

2nd Talk

The Dover War Memorial Project

A talk by Marilyn Stephenson-Knight and Simon Chambers

reported by Alan Lee

Marilyn and Simon are co-founders of the Dover War Memorial Project (DWMP). They have seen it grow from its inception in 2005 to the wide ranging and inspiring project that it is today. They are also justly proud of the virtual memorial they have helped to create on the internet.

Dover's War Memorial commemorates members of the armed forces who gave their life in the Great War of 1914-18. At present there are over 800 names recorded here.

As well those named on the War Memorial there are over 400 people commemorated in the *"Book of Remembrance"* held in Dover Museum. This remembers those who died in the Second World War.

It was realised that neither of these memorials are complete so Dover Town Council has agreed that every three years they will add names of those who have previously been omitted. The first of these updates occurred on Armistice Day 2009. One of the names added was Roy Sutton, brother of our vice-president Terry Sutton.



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There are requests for 22 names to be added in November 2012, the next amendment date. One is William Champion who survived WWI only to be killed by a shell whilst in London Road in

1944. Just before his daughter died she asked how his name could be included. "This is the last thing I can do for my darling brother," she said.

Marilyn stated, "That promise will be kept. His name will be put forward." If you know of any Dovorian who fell and you think that he/she should be included please let the Dover War Memorial Project know.

Marilyn has three relatives named on Dover's memorial. One died in France in 1917 another one of the earliest casualties died aboard HMS Cressy in September 1914. These made Marilyn think about others on the memorial.

Over the last six years along with Simon and aided by other volunteers working worldwide a large number of these names have been researched. Many of these people are not buried in Dover but where they fell throughout the world.

There are many people not recorded on either memorial but are commemorated on Parish memorials. There are also many plaques and tablets in churches, schools and colleges that tell of former pupils or members of their congregations who gave their lives in the fight for freedom.

Dover's Virtual Memorial records over 2,500 people who lived or were born in the town and lost their lives as a result of war. Many of them are not recorded elsewhere. On the Dover War Memorial Project website you can find part of the history of Christmas. It is said that the first Yule Log cake in Dover, and possibly anywhere, was created by George Bates. He worked in Holmes Morris the bakers and became one of the casualties of the Great War. You will also find a selection of ghost stories linked to those who perished during the hostilities.

To keep alive memories of our fallen various exhibitions have been staged. The latest *"Wee Willie"* is in the library. William Galbraith was the model for the figure and lived in Dunfermline. His son has since confirmed that William and his brothers all came safely home after the Great War.

The project runs educational programmes for schools. Completed so far are *"Walter Tull"*, *"The Unknown Warrior"* and *"Not Forgotten"*. All three have been a resounding success. Schools and colleges involved carry out their own projects and research. One of highlights from St Martin's school was the staging of a musical tribute. Written by a professional composer this was held on

the 90th anniversary of the return of the Unknown Warrior through Dover.

Through this project many people have discovered the names and details of relatives who fell during worldwide conflicts. One of the casualties studied was "Pom Pom" Whiting a former Player with Chelsea Football Club. This year for the first time his granddaughter Diane Parson laid a wreath at the Dover Society's plaque for the Unknown Warrior. It was only two months before that Diane and her sister Julia discovered his name and that he was a soccer player.

On November 21st 1941 James Wilkieson was killed in Libya. He had married his wife Ada two years before at Christ Church - sadly now gone. It was only later his parents realised that his brother Andrew had been killed in the same battle.

This year the project gained the Dover Civic Award and a Kent County Award from the Royal British Legion. Lord Boyce became a patron of the DWMP and joined the first, Dame Vera Lynn.

Marilyn ended her talk with the poignant words "we will - and we do - remember them".

The Dover War Memorial Project is a voluntary organisation which is part funded by Marilyn and Simon. To cover the remainder of the costs they rely on donations and grants from groups and individuals. Dover Town Council helped get the project off the ground with a generous donation. If you would like to help with research or with a donation then please contact the Dover War Memorial Project.