

# The Unknown Soldier



*They shall grow not old,  
as we that are left grow old;  
Age shall not weary them,  
nor the years condemn.*

*At the going down of the sun  
and in the morning*

*We will remember them.*

*Lest we forget.*



**This year marks the centenary of the end of the First World War which ended on 11 November 1918.**

At this time 100 years ago, The Great War saw more than 41 Million military and civilian casualties : there were over 18 million deaths and 23 million wounded, ranking it among the deadliest conflicts in human history.

During the First World War, the British and French armies jointly decided to bury soldiers themselves. In the UK, a British Army chaplain saw a grave marked with a simple cross & written in pencil were the words 'An Unknown British Soldier'. He suggested (together with the French in their own country) the creation of a symbolic funeral and burial of an 'Unknown Warrior', he felt that the grave should in the UK and include a national monument in the form of a headstone. The idea received the support of the Dean of Westminster, the Prime Minister David Lloyd George, and later King George V. At the same time, a similar concern grew in France. In November 1916, a local officer of Le Souvenir français proposed the idea of burying 'an ignored soldier' in the Panthéon. A formal bill was presented in Parliament in November 1918 and the decision was voted into law in September 1919.

The United Kingdom and France conducted services connected with their 'monumental' graves on Armistice Day 1920. In the UK, the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior was created at Westminster Abbey, while in France La Tombe du Soldat Inconnu was placed in the Arc de Triomphe.

Statistics show that 587,989 British soldiers have been buried in named graves, 526,816 do not have known graves but have been listed on the memorial to the missing. 187,861 of these have been buried but not identified by name & 338,955 have not been buried at all, or lost at sea.



La Tombe du Soldat Inconnu  
L'Arc de Triomphe, Paris

The Tomb of the Unknown Warrior  
Westminster Abbey, London



The idea of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier soon spread and within a few years similar tombs were erected in many countries around the world.

The American Tomb of the Unknown Soldier is located in Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia. The tomb was unveiled in November 11, 1921. The monument is constantly guarded, every day of the year by soldiers of the United States Army. It is regarded the highest honour to serve as a Tomb Guard. When watching over the tomb, the Tomb Guards follow a very elaborate ritual that involves marching down a precise path, waiting, shifting weapon to the other shoulder, and then marching back down the same path, all carried out precisely to the second.



There is a special place in Belgium where German soldiers lost at war can be remembered – The Langemark German Military Cemetery in the Flanders region of the country.



This cemetery began with a small group of German graves in 1915. Between 1916 and 1918 the burials at Langemark were increased by order of the German military directorate in Ghent. During the war the village was known by the spelling of Langemarck. In later times the “c” in the name was dropped.

In the mid-1920s the cemeteries in Flanders were being renovated and this cemetery became ‘Langemarck – Nord’ where 10,143 were buried because of the war. Later works were carried

out in 1930 and oak trees were planted (national tree of Germany) and the cemetery was officially inaugurated in July 1932. The cemetery is now known as 'Langemark' cemetery.

Emil Krieger, the Munich Sculptor Professor was inspired by a photograph taken in 1918 of soldiers mourning at a grave of a comrade, and built a bronze statue of the four figures.

Photograph  
from the  
German  
Press in  
1918.



The bronze  
sculpture  
of four  
figures by  
Emil  
Krieger.

It was decided that all of the thousands of unidentified German dead being discovered in the fields and isolated burial sites during the clearance of the battlefields would be taken to Langemark for interment. This was because there was room in the cemetery to create a mass grave for a large number of casualties. The grave site would be called the 'Kameraden Grab', the Comrades Grave. Names of some of the 16,940 German soldiers identified as having been exhumed and reinterred in the Kameraden Grab and now inscribed on bronze tablets.





