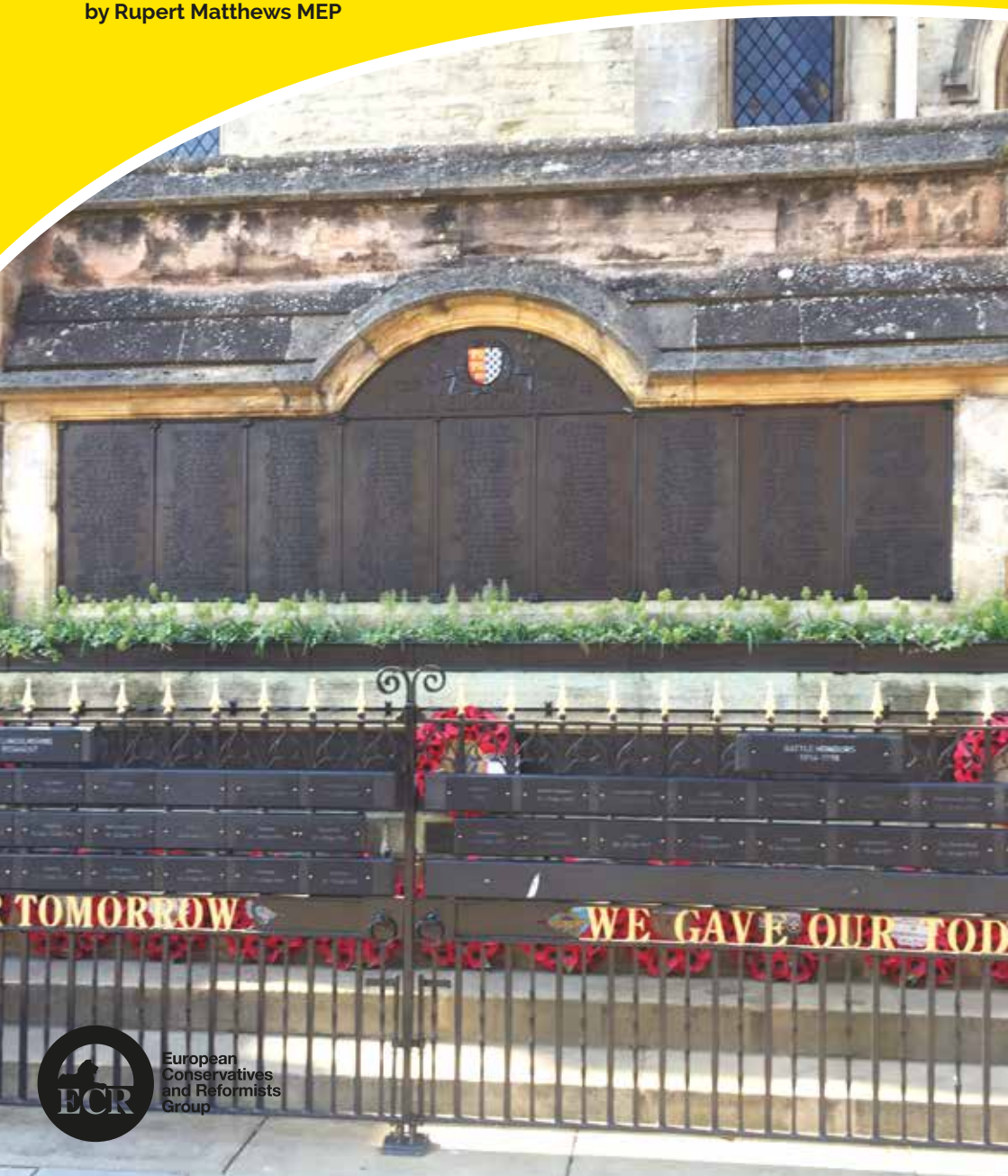
Stamford War Memorial

EAST MIDLANDS WAR MEMORIALS

by Rupert Matthews MEP



ECR European Conservatives and Reformists Group

HELLO AND WELCOME

As Conservative MEP for the East Midlands, I was delighted to become Chairman of the East Midlands War Memorials Association.

