
War Memorials in Bromley

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Beckenham A.F.S. War Memorial

**St. John's the Baptist Church, Layhams Road, West Wickham, Kent,
BR4 9HN.**

This war memorial commemorates the Coney Hall Auxiliary Fire Service Crew who lost their lives in the line of duty during the London bombings in 1941. The London Fire Brigade, under intense pressure from the many fires caused by enemy bombing, had frequently to call in reinforcements from outlying areas. It was on one such occasion on 19th March at West Ham that five Coney Hall Auxiliary Fire Service (AFS) men lost their lives. They comprised the crew of a pump, one of a convoy on the way to a fire at Silvertown, which was obliterated in a land-mine explosion in Plaistow Road.

Wesley Drew, Stanley Short, Frederick Moore, Dennis Fitzgerald and Leslie Palmer were buried in this one grave in St John's the Baptist Churchyard, West Wickham, Kent. A simple wooden cross on a brick plinth was erected in 1942 and unveiled by the Mayor of Beckenham, Alderman W.J. Sampson J.P. on Easter Sunday 5th April 1942 with the dedication by the Rector, the Rev. Shaw Page.

Plans were made as early as June 1947 for a more permanent memorial but due to many difficulties in a post war Britain, with both material and money in very short supply a new memorial was not in place until October 1953. In fact it may not have been completed by that time except the memorial was badly damaged by a falling tree!

The new memorial was unveiled on Sunday 25th October 1953 by the Mayor of Beckenham, Alderman W.J. Sampson J.P. By coincidence the same man who had unveiled the temporary war time memorial 10 years earlier was now serving another year as Mayor. The dedication was by the Rector of St. John the Baptist the Rev. John Hough.

While wartime comrades stood guard at the corners with heads bowed, Divisional Officer C.T. Davis, Kent Fire Brigade laid a wreath on behalf of the Fire Service.

John Drew aged about 13 years also placed a wreath in memory of his father, one of the AFS fire-fighters killed in 1941.

Next to the memorial is the double grave of two further AFS fire-fighters killed exactly a month later. Ernest Beadle and Norman Mountjoy were among 33 AFS fire-fighters killed when their temporary Fire Station received a direct hit during an enemy air raid on the night of 19/20 April 1941 at Poplar, in East London.

Beckenham War Memorial

Rectory Road/Croydon Road, Beckenham, Kent, BR3 1

This war memorial commemorates the men and women of Beckenham who lost their lives in two World Wars. It was unveiled on Sunday 24th July 1921 by former Sergeant Bert Hanscombe, D.C.M., M.M., a local council employee (dustman) and one of 9 brothers who fought in and survived the First World War.

The memorial was designed by Mr. Newbury A. Trent, R.B.S., is approximately 7.5 metres high, and is a rectangular white Portland stone column.

At the summit is a broad Celtic cross, enriched on one side in high relief with an equestrian figure of St. George slaying the legendary dragon (symbolic of the destruction of evil) and on the reverse side the Phoenix rising from its own ashes (symbolic of immortality).

Prince George, The Duke of Kent laid a wreath at the memorial on Thursday 20th October 1932 when amongst others he was introduced to Mr. Hanscombe, then Secretary of the Beckenham British Legion Branch. The Prince, later that same day, forsaking his chauffeur driven vehicle, walked part of the way to the High Street to open the new Town Hall and unveiled a plaque to record this second event.

The names of the fallen are recorded on large brass plaques. With over 700 for the First World War and over 300 recorded in H.M. Forces in the Second World War, there are also 12 Civil Defence, 30 Auxiliary Fire Service (AFS) and 288 Civilians recorded (including 22 children) killed during the war.

The alteration to the dates to include both wars was completed by Remembrance Day November 1946. The precedent to alter a memorial was allowed by the example set with the alteration to the Cenotaph in Whitehall, confirmed in a speech by the Prime Minister Mr. Attlee in August 1946.

There were many restrictions placed on local authorities during the early post war period including expenditure on War Memorials. However at a General Purposes Committee meeting held on the 10th May 1948, the Town Clerk was able to inform the committee that under the new Local Government Act 1948 reasonable expenditure on alteration to a war memorial so as to include a reference to any subsequent war was now allowable.

The Committee recommended that new additional plaques be erected on the memorial.

At subsequent meetings the need to harmonise the plaques already in place for the First World War with the Second World War resulted in a decision to replace them. The complete new set of plaques (plates) had a five-sixteenths of an inch lettering size, rather than the three-eighths of an inch as used

previously. This enabled just three large plates rather than the previous six, thus leaving adequate space for the Second World War Plates. The initial estimate of £400 was thus exceeded to a final cost of £700.

