

## THE BRITISH UNKNOWN SOLDIER : project

---

The tomb of the Unknown soldier typically contain the remains of a dead soldier who is unidentified. The anonymity of the entombed soldier is the key symbolism of the monument; it could be the tomb of anyone who fell in service of the nation, and therefore serves as a monument symbolizing all of the sacrifices.

The tomb that is taken in analysis in the texts is the tomb of the Unknown Soldier located in Westminster Abbey in London.

The idea of a Tomb of the British Unknown Soldier 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 the Dean of Westminster 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 the Dean and the then Prime Minister David Lloyd George.

The history of the Unknown Soldier is divided into chronological stages:

- on November 7, 1920 : four bodies from four different battlefields were transported to St. Pol in Northern France; at random, the general L.J. Wyatt selected one of bodies to become the Unknown Soldier of the Great War.
- November 8, 1920 : the body was escorted under a French honor guard to Boulogne
- November 9, 1920: the plain coffin was placed inside another that had been constructed of oak from Hampton Court, then sent over from England
- November 11, 1920: six black horses drew the Unknown Soldier through London's crowd-lined streets. The Unknown Soldier was brought in Westminster Abbey.
- October 17, 1921: American General John J. Pershing presented the Medal of Honor to the Unknown Soldier of Great Britain.
- November 11, 1921: It was flanked a plaque near the tomb of the Unknown Soldier

In 2011, the Duchess of Cambridge followed the poignant royal tradition of having her wedding bouquet left at the grave.

The late Queen Mother began this when her posy was left at the grave in 1923 after her wedding to the Duke of York, later George VI.

She laid the bouquet in tribute to her older brother Fergus Bowes-Lyon who was killed at the Battle of Loos in 1915 aged 26. His burial place was only found after her death in 2002.

The biblical text on the tomb is taken from 2 Chronicles 24:16, which says: 'They buried him among the kings, because he had done good toward God and toward his house'.

Today the Grave of the Unknown Warrior is one of the most famous of the Abbey's memorials. Visiting Heads of State include in their itinerary a wreath laying at the grave.