Here in the East Midlands our war memorials are important reminders of what we owe to previous generations. But they are also stark reminders of the evils of war and why it is so important that we never let up in our efforts to maintain peace and understanding between the nations of Europe. And in their day the war memorials played their role in fostering reconciliation. The crosses, angels and other features that adorn war memorials in Britain, Italy, Germany, France and further afield show how much we have in common.

In the European Parliament I spend much time seeking to improve understanding between the member states of the European Union. The same cultural underpinnings that make war memorials in England so similar to those in Belgium or the Netherlands also help to build friendly relations in the European Parliament between myself and my fellow MEPs.

Far from the usual admonition of "Don't mention the war", I find that the shared history and experience of warfare brings us together in a shared determination never to allow such horrors to happen again in Europe. My role as Chairman of the East Midlands War Memorials Association helps to build bridges to MEPs from other countries. My father's cousin was killed in 1944, the father of the German MEP whose office is opposite mine was killed that same year. We both remember men we never really knew at war memorials.

Where war once divided nations, war memorials can now bring them together.

Rupert Matthews.

PART ONE

THE FIRST WORLD WAR

The summer of 1914 was glorious across the East Midlands. The sun shone, crops ripened in the fields and the factories hummed with booming production that guaranteed work to the thousands who toiled away within them. If anyone noticed that an Austrian Archduke had been murdered in the Balkans, it did not really register. That sort of thing went on in the Balkans all the time.

When the Austrians invaded Serbia in supposed outrage over the murder – though in truth they had been seeking an excuse for years – only the mildest of alarm bells rang. But then Russia invaded Austria to support Serbia, Germany attacked Russia to support Austria and France invaded Germany to back up Russia. Finally, Germany invaded France. On 4 August German armies poured over the Belgian border as part of a great, sweeping march to outflank the main French armies on the Franco-German border. And then Britain declared war on Germany to honour a treaty defending Belgium

At this date, the counties of the East Midlands, as with most counties across the UK, had their own local regiments: The Lincolnshire Regiment took precedence, having been raised in 1685 and was numbered 10th in the Army List; the Leicestershire Regiment dated to 1688 and was numbered 17th; the 48th Northamptonshire Regiment was raised in 1741 and also drew recruits from Rutland. The final East Midlands regiment was the Sherwood Foresters, which had been created in 1881 by the amalgamation of the 45th Nottinghamshire Regiment and 95th Derbyshire Regiment.

Men from our counties served not only in their county infantry regiments, but also in various cavalry regiments and some were to be found in the Royal Navy. But in wherever they served, these men marched off to war.

British infantry attacking near Thiepval, 7 Aug 1916, during the Battle of the Somme. This photo was taken from the firing step of the trench that they've just left. Note the wooden stakes supporting coils of barbed wire. Before an attack such as this, military engineers would have cleared paths through the wire.

British infantry advancing in support near Morval on 25 September 1916, part of the battle of the Somme. Note the man carrying a stretcher in the centre, while the others carry rifles and the standard pack, in which would be ammunitions, food and a blanket. The spades were used for repairing trenches.

British wounded returning from fighting on Baneztin Ridge on the Somme, July 1916. Walking wounded were expected to make their own way back to field hospitals for initial treatment where medical staff decided if they could return to their units or had to be evacuated to hospitals in the rear. Note that the man fourth from the left wears a German uniform and is presumably a prisoner, which may explain the unwounded man with a rifle behind him.

The fighting of 1914 involved rapid advances, cavalry charges and sweeping infantry attacks, but neither side delivered a knockout blow. When the bad weather of autumn set in, the armies dug defensive trenches to hold their position through the wet, dismal winter weather, confident in the expectation that come the good spring weather more mobile warfare would resume and the war would soon be over.

Meanwhile, the regular regiments were thinly stretched along the line. Massive recruitment drives began to raise new troops. Some were drafted into regular battalions, but others were put into special battalions formed to last only for the length of the war. All of the East Midlands regiments gained these additional units.

The battles of 1915 – at Neuve Chappelle, Ypres and Loos – soon revealed that there was to be no easy breakthrough leading to a quick victory. Instead, the war was likely to descend into a murderous war of attrition. The victor would be the side willing to spend the most money and most blood to gain triumph.

