

Burgess Hill Town Memorial and Garden of Remembrance



War Memorials Trust

Introduction

Burgess Hill town war memorial is situated within the Garden of Remembrance on the junction of Church Walk and Crescent Road. It is an example of a memorial which remembers a number of conflicts and remembers animals as well. It is just one of a number of memorials within the town. Some of the names on this memorial are also recorded on other memorials in and around Burgess Hill including those in St John's West Churchyard, London Road School and Hammond Place.

Design and history of the war memorial

The memorial takes the form of a bronze figure of St George who is armoured except for his bare head. He has a lance in his right hand, a shield in his left and stands over the body of a slain dragon. The figure stands on a circular pillar and octagonal plinth with a three-stepped base made from sandstone.

The memorial was unveiled by Colonel C H M Hitchins and dedicated by Reverend F G Beddard on 11th November 1923. Initially the Garden of Remembrance was illuminated free of charge by the then Electric Supply Company. The names of the fallen from World War I were originally incised in black lettering on the panels on the base of the memorial. These have since been replaced by eight patinated bronze plaques. Seven are inscribed with the names of those who died in the service of their country during World War I and the eighth, at the front, carries the inscription. There is an additional bronze plaque below the World War I inscription which indicates the memorial was rededicated in 1972 to all those who gave their lives throughout the years that we might live in peace.



Burgess Hill town war memorial situated in the Remembrance Gardens © Burgess Hill Town Council, 2018

The memorial is set within a Garden of Remembrance which is enclosed by fences and oak gates. A flagstone pavement, turfed on each side, leads up to the monument. A H Gregory notes in his *The Story of Burgess Hill* (published in 1933) that the background of poplar trees is meant to be reminiscent of Flanders. Both the garden and memorial were designed by Mr Walter Ernest Tower of Lindfield who then supervised the implementation of the stonework, fences and entrance gates by Messrs. Norman and Burt of Burgess Hill. The figure was designed by Mr William D Gough of London and cast by Broad Salmon and Co Ltd of London who were bronze founders specialising in the casting of statuary. Their name appears on the base of the statue.

Two black granite memorial stones, offset to one side, were added in 1995 bearing an inscription and the names of those who were killed during World War II and later conflicts including the Falklands War. There are two additional memorial stones within the Garden of Remembrance one of which commemorates the horses, dogs and pigeons who lost their lives. The other, unveiled in 2014, is in memory of a Belgian pilot who crashed in Burgess Hill in 1944.

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World War I centenary repairs

War Memorials Trust was contacted by Burgess Hill Town Council in early 2016 as they felt the town war memorial was in need of urgent repair. Most noticeable was that the statue of St George was leaning slightly. A condition survey/report carried out by a conservation-accredited metal conservator was recommended to inform the necessary conservation and repair works. Deterioration of the stone and bronze elements was a result of exposure to the elements for over 90 years.



Statue of St George before and after works were carried out to Burgess Hill town war memorial
© Burgess Hill Town Council, 2018

Recommendations from the report included removing the statue to stabilise it, cleaning and re-pointing the stonework and works to the bronze dedication plaques to address the slight green discolouration caused by copper sulphate corrosion deposits. New plaque fixings were also suggested to reduce vulnerability theft. The memorial garden gates were also deemed to be rotting and it was recommended that they were replaced. A grant of £12,360 from War Memorials Trust Grant Scheme was awarded which along with additional money from the Town Council meant that these repairs and conservation works could be carried out. In addition the memorial structure was protected by Smart Water a forensic liquid which makes it identifiable if stolen through the [In Memoriam 2014](#) project

This memorial highlights the problems faced by these historic structures such as theft and weathering. Exposure to the elements over the course of nearly 100 years causes them to become worn and damaged. It is important to regularly survey memorials so that works can be carried out, if needed, to protect and conserve them so that those who are commemorated can continue to be remembered by generations to come.

Vincent Waterfall

Vincent Waterfall was a young pilot from Burgess Hill who died aged 23 during World War I. He is recorded on the war memorial. Originally from Grimsby, Lincolnshire, Waterfall was the first airman to be killed in action in World War I, along with his observer Charles Bayly. The loss of their aircraft was the Royal Flying Corps' (which later became the RAF) first combat loss of the war.

Vincent Waterfall was the youngest son of Walter Frank and Mary Waterfall who had 10 children (eight sons and two daughters). The family lived at 94 Mill Road, Burgess Hill. The house was demolished in 2015 and is now the site of Mill Close and Millers Close. Vincent was a Second Lieutenant in the 3rd Battalion of the East Yorkshire Regiment attached to the Royal Flying Corps (5th Squadron). He qualified at Brooklands in Surrey and was regarded as a very able young pilot by the staff there.



Bronze panel to the left of the inscription on Burgess Hill town war memorial showing Vincent Waterfall's name © War Memorials Trust, 2017

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Waterfall and Bayly were given reconnaissance work as the army's 'eyes in the air' reporting on troop movement in Europe. On 22nd August 1914 they took off at 10.16am. While over Belgium they recorded seeing 600 baggage wagons between Mons and Soignies and various companies of infantry between Enghien and Soignies. Reports indicate that they fell victim to German ground fire which brought them down. The Germans buried them in a nearby meadow but the next day the Belgian who owned the land dug up the bodies and put them in his own family vault. After the war Waterfall was reburied by the Commonwealth War Grave Commission at Tournai Communal Cemetery Allied Extension in Belgium.

Teaching suggestions

Information about and photographs of this memorial can be used in sessions with young people about:

- Threats to war memorials: Burgess Hill Town memorial highlights some of the threats facing war memorials today. Given the age of many war memorials they may be suffering from weathering and erosion. In this instance the Town Council were alert to this threat and took steps to ensure the memorial was conserved and protected. This is not always the case and some memorials can become neglected. Another threat facing war memorials is that the bronze, copper and lead elements can be a target for theft due to the cost of metal. Metal elements are often the parts of the memorial which bear inscriptions and the names of the fallen so the loss of these can impact the memorial's commemorative function. Again the Town Council has taken steps to prevent theft by ensuring the plaques are securely attached to the memorial and marking them with Smart Water. These issues could provide a useful starting point for a discussion around the importance of war memorials then and now and also what can be done to protect war memorials
- Who is commemorated on war memorials: this memorial is an interesting example of the range of groups that can be commemorated. The intention was to commemorate the fallen of World War I but later additions have extended this to the fallen of the World War II including a Belgian pilot and the Falklands War
- War memorial materials: the nature of the conservation works carried out on this memorial highlight the properties of different materials and the changes that may occur when exposed to different conditions. This could provide an opportunity to examine which materials are suitable for creating war memorials in different locations and environments. This memorial can be used as a local example for War Memorials Trust's 'What are war memorials made from?' lesson, www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org/primary/pri-lessons

Useful links

The following links may provide additional helpful information about this memorial:

- War Memorials Online record: www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk/memorial/125782
- War Memorials Trust's Grants Showcase: www.warmemorials.org/search-grants/?qID=1348

Further information can be found at www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org/links which may help with lessons on some of the wider issues suggested here.

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