***KEY FIGURES IN THE HISTORY AND RITUAL OF THE BRITISH UNKNOWN SOLDIER***

***David Railton***

David Railton was born on 13 November 1884 in London, he was a clergyman and he is known to be the originator of the idea of the Unknown Soldier’s tomb. The Railtons were a Scottish family and David Railton’s father George Scott Railton work together General William Booth in the founding of the Salvation Army. Educated in Oxford and Liverpool, David joined the Church of England in 1908: when the First World War broke out he was a curate in Folkestone and he would have seen hundreds of thousands of soldiers leaving the town for the Western Front, he would have become a military chaplain to the 2nd Battalion of the Hon. Artillery Company, so he saw the war trough his eyes. He has been awarded the Military Cross for an important military action: he saved two comrades under fire of a heavy machinegun.

In 1916 in France, he found a makeshift grave which brings a particular inscription on a wooden cross: An Unknown British Soldier. It was the first step of the birth of the war memorial in Westminster Abbey. Railton had the idea to build a symbolic burial in Great Britain to commemorate the men who died in the Great War without a name and for the realization of the project he convinced the most important British authorities. He couldn’t know that his project will be concretized in one of the most important British war memorials.

When the war finished he became vicar of Margate and in 1920, two years after the end of the First World War, he suggested Herbert Ryle, Dean of Westminster, the construction of a memorial into the abbey which would have represented the WW1’s casualties without identification. During the year, king George V, the Parliament and the government approved the idea, so the dream of David Railton took place.

David Railton sadly died in a train on 13 June 1955.

***Sources***

The documents that have been used as sources are arranged into paragraphs, each of them tells a step of the chaplain’s history and his connection with the Unknown Soldier’s memorial. They are informative texts which use a formal language, so the ideal reader is someone interested in history who wants to provide information about characters connected with the construction of the Westminster Abbey’s war memorial.