Efforts were made to break the stalemate in secondary campaigns. In both Mesopotamia and at Gallipoli attacks aimed at knocking out Germany's ally Turkey took place. Romania and Italy were induced to attack the Austrians. These ploys failed, but men and resources were sucked out of Germany to prop up their allies.

In 1916 the Germans attacked first, assaulting the famous French fortified city of Verdun. They inflicted vast casualties on the French. It also caused the planned Allied attack on the Somme to take place sooner than planned and without adequate resources. The bloodbath that was the Battle of the Somme was the result.

Back in the East Midlands the demands of war were making themselves felt with increasing impact. Day after day, week after week the local newspapers carried the names of local men who had been killed, wounded or decorated for gallantry. Men coming home on leave spread the news about the conditions in the trenches, discussed the role of new weapons such as machine guns or aircraft and passed on legends, rumours and gossip. Factories were re-equipped to make weapons instead of tractors, furniture or tools.

Above all there was a need for more and more men to join the army. Throughout 1915 volunteers had kept up the numbers, but in 1916 conscription was introduced. All men aged 18 to 40 were liable to service.

As the men went off to fight, their places in factories, farms and other workplaces were taken by women. Young, unmarried women without family ties were encouraged to work in factories far from home. Working class girls volunteered in large numbers to earn the top wages on offer. Middle class girls preferred the more genteel, if less well paid, roles of nurse or teacher. Right across the East Midlands gender roles were becoming more fluid.

In 1917 the USA entered the war to support the Allies and hopes of victory rose, only to be dashed a few months later when the Russian Empire collapsed into a chaotic revolution that took her out of the war.

By the spring of 1918 the Germans launched three massive offensives that came close to breaking through the British lines and gaining victory for Germany. In the event the attacks were just held. On 8 August the British, French and Americans launched their own massed assault. The German Army high command told Kaiser Wilhelm that defeat was inevitable and

British machine gunners near Arras, 1917. The heavy machine gun dominated the battlefields of the First World War and effectively made infantry attacks so dangerous as to be impossible.

A Sopwith Camel of the Royal Flying Corps. The Camel was primarily a fighter designed to shoot down enemy aircraft, but it could strafe enemy trenches with its guns or carry light bombs under the wings.

British Mark V tank. The Mark V entered service in 1918 and was a far more reliable and improved version of the Mark I of 1916 and Mark IV of 1917. It was armed with four machine guns and two 6 pounder guns. Bovington Tank Museum

advised him to seek an armistice as quickly as possible. On 11 November 1918 that armistice was signed at 5am, and came into effect at 11am – the symbolic eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. The Great War was over.

In popular imagination, the First World War was a nightmare of mud, trenches and inhuman barbarity in which brave men were led by incompetent generals. As with many stereotypes, there is some truth in the popular image, but only some.

The image of mud comes mostly from a few weeks of hellish conditions in 1917 during the Battle of Passchendaele. The heavy casualties of the Battle of the Somme in 1916, during which some units were effectively wiped out in a few hours of fighting, created the image of sudden, massive casualties.

For most men, the daily routine rarely changed. The men would be called to 'stand to' an hour before dawn in case of enemy attack. Then breakfast would be served before the men were given their tasks for the day – latrines had to be cleared out, food had to be cooked, weapons needed cleaning. At night, men would go into no man's land out on patrol. The barbed wire in front of the trenches had to be checked and, if necessary, repaired.

Sometimes a night-time raid would be carried out on the enemy. This might involve as few as a dozen men sneaking forward to hurl grenades into enemy trenches, or larger raiding parties would leap down into the enemy front line to kill sentries and set demolition charges to blow up enemy trenches.

Nor were the men in the front line all the time. Units spent a few days in the trenches, then moved to a rear area for rest and training. After a period that might be a week or so, or sometimes as long as a month, the battalion would be moved up to the reserve trenches before going forward to the front line again.

During the course of the war, tactics changed dramatically. The British devised a plan of co-ordinated action between aircraft, artillery and infantry that was deployed on the Somme in 1916, and which failed. The French tried more daring dash-and-hold tactics, but they too proved abortive. In 1917 the Germans came up with the stormtrooper tactics. This saw small units of fast-moving elite infantry dash forward to penetrate through weak points before spreading out in the rear areas to assault enemy command posts, artillery positions and communications links.

