

# THE WAR MEMORIAL

**Why and where borns the funeral rite? How remember the death of a person or a group of people? What is a war memorial? What is its purpose?**

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The **funeral ritual** is a public, traditional and symbolic means of expressing our beliefs, thoughts and feelings about the death of someone. This ritual helps us acknowledge the reality of the death, gives testimony to the life of the deceased, encourages the expression of grief in a way consistent with the culture's values, provides support to mourners, allows for the embracing of faith and beliefs about life and death, and offers continuity and hope for the living.

Many people live the pain of the death of someone so intense and exhausting; only a few people manage to overcome it and go on to find continued meaning in life.

They succeed in going toward the pain because they remember the deceased meaning to understand the meaning of death and to accept it.

For this reason funeral rituals are very important: funeral ceremonies can serve as wonderful points of departure for "head understanding" of the death. When we contact the funeral home, set a time for the service, plan the ceremony, view the body, perhaps even choose clothing and jewelry for the body, we cannot avoid acknowledging that the person has died.

At traditional funerals, the eulogy attempts to highlight the major events in the life of the deceased and the characteristics that he or she most prominently displayed. This is helpful to mourners, for it tends to prompt more intimate, individualized memories. Moreover, the sharing of memories at the funeral affirms the worth we have placed on the person who died, legitimizing our pain. This teaches us about the dead person's life apart from ours and allows us glimpses into that life that we may cherish forever. Then the funerals allow to express our painful thoughts and feelings.

After the ceremony there is the need to have a **symbol** or an object that reminds the deceased and that dispels his memory: a **grave**.

Usually, as mentioned before, it recognizes the grave a place to remember the dead; when the deceased to remember are a group of people or a disaster, usually using a tomb or a monument that has the only purpose symbolic.

This is precisely the case of a **war memorial**: a building (monument, statue, edifice, tragedy) to celebrate a war or victory to commemorate those who died or were injured in a war.

Behind the war memorials there is a story that begins in 1438. In this year it was built the oldest war memorial in the United Kingdom is Oxford University's All Souls College itself to pray for those killed in the long wars with France.

The first war memorials in Europe were for the Franco-Prussian War (1870–71) to have rank-and-file soldiers commemorated by name. Every soldier that was killed was granted a permanent resting-place as part of the terms of the Treaty of Frankfurt (1871).

War memorials can differ significantly in type and composition:

- Many war memorials often take the form of a traditional monument or statue, while others consist of entire buildings, often containing a museum, while yet others are simple plaques.
- War memorials can take a variety of other forms, including, but not limited to, commemorative gardens, eternal flames, urban plazas, fountains and/or pools of water, military equipment, and parks.
- War memorials often serve as a meeting place for commemorative services. As such, they

are often found near the centre of town, or contained in a park or plaza to allow easy public access.

- Many war memorials bear plaques listing the names of those that died in battle.
- Some war memorials are dedicated to a specific battle, while others are more general in nature and bear inscriptions listing various theatres of war.
- Many war memorials have epitaphs relating to the unit, battle or war they commemorate.

Even animals, often accompanying the soldiers in war, are the protagonists of the war memorials: many thousands of animals served with the military during the First World War both on the battlefields and behind the lines in support. In addition to the horses employed by the mounted military units, horses, mules, donkeys were requisitioned and taken into the theatres of war to carry ammunition, pull guns and wagons. Some 8 million horses, mules and donkeys died in the First World War while serving with the British and Dominion Forces. When horsepower was limited due to shortages of horses and mules, oxen were used to pull guns and wagons. Dogs were used to patrol, to seek out wounded men, search for bombs or mines, they carried medical equipment and messages. Thousands of pigeons were used to carry messages. Canaries were used by the military tunnelers. In the Middle Eastern theatres of war camels were used by the military.

A monument to the role played by animals in war and the sacrifice that so many thousands of them made is to be found in central London at Brook Gate, Park Lane; this monument was built thanks to the donation of many people and it is a powerful and moving tribute to all the animals that served, suffered and died alongside the British, Commonwealth and Allied forces in the wars and conflicts of the 20th century.

The Great War (the First World War) of 1914-1918 was so terrible and inflicted such large numbers of casualties on all sides that when it was over it was believed by many to be “The War to end All Wars”. By the end of four years of fighting from August 1914 to November 1918 many thousands of families around the world were affected by the tragedy of the wounding or loss of one of their own.

Many war memorial was built in memory of the war dead; at first the main intent of war memorials is not to glorify war, but to honor those who have died; this was the subject of controversy: many families of the fallen believed inopportune some memorials praising soldiers as heroes; only in modern times war memorial symbolized the sentence of the death like in France where set up pacifist war memorials.

Instead of commemorating the glorious dead, these memorials denounce war with figures of grieving widows and children rather than soldiers. Such memorials provoked anger among veterans and the military in general. The most famous is at Gentioux-Pigerolles in the department of Creuse. Below the column which lists the name of the fallen stands an orphan in bronze pointing to an inscription 'Maudite soit la guerre' (Cursed be war).

There seems to be no exact equivalent form of a pacifist memorial within the United Kingdom but evidently sentiments were in many cases identical. Thus, and although it seems that this has never been generally recognized, it can be argued that there was throughout the United Kingdom a construction of war memorials with reference to the concept of peace.

In the UK there are many and various war memorials :

- **The “wild” war memorial : “NATIONAL MEMORIAL ARBORETUM”**

It was created in 1997 in the centre of England at Alrewas near Lichfield in Staffordshire. It is a living tribute to the personal sacrifices made by the armed and civil services of the United Kingdom.

It is located in the heart of England. It is a living memorial of trees and plants dedicated to the concept of Remembrance. 50,000 trees have been planted and as each tree matures it will provide a variety of woodland areas and open grass spaces.

The aim of this living memorial is to offer families and friends of those who have made the ultimate sacrifice for their country a green and pleasant land to remember their loved ones.

- **The “technological” war memorial : “THE LOST GENERATION”**

This project is based at the Imperial War Museum London. It is a project to list and locate more than 100,000 war memorials in the United Kingdom from all conflicts, ranging from a small plaque on the wall to a large town memorial.

Using the online search facility provided by the War Memorials Register it is possible to search for a memorial using a simple or an advanced search. The results provide helpful information about the current location of the memorial by building and street plus an Ordnance Survey map reference. You can also find out information relating to whether it was moved from a previous location and the reason why. The search result will show what type of memorial it is and what it is made of. A general inscription on the memorial will be provided in the search result, with the number of those commemorated, whether they returned or died, and the nature of the details inscribed for each of those individuals, for example whether they are named by surnames and ordered alphabetically. Information relating to the memorial that is provided by the online search includes:

- Total names on memorial
- Number of those who served and returned
- Number of those who died
- Whether it is an exact count
- How the names are ordered
- The information also listed on the memorial

- **War Memorials Trust : “IN MEMORIAM 2014 WEBSITE”**

The War Memorials Trust is a charity working to preserve and care for over 100,000 war memorials located across the United Kingdom.

War Memorials Trust works for the protection and conservation of war memorials in the UK. This site provides advice and information to anyone as well as running grant schemes for the repair and conservation of war memorials. The website provides a range of resources to help to discover more about war memorials and their preservation.

Any war memorial or tomb or other forms of memory helps to not forget, to condemn the war and to keep alive the memory of the dead.

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