The new Plaques were unveiled by Councillor T.W. Mallett the retiring Mayor of Beckenham on 21st May 1950 in the presence of a large crowd. The dedication was by the Mayor's Chaplain the Rev. G.T. Brett.

An Addendum of one name was added in recent years. The name IMMS N (M.M.) should read INNS N (M.M.)

Biggin Hill War Memorial

Biggin Hill War Memorial, Main Road, Biggin Hill, TN16 3EJ

This war memorial was originally known as the Cudham War Memorial on Biggin Hill Green, that being the parish for the area prior to the emergence of Biggin Hill as a centre of population in its own right.

The memorial was unveiled at 3pm on Wednesday 21st March 1923 by Group Captain Blandy, D.S.O. of the Air Ministry, a former commander of the nearby RAF Air Station and the dedication was by the Vicar of Cudham the Rev. Bryan O`Loughlin. The memorial made from silver grey granite was designed and made by Messrs. Francis Chappell of Bromley.

The newspaper reports of the time give some interesting additional local information.

"Group Captain Blandy said before the unveiling "I passed the last months of the war at Biggin Hill and the aerodrome was one of the first places in England to hear by wireless the good news of the Armistice on 11th November 1918. I telephoned to the Vicar of Westerham to ring the church bells, hoping it would be the first message in the district if not the country to hear the great news".

Anti-aircraft detachments from Biggin Hill formed the Guard of Honour, with arms reversed. A representative from the The Royal Regiment of Artillery, Corps of Engineers, Royal Signals and R.A.F. were placed at the corners as mourners.

The column rests on a brick foundation with receptacles containing earth from the gardens where those who fell resided, and it is banked with earth from different parts of the parish. The brickwork and banking were done by Mr. A.T. Roffey, D.C.M., Mr. B. Aves and Mr. S. Hill.

A large gathering witnessed the unveiling with members of ex service organisations, local churches and youth groups.

32 names are recorded in nice clear lead lettering on the front for the First World War and the 27 names of the Second World War are on the right side panel.

The only inscription reads:-

To the fallen of this Parish, they died that we might live.

Bromley Parish Church Memorial

St. Peter and St. Paul Church, Church Road, Bromley, BR2 0EG

This war memorial is in memory of the parishioners who lost their lives in the First World War. The church tower and this memorial cross survived although a bronze tablet which was also erected in the church was lost in the destruction of the church on 16/17th April 1941, during a night of heavy bombing in which many local churches were destroyed or damaged.

The memorial cross in the churchyard was unveiled on Sunday 20th March 1921 by Major General Sir G.R. Longley, K.C.M.G., C.B., and the dedication was by Dr. John Reginald Harmer, Bishop of Rochester. The congregation and unveiling party then returned to the church where the bronze tablet was unveiled, with the service and prayers being led by the Vicar, the Rev. J.K. Wilson.

Both the memorial cross and tablet were designed and made by Mr Sydney March of `Goddendene`, Locksbottom, Farnborough, Kent. The cross of Portland stone, is approximately 5 metres high and is designed in the gothic period style. It has carved into it four figures representing St George, Victory, St. Michael and Peace.

Inscriptions at the base read:-

"In memory of the Men from this Church and Parish who gave their lives in the War of 1914-1919"

"Make them to be numbered with the Saints in glory everlasting"

"Their names are recorded on a tablet in the Church"

Bromley War Memorial

Martins Hill, Church Road, Bromley, BR2 0EG

This large and imposing war memorial is probably the most ornate of all memorials within the boundaries of the London Borough of Bromley. It was unveiled on Sunday 29th October 1922, by General Lord Horne, G.C.B., K.C.M.G. and dedicated by John Harmer D.D. the Bishop of Rochester.

The design is in the form of an obelisk with three figures at the base with the symbols of 'Liberty', a torch; 'Victory', a laurel wreath; and 'Peace', the open hand of peace. It was designed by Sydney March, who designed several other local memorials. He was a member of a family of six brothers and one sister who were artists or sculptors and lived at 'Goddendene' at Locksbottom, Farnborough, Kent.

The memorial records the names of 769 local men who died in the First World War.

There are also 476 names recorded for both Armed Forces and Civilians killed during the Second World War. These are listed, unusually in strict alphabetical order without mention of rank, service or civilian.