Aircraft were used to direct artillery fire to make it more accurate, then to drop bombs with even greater accuracy. Poison gas was deployed to clear entire sections of the enemy front line. Artillery barrages became heavier, then creeping barrages were developed to move just ahead of attacking troops. New weapons made infantry fighting in trenches more murderous – grenades, sawn-off shotguns and flamethrowers were just some of the new inventions put to use.

In the end the answer to the stalemate of the trenches came in the shape of the tank. First deployed by the British in 1916 these behemoths were still rather unreliable and slow by the war's end, which made them less useful than they would be in 1939.

PART TWO
THE LINCOLNSHIRE REGIMENT

Cap badge of the Lincolnshire Regiment.

The outbreak of the Great War in 1914 caught the British military rather by surprise. Although a Franco-German conflict was considered fairly likely few expected it in 1914. And most people thought that British involvement would be restricted to supplying France with weapons and cash. It was the German invasion of Belgium on their way to France that brought Britain into the war.

The Lincolnshire Regiment was one of the oldest, proudest and most senior in the British Army. It had been raised in 1685 by the Earl of Bath and, after various incarnations, had settled down in Lincolnshire in 1751. Thereafter the regiment fought in the American War of Independence and the Peninsular War under Wellington (where it distinguished itself at Tarragona) before going to India and other parts of the British Empire.

In 1914, the Lincolnshire Regiment consisted of two regular battalions and one reserve battalion plus two territorial battalions.

The Reserves were made up of men who trained for four weeks per year, having undergone six months of training when they first signed up. These units were equipped with weapons and kit identical to that of the regulars, and were expected to be posted overseas in wartime, though not to serve in front line duties except in an emergency.

The Territorials, by contrast, were made up of men who had enlisted for four years. They were expected to attend 20 days of training each year, mostly at weekends with only seven days spent away from home and under canvas. They were equipped with old rifles and other equipment considered obsolete by the regular army. It was expected that they would take over routine home defence tasks in time of war, freeing the regular and reserve battalions to go to war.

The 1st Battalion landed in France within days of the outbreak of war and was immediately thrown into the desperate fighting at Mons. That was followed by the terrible Retreat from Mons, carried out with the German army snapping at their heels. Having stopped the Germans at the Marne, the regiment then moved to

Ypres – or Wipers as it was popularly known – where more fighting took place before the fighting subsided into a trench stalemate.

In the spring of 1915, the newly raised 4th and 5th Battalions arrived in France, while the 6th went to the Mediterranean to take part in the disastrous Gallipoli Campaign. In 1916, the 10th Battalion, raised mostly in the Grimsby area, arrived in France. That unit had the misfortune to be in the first wave of attackers on the first day of the Battle of the Somme, 1 July 1916. In all, 502 men of the unit were killed or wounded that one day alone. By sunset only two officers were fit for duty.

It was this sort of carnage that prompted the erection of war memorials. But some villages were lucky. Bigby and High Toynton were what became known as "Thankful Villages". All 10 men from Bigby who marched off to war came back safe and well, as did the 14 men of High Toynton. To this day, neither village has a war memorial.

THE BATTLE HONOURS OF THE LINCOLNSHIRE REGIMENT

FIRST WORLD WAR: Mons, Le Cateau, Retreat from Mons, Marne 1914, Aisne 1914, La Bassee 1914, Messines 1914, Messines 1917, Messines 1918, Ypres 1914, '15, '17, Nonne Bosschen, Neuve Chapelle, Gravenstafel, St. Julien, Frezenberg, Bellewaarde, Aubers, Loos, Somme 1916, Albert 1916, '18 ,Bazentin, Delville Wood, Pozières, Flers-Courcelette, Morval, Thiepval, Ancre 1916 '18, Arras 1917 '18, Scarpe 1917, Arleux, Pilckem, Langemarck 1917, Menin Road, Polygon Wood, Broodseinde, Poelcappelle, Passchendaele, Cambrai 1917 '18, St. Quentin, Bapaume 1918, Lys, Estaires, Bailleul, Kemmel, Amiens, Drocourt Quéant Hindenburg Line , Épéhy, Canal du Nord, St. Quentin Canal, Beaurevoir, Selle, Sambre, Suvla, Gallipoli 1915, Egypt 1916.

