

# Quorn War Memorial



by Rupert Matthews MEP



European  
Conservatives  
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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 LEICESTERSHIRE REGIMENT



Cap badge of the Leicestershire Regiment. This distinctive design with a Bengal Tiger on it was given to the regiment in 1825 to recognise its long service in India.

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 Leicestershire Regiment had been raised in 1688 and so ranked as the 17th most senior regiment in the British Army in 1914. It has a glorious history of fighting the enemies of the King right around the world, campaigning in North America during the American War of Independence, fighting the Jacobites in Scotland in 1715 and campaigning against the French during the Napoleonic Wars before going out to India and the Crimea during Queen Victoria's reign.

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

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 went to France within days of the war breaking out and was quickly in action against the Germans. This unit took horrific casualties on the Somme in 1916. The 2nd Battalion was in India when the war broke out, but was at once put on board ship for Marseille and was then taken north by train to join the fighting. After a year in France, the battalion was shipped back to the Indian Ocean to join the invasion of Mesopotamia, fighting the Ottoman Turks. It ended the war in Baghdad.

In all, another 17 battalions were raised by the Leicestershire Regiment during the First World War – an amazing effort by one county. The 1/4th Battalion and 1/5th Battalion went to France in March 1915 as part of the Lincoln and Leicester Brigade of the North Midland Division. They fought at the Hohenzollern Redoubt later that year. The 2/4th Battalion and 2/5th Battalion joined the same brigade in February 1917 and fought through to the end of the war.

The 6th (Service) Battalion, 7th (Service) Battalion, 8th (Service) Battalion and 9th (Service) Battalion landed in France as part of the 110th Brigade of the 37th Division in July 1915 for service on the Western Front. They fought at High Wood and in the Battle of the Somme in the summer of 1916. Lieutenant Colonel Philip Bent was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross for his actions while in command of the 9th (Service) Battalion at the Battle of Polygon Wood in September 1917. The 11th (Service) Battalion was trained as what were then termed "Pioneers", though today they would be classed as military engineers, and went to France in March 1916 also for service on the Western Front. Finally, the 14th (Service) Battalion landed in France in July 1918 also for service on the Western Front. Other units were kept in Britain for home defence.

Given the many actions in which the Leicestershire Tigers fought, it comes as no surprise that the regiment lost an horrific 7,028 men.

But some villages were lucky. All the men who marched off to war came back again. They came to be known as the "Thankful Villages" and Leicestershire has two of them: Saxby and Willesley. To this day, neither village has a war memorial.

## THE BATTLE HONOURS OF THE LEICESTERSHIRE REGIMENT

NOTE THAT NAMES IN BOLD WERE EMBROIDERED ON THE REGIMENTAL COLOURS.

**FIRST WORLD WAR:** Aisne, 1914, '18, La Bassee, 1914, Armentieres, 1914, Festubert 1914, '15, **Neuve Chapelle**, Aubers, Hooge, 1915, **Somme, 1916, '18**, Bazentin, Flers-Courcelette, Morval, Le Transloy, **Ypres, 1917**, Polygon Wood, **Cambrai, 1917, '18**, St Quentin, **Lys**, Bailleul, Kemmel, Scherpenberg, Albert, 1918, Bapaume, 1918, Hindenburg Line, Épehy, **St Quentin Canal**, Beaurevoir, Selle, Sambre, **France and Flanders, 1914–18**, Megiddo, Sharon, Damascus, **Palestine, 1918**, Tigris, 1916, Kut-el-Amara, 1917, Baghdad, **Mesopotamia, 1915–18**.

**SECOND WORLD WAR:** Norway, 1940, Antwerp-Turnhout Canal, **Scheldt**, Zetten, **North-West Europe, 1944–45**, Jebel Mazar, Syria, 1941, **Sidi Barrani**, Tobruk, 1941, Montaigne Farm, **North Africa, 1940–41, '43**, **Salerno**, Calabritto, **Gothic Line**, Monte Gridolfo, Monte Colombo, **Italy, 1943–45**, **Crete**, Heraklion, Kampar, **Malaya, 1941–42**, **Chindits, 1944**

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

## PART THREE WAR MEMORIAL

The village of Quorn is in Leicestershire, near the university town of Loughborough. The name was shortened from Quorndon in 1889 – the change being effected to avoid postal difficulties due to the similarity to the name of another village, Quarndon in Derbyshire. Quorn is also known for its quarrying of stone from an early age at Buddon Wood, which is on the edge of the parish. Granite millstones were quarried in the early Iron Age and, under the Romans, stone was quarried for building in Leicester. Millstones continued to be produced into the early modern age and some of the larger examples can still be seen in the area, however these days they are either used as garden ornaments or worked into seats or slabs.

The War Memorial in Quorn is in the centre of the village at Quorn Cross on the old A6 road between Leicester and Loughborough. The memorial was unveiled on the 24th July 1921 by Lieutenant Colonel William Shirley Northcote Toller and was designed by Samuel Perkins Pick, of the company Pick Everard and Keay.

Toller was a popular choice to unveil the new memorial. He had been born in Loughborough in 1878, and as a young man moved to Stafford Court, just outside Quorn. In 1908, he joined the Territorial Army and by 1914 he held the rank of Major. On the outbreak of war, he transferred to the regular army and within weeks was in France with the 5th Battalion of the Leicestershire Regiment.

The memorial was originally supposed to be placed at the Spinney at the entrance to the park with appropriate entrance gates, piers and elevation of landscaping, but this was too expensive and cost £580. The memorial was listed on the 12th October 1984 as a Grade II building in the category of Statutory Listed Buildings.