It was sufficient that they were local people and died as a result of enemy action or on active service.

These new plaques were dedicated by the Vicar of Bromley the Rev. W.H. Murray-Walton at 11am on Remembrance Sunday, the 6th November 1949. In a short address he said "This Memorial, in front of which we now stand, was dedicated in memory of those who laid down their lives in the First World War. Since 1939, however it has also been a silent symbol of remembrance of those who were killed in the last war".

A short service and prayers followed.

In attendance were the Mayor, Alderman B.J. Finnie, M.C. J.P. and other members of the council, also the Member of Parliament for Bromley, Mr. Harold MacMillan.

Chislehurst War Memorial

Bromley Road, Chislehurst, BR7 6

This war memorial is well sited at the cross-roads of Chislehurst Common and is thereby very visible and well known. It was unveiled on Sunday 17th October 1920 by Lt Colonel F Edlmann, D.S.O. and the dedication was by the Rector of Chislehurst Rev. Canon Dawson. The memorial was designed by Sir Reginald Blomfield, R.A. and is about 8 metres tall and is similar to the traditional Imperial (later Commonwealth) War Graves Commission Cross and Sword of Sacrifice, seen in their cemeteries in many parts of the world. The Cross was made at the Torquay works of Messrs H.T. Jenkins & Son and the sword described as a `Crusader's Sword` was made by a Mr Bainbridge Reynolds. The whole memorial was erected by a local firm Messrs T. Rider & Son. The memorial, unlike the CWGC Memorials has the names inscribed of the 186 local men who died in the First World War, and a further 65 who died in the Second World War.

The inscription for the First World War reads:-

"In proud and grateful memory of the men of Chislehurst who fell in the Great War 1914-1919"

There is a more unusual wording for the Second World War:-

"They gave us peace by their warfare and life by their death 1939-1945"

Holy Trinity, Bromley Common Memorial

Holy Trinity, Bromley Common, Bromley, BR2 8LB

This is the parish war memorial of Holy Trinity, and it was unveiled on the evening of Thursday 29th July 1920 by Colonel Cuthbert James M.P. and dedicated by Dr Storrs, Dean of Rochester. Special prayers and the service were led by the Vicar the Rev. J.F.W. Gomperty M.A. with Mrs Moate at the organ.

The memorial in Portland stone, with a central pier on which there is a tall slender pillar and cross with four panels forming a crescent shape, was designed by Mr. Evelyn Hellicar, F.R.I.B.A. and erected by Messrs Earp and Hobbs.

This fine monument has an unusually long inscription for the First World War and has been added to, to explain the inclusion of the names of those who died in the Second World War. Recorded by year of death on two panels are the 28 local men who died in the First World War. On the outer panels, or wings of the monument, are recorded the 18 Members of the Armed Forces who died in the Second World War and the 15 local civilians killed during the war.

"Their name liveth for evermore they died as few men get the chance to die fighting to save a Worlds morality, they died the noblest death a man may die, fighting for god and right and liberty and such a death is immortality"

This monument is erected to the Glory of God in honour of all who went from this Parish to serve in the Great War and in grateful and undying memory of those who laid down their lives for their Country by sea and by land.

1939-1945, Commemorated on the side panels are the names of men of the three services who gave their lives, and also of civilians of this Parish, who were killed by enemy action in the Second World War."

Keston War Memorial

Heathfield Road, Keston, Kent, BR2

This is the Keston war memorial in memory of local men and women of two World Wars and is situated within a semi-circular hedge area on the Common, with two conical-shaped Yew trees set equally to the left and right. It gives an overall impression of care and attention to detail in this peaceful country setting.

The memorial was designed and sculpted by Sydney March who also designed the nearby Bromley Memorial. The Keston War Memorial which is about 3.9 metres high of white Portland stone, surmounted by a bronze wreath, was unveiled on Wednesday 10th March 1920, by General Sir A. Lynden-Bell K.C.B. The dedication was by the Rev. M. Parker Shipman (in the absence of the Rector who was ill).

A plaque fixed to the front records the 30 local men who died in the First World War. A separate plaque beneath records the 9 men of the Armed Forces and 14 local civilians killed during the Second World War.

The First World War wording is "To Our Glorious Dead 1914-1919"

The Second World War wording says simply "In Memoriam 1939-1945"

Mottingham War Memorial

Mottingham Road/Grove Park Rd, Mottingham, SE9

This war memorial is in memory of the men of Mottingham Parish and is more unusual than most in that it is approximately 4 metres high, made from Portland stone and is a round `temple` design with the names listed on a six-sided centre piece surmounted by a small cross. Here are recorded the names of 44 local men who lost their lives in The First World War. On a separate panel are recorded a further 24 names for the Second World War.