SECOND WORLD WAR: Vist, Norway 1940, Dunkirk 1940, Normandy Landings, Cambes, Fontenay le Pesnil, Defence of Rauray, Caen, Orne, Bourguébus Ridge, Troarn, Nederrijn, Le Havre, Antwerp-Turnhout Canal, Venraij, Venlo Pocket, Rhineland, Hochwald, Lingen, Bremen, Arnhem, Sedjenane I, Mine de Sedjenane, Argoub Selah, , Salerno, Vietri Pass, Capture of Naples, Cava di Terreni, Volturno Crossing, Garigliano Crossing, Monte Tuga, Gothic Line, Monte Gridolfo, Gemmano Ridge, Lamone Crossing, San Marino, Donbaik, Point 201 (Arakan), North Arakan, Buthidaung, Ngakyedauk Pass, Ramree.

More details about the war service of the Lincolnshire Regiment can be found on the excellent website: http://www.wartimememoriesproject.com/greatwar/allied/regiment.php?pid=17628

PART THREE
WAR MEMORIAL

Stamford is an old town. It began where a Roman road crossed the River Welland, survived the chaos of the Dark Ages and under the Vikings became a major centre for trade and the military. As one of the mighty Five Boroughs of the Danelaw, it dominated the surrounding countryside. Even after it was swallowed into a united England its importance was recognised by being made a formal Borough in 972. And in 1485 local wool merchant William Browne founded Browne's Hospital, a set of almshouses to care for the respectable poor of the town.

All of which is a roundabout way of reaching the town's war memorial, which is set into the wall of Browne's Hospital, on Broad Street, forming a secure link between the town's prosperous past and its military sacrifices during two World Wars, and other conflicts. This is a memorial that not only remembers the past, but also remains a living testament to the present and prepares for the future.

It was on 9 November 1919, just two days short of the first anniversary of the armistice that ended the Great War that a committee led by the Mayor of Stamford met to discuss how to commemorate the 327 men of the town who had died for King and Country during the war. A public subscription was opened and within weeks enough money had been gathered to pay for the war memorial.

The Stamford-based architect Henry Traylen was commissioned to design the memorial. Traylen had been born in Leicester in 1874, but was educated at Stamford School and on gaining his qualifications from the Royal Institute of British Architects

he went into partnership with his father in Stamford. In 1907, he took over leadership of the company from his father and took on a new partner, Frederick Lenton. Lenton served in the trenches as a lieutenant while Traylen himself worked for the Ministry of War putting up a large number of military buildings.

Traylen proposed that the memorial should take the form of stonework attached to the outer wall of Browne's Hospital, with nine bronze plaques on which would be written the names of the men who were killed. At the top of the memorial Traylen put the Borough's arms in coloured enamel surrounded by a bronze laurel wreath and accompanied by the words:

"OUR GLORIOUS DEAD"

The stonework was commissioned from Messrs Bowman and Sons of Cherry Holt Road, Stamford. While the bronze plaques were ordered from the Dryad Metal Works of Leicester.

The memorial was unveiled by the Mayor of Stamford, Cllr Albert Cliff on 23 June 1920 – making this one of the first war memorials to be completed and dedicated. The religious side of the ceremony was conducted by the Dean of Stamford, the Rev. Canon Paul Ashby, M.C. There was a huge crowd present, nearly all of them locals, who watched the proceedings in almost total silence. The crowds returned on 11 November 1920 for the second Remembrance Day, and the first at which the town focussed on the war memorial in Broad Street.

In 1945, another public subscription was opened, this time to raise the funds to pay for another five bronze plaques to record the names of those Stamford men and women who had died while serving their country in World War II. Once again, Traylen was brought in to advise on the design. He insisted that the new additions should match the quality and design of the old. But this time there was a difference. The names of the dead from the Great War of 1914-18 were listed with the highest in military rank first, then in alphabetical order within rank before moving on to the next rank down. In 1945, the names were in simple alphabetical order irrespective of rank. In 1960, another plaque was inserted to commemorate the dead of the Malayan Emergency, though by then Traylen had passed away.