However, before this memorial was unveiled there was a temporary memorial in its place while the permanent memorial was being constructed. This memorial was unveiled in December 1917 by Major Brockington who, upon its unveiling, said:

"I declare this war memorial open. Henceforth this spot of earth will be sacred to the memory of those, our sons and brothers, who have died that England may live.

"Perhaps in the course of time this temporary memorial which the wise forethought of our dear friend and neighbour has erected here will be replaced by a permanent memorial to the men of Quorn who have passed from our earthly regard, but whose spirit still lives with us. But certain it is that no more fitting or more beautiful memorial than this of Mr Pick's will stand here.

"It is just what we want – in simplicity and purity of design matching the simplicity and purity which should reign in our hearts as we pass this spot. No soldier will pass this spot without saluting his dead comrades. No father, brother, wife or sister, though their hearts be bowed with grief, will pass this spot without an uplifting of



the spirit, and she whose burden of sorrow is heaviest of all will lift up her heart with pride in the son she bore and gave to her country in her country's direst need.

"As for me, most of the names on this memorial are those of old boys of Leicestershire schools. I tried to be with them at the first, and my highest hope is that even now I may do something which is worthy of the sacrifice they had made. I declare this war memorial open, and I proclaim this spot of earth in Quorn sacred to and hallowed by the memory of our sons and brothers who have fought and died for us."

The memorial itself is a two-stepped square base surmounted by a large square sectioned Portland Whitbed two-tier stone column with a shallow relief of St George, and there is a dragon on the top front face. There are slate tablets on the front and rear face commemorating those who lost their lives in World War One and a slate tablet on the side for those who died in World War Two. The inscription on the slate tablets reads as follows:



“ ST GEORGE AND MERRY ENGLAND  
PASS NOT THIS STONE  
IN SORROW BUT IN PRIDE  
AND MAY YOU LIVE  
AS NOBLY AS THEY DIED  
IN MEMORY OF  
THE MEN OF QUORN  
WHO FELL IN THE  
GREAT WAR 1914-19  
[NAMES]  
1914-1919  
[76 NAMES TOTAL] ”

“ 1939-1945  
IN  
HONoured MEMORY  
OF THOSE WHO GAVE  
THEIR LIVES IN THE  
CAUSE OF FREEDOM  
[19 NAMES]  
WE WILL REMEMBER THEM ”

There was clearly a large loss of life in the village of Quorn and some of those who sacrificed their lives were C. Adams, F. Bale, W. Hallam, M. Hickling, J. Lucas, D. Moore, W. Moore, F. White and W. Steer.

William Hallam was Quorn's first casualty, Hallam had been a regular soldier with the Leicestershire Regiment and, although he left the army, he was one of the first to re-join when war broke out. In May 1914, he married Christina Savery in St Bartholomew's Church, but sadly news came 5 months later that Hallam had died on the 22nd October. Hallam had died in the trenches while in France. The War Diary for Thursday 22nd October shows that the Battalion had relieved the West Yorkshire Regiment the previous day at the Chemical Factory at Rue du Bois, they held the trenches and were heavily shelled by shrapnel and heavy Howitzers all day. Casualties included Lieutenant Prain and Dods killed, Lieutenant Smeethman was wounded and died on the 24th October, eleven Other Ranks were killed and twenty-five wounded. William was one of seven Leicestershire men who lost their lives on this day.

Another who is remembered on the memorial is Frank Bale. He was the son of George Bale, a General Labourer born 1846 in Husbands Bosworth, Leicestershire and his wife Ann, born 1855 in Quorndon, Leicestershire. Frank was born in 1884 in Quorndon, Leicestershire, his siblings were Harry, born 1877, Annie, born 1879 and Gertrude, born 1886; all his siblings were born in Quorndon, Leicestershire. In April 1891, the family home was at Freehold Street, Quorndon, Leicestershire. In March 1901, Frank was employed as a Farm Labourer and was residing with his parents and siblings in the family home at Freehold Street, Quorndon, Leicestershire. In April 1911 Frank was serving as a Gunner with 59th Siege Company, Royal Garrison Artillery and was stationed at Roorkee, India.

One day, which holds great importance, was the 13th May 1915, when Quorn suffered the greatest loss of life in a day during the war. Those who lost their lives included C. Adams, M. Hickling, J. Lucas, D. Moore, W. Moore, F. White and W. Steer. On this day, the Leicestershire Yeomanry found themselves involved in the battle of Frezenburg, which was a stage in the Second Battle of Ypres in Belgium; a battle in which the Germans used gas for the first time. With Quorn's long association with horses, it is not surprising that many young men from the village had joined the Leicestershire Yeomanry, and this led to many of them being involved in the horrors of that day – resulting in seven Quorn men losing their lives.

Brothers Daniel and William Moore tragically lost their lives on this day. Their parents, William and Ann brought up their family of seven on Station Road, in what is believed to now be number 34. It is recorded that "Trooper Dan Moore had been detailed as 'Pack leader' to take the horses out of the firing line, but he swapped places with another, so that he could remain with his brother, Billy, a decision that cost him his life." Additionally, with the end of the war in sight, news came through in September 1918 that their youngest son Hubert Mason Moore, who was fighting on the Western Front, had also been killed.

On the 13th May 1915, Frank Cuthbert White sadly lost his life. His parents were George White and his wife Mary who lived at Rose Cottage on Loughborough Road. George White was a well-known public figure in the village, as he was the Clerk to Quorndon Urban District Council, but held several other offices and was a local property developer. Similar to the Moores, they lost two of their sons, including Frank White and, near the end of the war, their eldest son Charles Kirbell White, who had died in action, in France, in September 1918. Perhaps these similar situations brought the families closer together, but as a result they donated a stained-glass window in St Bartholomew's Church in memory of the five men who lost their lives. This can be seen today on the North side of the Church.







## 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](http://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

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