The memorial was unveiled on Friday 26th March 1920 by Mr. S. Palgrave Page, Chairman of the Mottingham War Memorial Committee. The dedication was made by the Rev. Noel Mellish V.C. Vicar of St. Mark's Lewisham. The design was the one chosen by the committee from the final shortlist of five, and was submitted by George Hubbard, a local architect who acted in an honorary capacity i.e. no fee. The work was carried out by Messrs J. Daymond & Sons of Westminster and cost £620.

This must be one of the earliest publicly erected Great War Memorials, and the local newspaper reports of the day make much of this in congratulating the Memorial Committee. They had been elected at a public meeting in January 1919 and this memorial was in place and unveiled within 14 months, which may account for its unique design, before a large cross became the norm for these war memorials. It cost £620 which although a great deal of money in 1919, was soon raised. Again this was a surprising feat for such a small area as Mottingham, which may at that time have had a more recognisable identity as an area than today. hemmed in as it is at the boundaries of three London Boroughs (Bromley, Greenwich and Lewisham).
Notes: - Rev Noel Mellish V.C. M.C. (1890-1962)

During the period 27/29 March 1916 at St. Eloi, Belgium, Captain The Reverend Noel Mellish went backwards and forward under continuous and very heavy shell and machine-gun fire between our original trenches and those captured from the enemy, in order to tend and rescue wounded men. He brought in 10 badly wounded men on the first day from ground swept by machine-gun fire. He went on the second day and brought in 12 more and on the third he took charge of a party of volunteers and once more returned to rescue the remaining wounded.

He also served as a trooper in the South African War of 1899-1902 and was an Air Raid Warden in the Second World War.

Orpington War Memorial

Orpington War Memorial, High Street, Orpington, BR6

This is the war memorial for the area of the borough that was once the Orpington Urban District Council area. The memorial was unveiled on Sunday 28th August 1921 by Colonel A. Wood-Martyn D.S.O. The Roll Call of names was read aloud by Dr A. Tennyson-Smith, and included that of his son, John Allan. The memorial was designed by Charles Heaton Comyn F.R.I.B.A., of Hill Cottage, Station Road, Orpington (about 200 metres from the memorial). The design is a triangular column of Portland stone about 6 metres high with the names of the fallen cut into each of the three sides. At this time there were only three roads. Spur Road, as its name suggests, was built to connect to Court Road (the Orpington By Pass) in 1926. Two sides have a simple cross at the summit and the third side, a Horse Rampant, the symbol of Kent. The cost of £900 was raised by public subscription. The contractors for the works were Messrs Farmer and Brindley of Westminster Bridge Road, London and the three lions were cast by Messrs Thomas Elsley and Company of Great Titchfield Street, London.

It originally recorded the names of the 111 local men who died in The First World War.

"In memory of the Men of Orpington who laid down their lives in the Great War 1914-1918"

Four names were added over the years:-

J.W. Barr, Joseph Richard Briggs, Albert Nansen Harris, Joseph Henry Everist

After the Second World War a committee was set up to advise on the manner in which the people of Orpington would wish to honour local people who died during the war. Several suggestions were made and in time and after a presentation to the Council in 1947 it was agreed to support:

- the purchase of Priory Gardens (as well as the intended purchase of the house)
- part funding to Petts Wood Memorial Hall
- part funding to Cudham Village Hall
- several other amenities in Priory gardens i.e. Children's play area/pool, sheltered seating and a bandstand.
- a plaque was also to be attached to the Town Memorial in honour of all who had died.

The wording of the plaque which was attached to the side facing the High Street reads:

"Orpington Urban District to the memory of those in the Services and the residents of this district who died in the World War 1939-1945"

Only this plaque and the appropriately named Memorial Hall at Petts Wood record now the good intentions of those deliberations of long ago. It is hoped to erect a Blue Plaque at the Priory Gardens to indicate their purchase as a memorial garden.

In 1997/8 a campaign commenced, led by the local branch secretary, Mr. Stan Wright of the Royal British Legion to record the names of the Armed Forces Personnel who died in that war. With thanks to a very generous donation by Francis Chappell & Co., and the active co-operation of Mr. Barry Holroyd, Deputy Director of the Environmental Services Department of the Borough of Bromley, this was achieved. This resulted in a second unveiling on Sunday 2nd August 1999, when eight separate plaques were unveiled recording 424 men of the old Orpington Urban District Council area who died during the Second World War and 7 local men who died on active service in other conflicts since 1945.