More work took place at the war memorial in the 1990s. Protective black iron railings were added, together with Memorial Gates bearing the words "For your tomorrow, we gave our today". The gates were dedicated at a Jubilee Civic Service on 9 June 2002. The new work also included the setting in the pavement area of mosaics of the crests of the Royal British Legion, the Royal Naval, the Royal Lincolnshire Regiment, the Royal Air Force and the Independent Polish Parachute Brigade, which was based in Stamford in World War II.

In 2007, seven large planters with yew and other plants were installed on the War Memorial pavement and five wooden benches were added by the Royal British Legion, Royal Naval Association, Royal Air Force Association, Royal Lincolnshire Regiment and Royal Lincolnshire Regiment/Terry Browning.

In March 2009, the memorial was vandalised late at night by two drunken young men armed with a sledge hammer. The stone bench beside the memorial was completely destroyed. Attracted by the noise, a policeman dashed forward and manhandled one of the miscreants to the ground. He was tried on 13 May, found guilty and ordered to pay for repairs plus £150 as a fine. The vandal, a gunner in the Royal Artillery, later apologised to the local branch of the Royal British Legion for the offence and upset that he had caused. In the event the old stone bench was not repaired, and the repair money was instead donated to military charities.

Tragically, there are too many names on the war memorial for them all to be listed here. They were all heroes in their way and made the ultimate sacrifice for their country's future – and so for us. While it is unfair to pick out any for special mention, comment should be made about a few.

Captain E.H. Young, one of four captains listed for World War I, was a recipient of the Military Cross. This medal for feats of exceptional gallantry was created in 1914 as many commanding officers wanted to recognise the bravery of their men, but the authorities did not believe that the acts reached the astonishingly high standards demanded for the Victoria Cross. When creating the medal, King George V stated:

> “We are desirous of signifying Our appreciation of such services by a mark of Our Royal favour We do by these Presents for Us Our heirs and successors institute and create a Cross to be awarded to Officers whose distinguished and meritorious services have been brought to Our notice.”

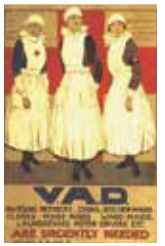
Since its creation, around 48,000 have been awarded, more than 70% of them in World War I. At first the medal was restricted to commissioned and warrant officers of the rank of captain or below but has since been opened up to all ranks.

The Military Cross (MC).

Rather unusually, Stamford war memorial lists a woman. She is on the memorial as simply “Sister Margaret Evans”. In fact she was Margaret Ellen Evans of the Voluntary Aid Detachment. The VAD was formed in 1909 as an organisation of unpaid volunteers who provided auxiliary nursing care for the military. When war broke out, the VAD sent members to France, though at first they were restricted to recuperation hospitals and not allowed to serve near the front line. That changed in 1915, and soon the VAD were serving as ambulance drivers and other medical staff as well as in their primary role as nurses.

Evans joined in May 1915 and spent her first year working at the First Northern General Military Hospital, which was in Lincoln. In July 1916, as the horrific casualty rate of the Battle of the

Somme became clear, she was transferred to the 83rd General Hospital in France. She worked there as a nurse for over a year until she suddenly fell ill and died of fever. She is buried in the Wimereux Communal Cemetery, just outside Boulogne.



(From left to right): stone tablet at Løgstør, Denmark, marking where the bodies of M.A. Brogen and his co-pilot H.O. Sharman were found © Søren C. Flensted; recruitment poster for the Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD); embroidered VAD badge, as worn by its members © Europeana 1914-1918 project.

Of the men listed for World War II, two men are recorded as having received medals. Pilot Officer G.H. Baker received the Distinguished Service Medal. This is one of the middle grades of medal available in the British army. It is awarded for outstanding bravery and resourcefulness on active service. Unlike many medals it is not awarded for a single exceptional feat, but for actions over a period of time.

