

*Dear Friends,*

*As there will be services on the TV and radio for Remembrance, plus I have put together a video service, the link for which will be on the Circuit website by, I trust, Saturday evening, I thought that I would just send this account out. David Kendall is a member at Wimborne Methodist Church. **Below are the written memories of David's father, a padre, and the story of the Unknown Soldier:***

"I must now proceed to tell the story of 'The Unknown Warrior'. It has been stated that this is the greatest mystery of the First World War. I have been interviewed from time to time by the correspondents of nearly all our great national newspapers, asking me if I knew who he was, could I say where he was actually found, who was responsible for the idea? All I can say was that he was chosen from the countless unnamed dead in France, and Flanders, that the nation might honour him, and this without distinction of rank, birth or service. There were in these two countries many thousands of graves of men whose bodies had been found, but, with all our endeavours, could not be identified - so over their crosses we inscribed 'Unknown British Soldier'. Here then is my story, told because of the younger generation, who go to see the tomb in Westminster Abbey and do not know how he was chosen and brought home.

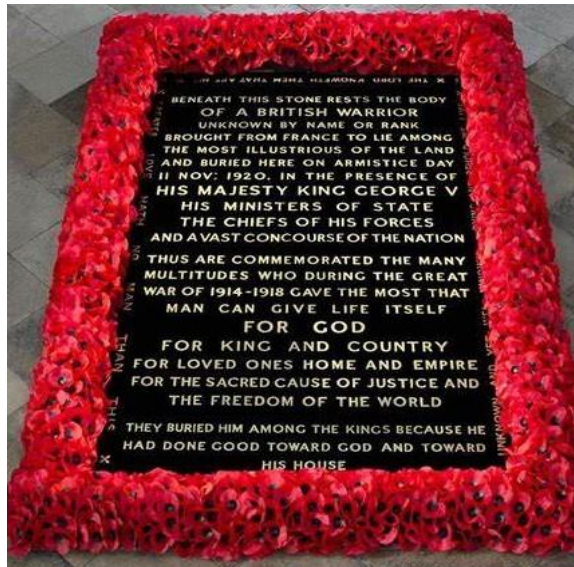
Early in November 1920, we received orders from headquarters, for the exhumation of a certain number of bodies of unknown men. No one - and this is very important - was to know from which district a body had been taken. The graves which were opened in all the theatres of war were marked only by a cross which stated that an unknown warrior lay there. If the regiment or division in which the man had served were specified - and there were cases in which a man may not have been identified, but his regiment or battalion was known - the grave was untouched. In all some six bodies were finally taken to the headquarters at St Pol, near Arras. Those who awaited the bodies at St Pol did not even know from where they had come. The six coffins were placed in a hut, and each covered with a Union flag. All night they rested on trestles, with nothing to distinguish one from the other. The door of the hut was locked and sentries posted outside. In the morning a general entered the hut. He placed his hand on one of the flag-shrouded coffins, and the body therein became 'The Unknown Warrior'. The five other coffins were taken from the hut and reverently reburied. The one selected to receive the tribute of the Empire was conveyed to Boulogne and embarked there on the British destroyer Verdun, to be brought to England. On the lid of the coffin, as it was taken on board, was placed a rare and valuable sword taken from the private collection of King George V. Out in the mists, six British destroyers were waiting to escort the Verdun to Dover. They formed up three ahead, three astern, and course was shaped for England. As the vessels slipped silently into Dover Harbour, a Field Marshal's salute of nineteen guns was fired.

Of course, one might ask from what cemetery the bodies were collected! That I cannot answer, and the knowledge I have will die with me. I suppose if the location was made known, there would be a flood of cameramen taking photographs of the cemeteries and saying, "From here 'The Unknown Warrior' was chosen," but apart from that, so great are the changes in the cemeteries over the years that nature comes to the rescue, and destroys all identification marks. No! The location can never be revealed, but again I stress this great fact - the soldier lying in Westminster Abbey is British and unknown. He may have come from some little village or some city in this land, and he may be the son of a working man or of a rich man: 'Unknown to man but known to God'.

On the morning of the embarkation ceremony, we motored from Kip-Cot Camp, Poperinghe, to Boulogne. We began the journey at Sam. It was a cold and frosty morning. Arriving at the starting point, we were marshalled into our places. I shall never forget the overwhelming solemnity of the procession. In it was Marshal Foch, French and Belgian officers of all ranks and ourselves of the British Army — generals, colonels, captains and myself - the only Padre to represent the many thousands of chaplains who had served in France and Flanders. The coffin, covered with the Union flag, and carried by stalwart non-commissioned officers, was preceded by the bands of British, French and Belgian regiments. The streets through which the cortege passed, were packed with thousands of people, and so we passed on to the embarkation wharf. Home, they were taking this warrior dead, and all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side. I could, as I stood on the wharf watching the coffin being carried onto the cruiser, visualise the journey over the Straits of Dover and on to London's Whitehall where the massed crowds gathered round the veiled Cenotaph. I could also see the King with the Prince of Wales, standing beside the coffin on the gun carriage. What must have been the emotion as the King touched a button and the two flags fell, revealing the Cenotaph, followed by the two-minute silence which is observed, to this day, on Remembrance Sunday.

I could, again in my imagination, see the gun carriage make its way from Whitehall, with Earl Haig, Lord Byng, Lord French, Earl Beatty, Air Marshal Sir Hugh Trenchard as the pall-bearers, and then on to Westminster Abbey, filled with the great ones of this and other lands, and the mothers and fathers and wives of so many loved ones who had fought the fight and entered into rest.

Each Remembrance Day I visit the little crosses in the abbey grounds and stand by the tomb on which I read:"



BENEATH THIS STONE RESTS THE BODY  
OF A BRITISH WARRIOR  
UNKNOWN BY NAME OR RANK  
BROUGHT FROM FRANCE TO LIE AMONG  
THE MOST ILLUSTRIOUS OF THE LAND  
AND BURIED HERE ON ARMISTICE DAY  
11 NOV: 1920. IN THE PRESENCE OF  
HIS MAJESTY KING GEORGE V HIS MINISTERS OF STATE  
THE CHIEFS OF HIS FORCES  
AND A VAST CONCOURSE OF THE NATION  
THESE ARE COMMEMORATED THE MANY  
MULTITUDES WHO DURING THE GREAT  
WAR OF 1914-1918 GAVE THE MOST  
THAT MAN CAN GIVE - LIFE ITSELF  
FOR GOD  
FOR KING AND COUNTRY  
FOR LOVED ONES, HOME AND EMPIRE  
FOR THE SACRED CAUSE OF JUSTICE AND  
THE FREEDOM OF THE WORLD  
THEY BURIED HIM AMONG THE KINGS BECAUSE HE  
HAD DONE GOOD TOWARD GOD AND TOWARD  
HIS HOUSE

*Thanks to David for sharing this account from 100 years ago this week. It might evoke to our thoughts the anonymous servants of Christ there have been down the years. Those nameless people who have done so much behind the scenes. In our churches and in the world. The unidentified people who have witnessed for God's Kingdom. Including those who continue to do so much for the good of others without being recognised and thanked. They go without praise and so often without acknowledgement. As you read this, you might recall times when your service has gone un-noticed or unrewarded, therefore you too join the ranks of the anonymous servants. Nevertheless, ultimately, they and you are acclaimed and known by God.*

*Every Blessing,*

*Pauline*