Alan J. Smithers - Middle East; Michael E. Casey - Berlin Airlift; John M. Lock - Korea; Rex H. Eames and William H. Leppard - Malaya; John D. Crane - Sarawak and Michael Geall - Aden.

The Honour Guard with reversed arms (Rifles) was provided by the local Sea Cadet unit, T.S. Whirlwind based in St Mary Cray, the unveiling of the 8 plaques was performed by Cadets from the local Army Cadet Unit based in Anglesea Road also in nearby St Mary Cray.

The Deputy Lieutenant of London, Colonel Hugh Maltby, T.D., T.L., (deputising for The Lord Lieutenant, Lord Imbert, who was indisposed) performed the official unveiling.

The 8 Union Flags that had, until that point covered the plaques, were presented to members of the families of some of those who were remembered on this day. The service of dedication was led by the Vicar of Orpington, the Revd. Alan Mustoe, assisted by other church leaders of the area, with many family members of those being honoured and guests in attendance.

Wreaths were laid on behalf of the Government by Mr John Spellar M.P. Under Secretary of State for Defence (Minister for the Armed Services), and on behalf of the local council, Her Worship The Mayor of the London Borough of Bromley, Councillor Sue Polydorou, J.P.

Many ex Forces Organisations, the Royal British Legion, Youth Groups and others also laid poppy wreaths.

The Royal Artillery Band, Woolwich was on parade under the direction of Major G.A. Kingston to play appropriate music and their buglers sounded the 'Last Post'.

The massed standards were under the direction of the Royal British Legion

Parade Marshall Mr Barry George (Queens Regt. Ret`d). The Royal British Legion Contingent was under the Director of the Orpington and District Branch Deputy Parade Marshal Mr Peter Golightly (Royal Engineers Ret`d).

Penge War Memorial

Penge War Memorial, High Street, Penge, SE20

This is the war memorial for the area of the old Penge Urban District Council whose Chairman, Councillor Francis P. Hodes J.P. performed the unveiling on Sunday 25th September 1925, and the dedication was by the vicar of Penge, the Rev. Canon Smyly. The memorial is about 4.5 metres high of rough hewn granite of the Celtic cross design with the sword of sacrifice in relief, rather faint and almost unnoticed now. The names of the 399 local men who died in the First World War are recorded on plaques in 18 columns at the base of the memorial.

The wording of the First World War reads:-

"Erected by the residents of Penge to the Glory of God in proud memory of those who made the Supreme Sacrifice in the Great War 1914-1918"

The Second World War inscription which was added in 1947 reads:-

"Also in memory of the Men and Women of H.M. Forces Civil Defence and civilian population of Penge who lost their lives in the Second World War 1939-1945"

Priory Gardens – Garden of Remembrance

Church Hill, Orpington, BR6 0HH

In 1946 the Orpington Urban District Council, the British Legion, the local Churches and other notables set up a working party to ascertain the views of the community as how to commemorate the fallen of the Second World War.

The Working Party suggested a number of alternatives but the ones finding popular support were:

- purchase of the Priory Gardens and turn them into a Garden of Remembrance where people could reflect upon lost ones. There was to be a bandstand, rose gardens, etc.;
- build the Petts Wood War Memorial Hall;
- build the Cudham Village War Memorial Hall.

The Orpington Urban Council did all three.

While the Petts Wood and Cudham War Memorial halls all indicated their purpose there was no indication as to why the Priory Gardens had been purchased in 1947.

The Mayor, Councillor Sue Polydorou, unveiled a Blue Plaque on 11th November 1999, in the presence of a large number of guests from the Royal British Legion, Councillors and members of the public. As the Mayor unveiled the Blue Plaque she said, "this last Armistice Day of this century was a fitting time to remember those who paid the ultimate sacrifice for the freedoms enjoyed by the current generations and those to follow in the 21st century. We shall be eternally grateful to those who took up arms to defend this country and this should never be forgotten".

The Mayor dedicated the Blue Plaque to the many citizens from the Orpington area who died or who were wounded together with their families whose pains of loss still lasts to this day.

R.A.F. Memorial, Grassmead Estate

Grassmead Estate, Mungo Park Way, Orpington, Kent, BR6

This is a polished granite tablet set into a brick plinth standing some two metres high, on a small area of grassed land at the entrance to the Grassmead Estate. (Grassmead being the name of a large house that once stood on this plot of land).

