Reverend David Railton first considered the concept of the Unknown Warrior on the battlefield.

The idea came to him in the early part of 1916 after returning from the line after dusk to a billet at Erkingham near Armentieres. There was a small garden at the back of the billet and in that garden there was a grave. At the head of the grave stood a white cross of wood on which was written in deep black pencilled letters: “An Unknown Soldier of The Black Watch”.

David Railton wrote a letter to Field Marshall Douglas Haig during the war to express the idea of

a representative dead of the war in England but the letter was not acknowledged by Haig. In August 1920 he wrote a letter to Dean Ryle of Westminster Abbey with the suggestion that an unknown soldier should be buried in the Abbey.

The idea impressed Dean Ryle. Someone in the Church of England disappointed that the Cenotaph in Whitehall was not a Christian memorial to the war dead. The French were also planning to bury an unknown soldier at the Arc de Triomphe. The Prime Minister, David Lloyd George was enthusiastic and a committee led by the Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon, agreed the proposal quickly. The arrangements were made to bury an unknown soldier in the Abbey.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. So the propose 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, 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. In spite of Railton (a minority figure) Ryle took all merits because of his authority.

The role of the king is important in the ritual: The King, his three sons, members of the Royal Family and Ministers of State followed the coffin of the Unknown Soldier through the streets to the north entrance of Westminster Abbey. At the west end of the Nave in Westminster Abbey the Unknown Soldier was laid to rest. Following the hymn "Lead Kindly Light", King George V sprinkled soil from the battlefield at Ypres . It is important to say that the consent of King George V has been fundamental. The burying ritual was a National event and the figure of the king was fundamental.