The Dean of Westminster

The Dean of Westminster is the head of the chapter at Westminster Abbey. Due to the Abbey's status as a Royal Peculiar, the dean answers directly to the Queen. Initially, the office was a successor to that of abbot of Westminster, and was for the first 10 years’ cathedral dean for the Diocese of Westminster. From 1911 to 1925 the Dean of Westminster was Herbert Ryle.

He was born in Onslow Square, South Kensington, London, on 25 May 1856. After attending school at Hill House, in Wadhurst, Sussex, Ryle went to Eton College in 1868. In 1875 he won the Newcastle scholarship, and in the same year he proceeded to King's College, Cambridge. Between 1879 and 1881, he won every distinction open at Cambridge to students of theology, including a first class in the theological tripos. In December 1900 Ryle was appointed Bishop of Exeter, being consecrated at Westminster Abbey in January 1901. He became Bishop of Winchester in the spring of 1903. In December 1910 Ryle was appointed Dean of Westminster. He was installed in Westminster Abbey in April 1911. Under his guidance and with the help of his advisers, the dignity of the Abbey services was notably increased. During World War I Ryle used to take the midday service of intercession personally, and he was responsible for the many special services held in wartime.

The idea of a Tomb of the Unknown Warrior was first conceived in 1916 by the Reverend David Railton, who, while serving as an army chaplain on the Western Front, had seen a grave marked by a rough cross, which bore the pencil-written legend 'An Unknown British Soldier'. He wrote to Dean Ryle in 1920 proposing that an unidentified British soldier from the battlefields in France be buried with due ceremony in Westminster Abbey "amongst the kings" to represent the many hundreds of thousands of Empire dead. The idea was strongly supported by Ryle and the then Prime Minister Lloyd George. There was initial opposition from King George V (who feared that such a ceremony would reopen the wounds of a recently concluded war) and others but a surge of emotional support from the great number of bereaved families ensured its adoption. The inscription on the tomb was composed by Ryle.

Herbert Edward Ryle died on 20 August 1925 and his grave is in the centre of the nave of Westminster Abbey, near the grave of the Unknown Warrior.

<http://www.westminster-abbey.org/our-history/people/herbert-edward-ryle>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herbert\_Edward\_Ryle