The inscription reads:

"This Plaque was presented by Planwell Homes a member of the Ronson Group of Companies, was unveiled by Air Chief Marshall The Lord Dowding G.Cb., G.C.V.O., C.M.G., R.A.F. (Retd) on 25th May 1965. The Grassmead Estate is dedicated to those illustrious pilots who flew with the Royal Air Force during the Battle of Britain. The roads hereon are named after some of them who died in the cause of freedom which we enjoy today.

They Are:

Flight Lieutenant G. Allard D.F.C., D.F.M. and Bar.
Wing Commander F.V. Beamish D.S.O. and Bar, D.F.C., A.F.C.
Wing Commander B.E. Finucane D.S.O., D.F.C. and 2 Bars.
Squadron Leader J.G. Mungo-Park D.F.C. and Bar.
Wing Commander J.L. Nicolson V.C., D.F.C.
Wing Commander T.S. Wade D.S.O., D.F.C. and Two Bars"

RAF Biggin Hill (1917-1992)

RAF Biggin Hill, St George`s RAF Chapel, Biggin Hill, TN16 3EJ

The story of Biggin Hill goes back to summer 1916 when a 75 acre flat field between Westerham and Bromley, being one of the highest points in Kent, was chosen as a site for a wireless testing station. The first hanger (made of canvas) was erected by the Royal Flying Corps on 13th February 1917, though the first airmen had arrived in deep snow in the January. Biggin Hill was one of the first locations where communications from the ground to the air was achieved in 1917. Though distorted it was considered a success.

The first operational squadron was located at Biggin Hill on 8th February 1918, to defend London. Two months later the Royal Flying Corps and the Royal Naval Air Service was merged into the Royal Air Force. Biggin Hill's first "kill" as a fighter station came on 19th May 1918. This also turned out to be the last air attack of the 1914-18 war, as the defences, both air and land, had shown they had mastered the bomber. Thus Biggin Hill played a vital role in the outcome of the war.

Biggin Hill became a household name during the 1939-45 war. The well known Battle of Britain in the summer of 1940 saw Biggin Hill pilots claim some 400 enemy aircraft shot down. These statistics did not come without a price and many young British pilots gave their lives in the battle that saved England from invasion and saw the first British victory after Dunkirk. In the spring of 1943 the Biggin Hill Sector claimed it's 1,000th "kill" of the war. The death toll of aircrew alone at Biggin Hill was 453 plus those who died on the ground during air attacks.

The original Memorial Chapel, a disused Army hut, was dedicated in September 1943. This was destroyed by fire in 1946. A new Memorial Chapel was dedicated in November 1951. It is open to visitors' daily.

Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve Memorial

Crystal Palace Park, London, SE20

During the First World War, Crystal Palace was used as a training establishment for the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve - the nearest the navy had to the army's TA. Formed in 1903, these volunteers trained to serve in ships of the fleet as seamen, signalmen, telegraphists and engineers. However with the outbreak of war it was thought there were too many for the numbers of ships available. Winston Churchill, as First Lord at the Admiralty, ordered that these men be formed into two Naval Brigades to act as infantry to defend the port of Antwerp. Although disembarked and recalled within three days without firing a shot, the Naval Brigade went on to see extensive action at Gallipoli, Salonika, the Somme, Pusieux, Oppy, Mericourt and Passchendaele and at many other battles. They were in action up to a quarter of an hour before the ceasefire on Armistice Day, after having advanced through Gavy and crossed the Mons - Gavy Road almost at the point of the first British involvement four years before. In this final action in Belgium, six officers and 25 men were killed just minutes before the end of a long and costly war.

For the Naval Brigades the cost was 10,795 killed and 30,892 wounded. The Crystal Palace establishment under its official title of `HMS Victory IV` but always known locally as `HMS Crystal Palace` trained 125,000 men as replacements for the Brigades and as sailors for the Fleet.

The original RNVR Commemorative Memorial (then termed a `Trophy` in the Navy fashion) was unveiled at Crystal Palace on 6th June 1931 by the then Prince of Wales (later Edward VII and then Duke of Windsor), as a memorial to all who had served in the RNVR and trained at Crystal Palace, and in particular those who had lost their lives. It then stood on the terraces in front of the bandstand. It was not damaged in the great fire of 1936 and remained in situ for many years.

It was moved in the 1980s by the then owners of the park, the Greater London Council. However because of increased vandalism and theft from the memorial, a replica was cast which this now is. It is not known where the original is.