Wing Commander M. A. Brogan was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. Michael Andrew Brogan not only won the DFC, for an action in February 1945, but was also mentioned in despatches. He was killed when his aircraft was shot down at Limfjorden, Denmark, on the night of 5 March 1945 – tragically just nine weeks before the end of the war and before the announcement that he had won the DFC.

At the time of his death Brogan, had been flying with the elite and highly secretive No.161 Squadron operating out of RAF Tempsford in Bedfordshire. The squadron had a variety of aircraft, including single-engined Lysanders, able to land and takeoff on very small fields, Halifaxes, Stirlings and other bombers – all of which had been converted to a variety of “special duties”. A flight specialised in dropping and collecting agents from behind German lines, while Brogan’s B flight dropped supplies.

Brogan was on one of these top-secret missions to drop supplies to the Danish Resistance when he fell victim to a German night fighter. His body was recovered from the waters of Limfjord on 12 May. The funeral was held three days later and – since the war had by that date ended – was attended by the men and women of the resistance group that he had been sent to help. The spot where his body was found is now marked by a stone tablet on to which is engraved an RAF bomber crashing into the sea together with Brogan’s name and that of his co-pilot whose body was

also recovered. The graves of the two men are at Løgstør and follow the standard Commonwealth War Graves pattern. Brogan's grave carries the inscription

> “AMONG THE CHOSEN FEW,
> AMONG THE VERY BRAVE,
> THE VERY TRUE.”

The Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC).

EAST MIDLANDS
WAR MEMORIALS

ABOUT THE EAST MIDLANDS WAR MEMORIALS ASSOCIATION

The Association was founded to mark the centenary of the end of the First World War. There are thousands of reminders to the fallen of the First World War and later conflicts all over the East Midlands. We believe that these war memorials should be cared for and respected.

- We will fundraise for repair or improvement works to war memorials.
- We will look to tell the story of those brave individuals named on our memorials.
- We will work to ensure that all worthy war memorials in the East Midlands are listed by Historic England.
- We will create an educational program for schools in the East Midlands where we will be offering lesson plans to schools on the importance of Remembrance Day.

To keep up-to-date with our work, please visit our website at
www.eastmidlandswarmemorials.com
where you can learn how to: sign up for our email newsletter, nominate a war memorial for listing, join our fundraising activities, join us when we visit war memorials.

WHO WE ARE

The East Midlands War Memorials Association is a not-for-profit company limited by share guarantee.

PRESIDENT: Her Grace Frances Duchess of Rutland
CHAIRMAN: Rupert Matthews MEP
VICE CHAIRMAN: Squadron Leader Andrew Smith
HON. TREASURER: William Scott
HON. SECRETARY: Simon Whelband

RUPERT MATTHEWS MEP

European Conservatives and Reformists Group

The European Conservatives and Reformists

Rupert Matthews MEP is a member of the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) Group within the European Parliament.

About the ECR

The ECR Group is a political group within the European Parliament that includes the British Conservatives and like-minded political allies from several other countries. We are the only group in the European Parliament that believes the EU should decentralise power back to national capitals, town halls or to families and individuals.

We were created in 2009 to bring about major reform of the EU based on Eurorealism, a decentralisation of powers, more openness and a focus on supporting Europe's economic growth.

We promote principles like open markets, lower tax, the transatlantic alliance and the family.

As the third largest group in the European Parliament we put forward an alternative agenda for the EU to bring together all MEPs who believe the EU cannot go on as it is and needs to change.

EU Reform

The ECR becoming the 3rd largest group in the European Parliament and the success of our member parties in elections across Europe show that our calls for reform are resonating with the growing skepticism of European voters across the continent.

The current policies and structures of the European Union, largely designed to meet the needs of the 1950s, make it unfit to meet the challenges of the 2050s. This must change.

Europe needs a fresh approach. It needs new policies to modernise the economy so its industries and business can be competitive in the global marketplace. It needs reform so it is able to generate jobs and prosperity in the century ahead.

Contact the ECR

General Enquiries
European Parliament
Rue Wiertz – ATR 02K024
B-1047 Brussels
Tel: +32 2 284 13 94

Press Enquires
Robert Taylor
Tel: +32 498 984760
E-mail: robert.taylor@europarl.europa.eu

Website: http://ecrgroup.eu/