin, Hamburg, and Cologne. Visually they follow the standard CWGC design with minor local differences.

Next issue will consider the American approach to memorialisation.

Images below; clockwise from top-left: **Cannock Chase German Military Cemetery; Central Memorial of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Victims of War and Dictatorship at Neue Wache; Ysselsteyn German Cemetery, Netherlands; La Cambe, Normandy.**



Cleaning of War Memorials

Jack Sills of Independent Memorials Inspections outlines the purpose of the company, and the work it undertakes to ensure memorials are kept in the best condition possible.

Independent Memorial Inspections (IMI) is a small family business established in 2003, to undertake memorial headstone safety inspections which we still do. In 2005 we expanded into and specialised in cleaning War Memorials. We are based in the Midlands but offer our services all over the UK from Scotland to Kent, Anglesey to Norfolk and down to Devon.

We only use methods approved by the War Memorial Trust and also Heritage England, namely the use of super-heated steam (DOFF style system), Lime Pointing, specialist wax applications to Bronze fixtures, application of "Smartwater" supplied by In Memoriam 2014 (helping in recovery of any stolen fixtures) suitable "Sheltercoat" where appropriate. There are also other options we provide, such as painting engraved/raised letters and replacing lost lead lettering.

Since 2005 we have cleaned hundreds of War Memorials, as well as other unusual features – a bridge, water fountains, market crosses, cycling monuments etc.

Most of the memorials we clean are made of stone - granite, limestone or sandstone, but we also clean some memorials made from wood, concrete, bronze, slate and other materials.

Where appropriate we re-point joints using only Lime Mortar, where the original pointing has failed and can be removed by hand, at no point is mechanical equipment used.

While we are not restorationists, we do conserve the memorials ensuring the memorials are maintained, safe and show the life they have lived over the last 100+ years. A report is given for each memorial we work on, showing what we have done and any future

works that may be required.

All our work is undertaken professionally, with respect and care as if the memorial was our own with the names of our loved ones.

Top right and right: **Metal memorial before and after cleaning.** Below and bottom: **Stone names and base in the process of being cleaned.**



We have a close mutual working relationship with the Leicester & Rutland Branch The Western Front Association and are happy to advertise their meetings and they, likewise ours.

*Venue: The Council Chamber, Braunstone Town Council,
Braunstone Civic Centre, Kingsway, Braunstone Town,
LEICESTER LE3 2PP*

21 July - Jonathan Dale
Masters of the Tripehound

18 August - Jenny Wilkinson
The Holy Trinity War Memorial Revisited

15 Sept - Maj. (Retd) Phil Watson
12th Lancers at Dunkirk, 1940

10 Oct - Mark Gamble
Man of Colour

17 Nov - TBA
TBA

15 December - David Humberston
Sidney's war

Open days 2025

11am - 4pm

Saturday 26 July talks by Robin Jenkins.

12 noon: "It was a bomb business" *The Leicestershire Territorials' assault on the Hohenzollern Redoubt 13th October 1915.*

2pm: "I should be glad to know how he died" *Identifying the dead of the Hohenzollern Redoubt.*

Saturday 13 September*

Sunday 14 September*

Saturday 15 November talk TBA

Find us at:

**Chancel, (rear of) All Saint's Church,
Highcross Street, Leicester LE1 4PH.**

The Project is located to the rear of All Saints Church, and can be found by following the red arrow from the pavement on Highcross Street off Vaughan Way (see map, right). Parking is available in the John Lewis Multi-story car park nearby.



*Heritage Open Days