It was again refurbished and re-dedicated in the presence of the Admiral of the Fleet, Sir Henry Leach. GCB on Saturday 6th June 1992.

It now is in the care of the London Borough of Bromley, within the Crystal Palace Park.

The bronze plaques are normally removed and held elsewhere for safe keeping.

Shortlands Air Raid Wardens Memorial

Queen Anne Avenue, Shortlands, Kent

On the evening of Wednesday, 4th December 1940, during an enemy air raid a direct hit was received on the Air Rail Warden Post in the grounds of St. Marks School. At the time the two wardens on duty in the post were Mrs Gladys Muriel Blinkhorn-Hay aged 48 and Leslie Frederick Hurst aged 37, both of whom were killed instantly. A third warden, who was standing outside the post, survived although he suffered many injuries having been covered up to his shoulders in debris from the warden's post, school and adjoining houses.

The funeral took place at St. Mary's Shortlands, the Parish Church (soon also to be a victim of bombing) on Friday 13th December 1940, with the Mayor of Beckenham, Town Clerk, Councillors and other local dignities in attendance. The burial was in nearby Elmers End Cemetery.

Beckenham Borough Council purchased the land on which the warden's post had been sited and had it planted as a lasting memorial.

A small metal Plaque erected on the site reads:

"This land was acquired and has been planted by the Council as an amenity to the neighbourhood. Please do not destroy or damage the shrubs etc., or throw any sort of rubbish on the land: rather help keep it tidy.

This is a place of war-time memories, sad but proud, of lives lost in loyal service and of devotion to duty."

The memorial is a tribute to the loyal service of all the Air Raid Wardens who served their local communities unstintingly, and paid the supreme sacrifice.

It is still in the care of the local Council, now the London Borough of Bromley and the plaque has recently been mounted on a stone plinth.

Shortlands War Memorial

Kingswood Road, Shortlands, BR2

This is the war memorial for an area of Bromley known as Shortlands, perhaps not so well defined as a separate area today, but once, and not so long ago it was a small country hamlet on the outskirts of Bromley Town. It is therefore felt justified in 1921 in erecting its own public War Memorial in addition to the parish memorial in the chapel of St. George in the nearby St. Mary's Church.

The memorial was unveiled on Sunday 9th October 1921 by Lord Harris. G.C.S.I. and the dedication was by the vicar of St. Mary's Church the Rev. H.T. Knight, M.A.

The Cross, which is 5 metres high, is based on the Celtic form, and made from Leckhampton stone. It was designed by Mr. W. Douglas Caroe, architect to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners.

The face of the cross was intended to face Church Road as this is where the inscription are found. About half way down the up right is the words; LIFT UP YOUR HEARTS

The base contains the following inscription and date and the names of 63 local men who died in the First World War.

MCMXIV

MCMXIX

Our Dead Through Whom We Live

The names of 65 local men who died in the First World War are inscribed on three plaques attached to the base. Strangely although most of the names are in alphabetical order some are out of sequence. Also the layout of the name order indicates the middle plaque was intended for the front of the memorial rather than the rear or the end plaques should be swapped.

A separate plaque was attached to after the Second World War in memory of the men and women of Shortlands who died in both Wars.

"To the Glory of God and in proud memory of the men and women of Shortlands who gave their lives in Two World Wars 1914-1918, 1939-1945"

Their names are inscribed in a Book of Remembrance kept in the Parish Church"

Notes: St. Mary's Church was badly damaged during the Second World War and their First World War Memorial was lost, although Book of Remembrance survived. This War Memorial was also slightly damaged during the air raid.

St. John's the Baptist Church

Layhams Road, West Wickham, Kent, BR4 9HN

In 1941, the London Fire Brigade, under intense pressure from the many fires caused by enemy bombing, had frequently to call in reinforcements from outlying areas. It was on one such occasion on 19th March at West Ham that five Coney Hall Auxiliary Fire Service (AFS) men lost their lives. They comprised the crew of a pump, one of a convoy on the way to a five at Silvertown, which was obliterated in a land-mine explosion in Plaistow Road.

Wesley Drew, Stanley Short, Frederick Moore, Dennis Fitzgerald and Leslie Palmer were buried in this one grave in St John's the Baptist Churchyard, West Wickham, Kent. A simple wooden cross on a brick plinth was erected in 1942 and unveiled by the Mayor of Beckenham, Alderman W.J. Sampson J.P. on Easter Sunday 5th April 1942 with the dedication by the Rector, the Rev. Shaw Page.

Plans were made as early as June 1947 for a more permanent memorial but due to many difficulties in a post war Britain, with both material and money in very short supply a new memorial was not in place until October 1953. In fact it may not have been completed by that time except the memorial was badly damaged by a falling tree!

The new memorial was unveiled on Sunday 25th October 1953 by the Mayor of Beckenham, Alderman W.J. Sampson J.P. By coincidence the same man who had unveiled the temporary war time memorial 10 years earlier was now serving another year as Mayor. The dedication was by the Rector of St. John the Baptist the Rev. John Hough.

While wartime comrades stood guard at the corners with heads bowed, Divisional Officer C.T. Davis, Kent Fire Brigade laid a wreath on behalf of the Fire Service.

John Drew aged about 13 years also placed a wreath in memory of his father, one of the AFS fire-fighters killed in 1941.

Next to the memorial is the double grave of two further AFS fire-fighters killed exactly a month later. Ernest Beadle and Norman Mountjoy were among 33 AFS fire-fighters killed when their temporary Fire Station received a direct hit during an enemy air raid on the night of 19/20 April 1941 at Poplar, in East London.

St. Mary's Church War Memorial

High Street, St. Mary Cray, Kent, BR5 3NL

In the churchyard there is a First World War memorial, in the form of a tall slender column with a small Celtic cross. This is the Parish Memorial of St. Mary's Church, St. Mary Cray.

It was unveiled by Mrs R.B. Berens of Kevington on Saturday 29th December 1991 and it was dedicated by the Archdeacon of Rochester, the Venerable D. Tait. The Vicar of St. Mary's, the Rev. A.H. Stevenson lead the prayers.

The Cross made from Portland stone had been erected at a cost of about £85 by Messrs Watts and Co. of Baker Street, London. There was an inscription (reproduced below) but now unreadable because of weathering. A metal plaque was fixed to the base by the Council, in whose care this memorial now is invested, in 1996. The names of the fallen were not recorded on this memorial as they were already on the wooden `shrine` which had stood in the churchyard for two or more years. This memorial replaced the `shrine` which was then taken into the church where it still is.

The original inscription.

"The Great War 1914-1918 to the great and imperishable memory of those who gave their lives for the lasting welfare of their Country. Lift up your hearts: We lift them up unto the Lord."

The recently fixed plaque wording:

"This Memorial was erected to the memory of Officers and Men who lost their lives in the Great War 1914-1918 (Their names are commemorated in full inside the church)"

West Wickham War Memorial

Corkscrew Hill, West Wickham, BR4

This is the war memorial for West Wickham, an area that has greatly expanded since the First World War from a small village to a large suburb of the Borough of Bromley. This memorial when unveiled was in the High Street of West Wickham near Sherwood Avenue. Unfortunately vested interest in developing that part of the High Street and road widening plans succeeded in having it moved, ironically in 1939, just at the start of the Second World War. It was re-dedicated by the Bishop of Croydon on 22nd December 1939.

Although it is well cared for by the Council, it now stands a lonely marker on top of nearby Corkscrew Hill, out of sight of most of the residents of the area and equally un-visited. There is little doubt that once removed from a prominent public place these memorials are soon forgotten in spite of the often quoted `We Will Remember Them`.

This memorial was unveiled on Sunday 12th June 1921 by Lt. Colonel Vansittart, one time commander of the 8th Battalion Royal West Kent Regiment, and the dedication was by the Rector, the Rev. H. Bertie Roberts. The `Last Post` was sounded by Sergeant Bartlett, Corporal Winch and Corporal Doughty of the 1st Cadet Battalion, RWK Regiment.

The Cross was erected on a piece of land given by Mrs McAndrew and erected by Messrs. Farmer and Brindley.

There are three separate plaques recording 72 local men who died in the First World War, with an added plaque attached to the base in remembrance of the men and women who died in the Second World War.

"To the Glory of God and in Memory of the men of West Wickham who served and fell in the Great War 1914-1918"

An additional plaque was unveiled on Sunday 10th November 1946, during the Remembrance Day Parade by the Deputy Mayor of Beckenham Councillor T.W. Mallett. The service was conducted by the Rector of St John`s the Rev. J.P. Gough and the Rev. T.M. Morrow (Methodist Church). Mr. Grover of the British Legion and Home Guard Association sounded the `Last Post`.

The added inscription reads:

"This Inscription is added in Remembrance of those Men and Women who gave their lives 1939-1945"