

Introduction

This memorial, located near Brompton Barracks in Chatham, is one of many that commemorate Field Marshall Earl Kitchener. The memorial was originally located in Khartoum and was moved to its current location in 1960. While the memorial commemorates Kitchener's entire military career, particular reference is made to Kitchener's time as Secretary of State for War in the early part of the First World War, a role for which he is arguably now best remembered.

History and design of the memorial

The war memorial consists of a large bronze statue of Earl Kitchener on horseback, which is set on top of a rectangular stone block. The whole structure is on a step and surrounded by lawn. A plaque, supported on a pedestal, is located close to the statue and this contains considerable detail about Kitchener's military career during the 19th and early 20th centuries, from his commission into the Royal Engineers in 1871, through to his appointment in August 1914 as Secretary of State for War. The plaque also explains how Kitchener died in 1916.

The memorial was unveiled on its present site in 1960 by the then Secretary of State for War, Christopher Soames MP. Prior to this date the statue was situated in Khartoum.

This statue is an example of a memorial to a significant individual, in contrast to the local First and Second World War memorials young people are perhaps more likely to be familiar with that tend to remember the many members of a community who were ordinary members of the armed forces. Memorials like the Kitchener statue were generally more common prior to the twentieth century, when it was usually only leaders and significant individuals killed during a war who were commemorated. It was the First World War which was the significant turning point in terms of who was commemorated on war memorials and which led to the creation of the thousands of local memorials that are now part of our landscape.

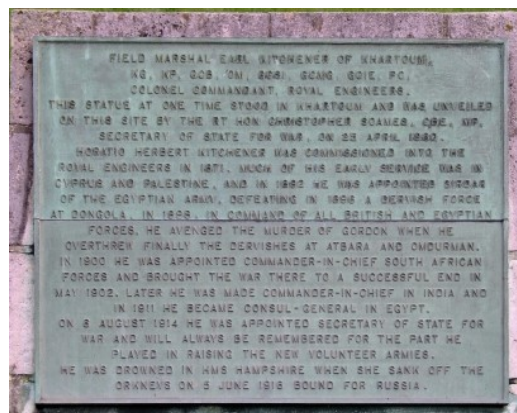
The design of the Kitchener memorial is also more in keeping with this earlier type of commemoration. An elaborate statue depicting the individual in military uniform and on horseback was fairly common before the First World War and many examples like this one can be found in the UK and elsewhere. While pre-20th century war memorials were not exclusively of this type there was not the variety in war memorial types that became more widespread in the aftermath of the First World War. As such the Kitchener memorial can be used as an example to compare war memorial types with young people and to track the changes in methods of commemoration over time.

Earl Kitchener

Kitchener's military service is summarised on a plaque attached to the memorial statue. Kitchener was born in 1850 in Ireland and at a young age moved to Switzerland before returning to England. He received a commission into the Royal Engineers in 1871 and during the remainder of the nineteenth century served in Cyprus, Palestine and Egypt. During the Second Boer War (1899-1902) he was mentioned in dispatches several times and by 1902 had been promoted to the rank of general. He also



Kitchener memorial statue, Chatham
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Information plaque on the memorial ©
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was created Viscount Kitchener of Khartoum in July 1902, before later becoming Commander in Chief in India. In 1911 he became Consul-General in Egypt.

It is the early part of the First World War for which Kitchener is arguably best known. Shortly after war was declared he was appointed Secretary of State for War. Kitchener was one of the few who believed that the war would be a long one and would require significantly more manpower than was available in the army at the time. He therefore advocated the existing army being used to train up new divisions so that Britain was equipped for a long war. A recruitment campaign began featuring the now well known poster of Kitchener. Men volunteered for the army at the start of the war for a variety of reasons, but by the end of September over 750,000 had joined up; by January 1915, a million. Perhaps surprisingly the real peak in terms of recruitment in this period was not immediately after war was declared but in the last week of August and early September after the British retreat following the Battle of Mons.

In June 1916 Kitchener was on his way to Russia on board HMS Hampshire when the ship sank west of the Orkney Islands after striking a mine. Kitchener, his staff and most of the 655 crew members were either drowned or died of exposure; there were only 12 survivors. Kitchener's body was never found.

Numerous memorials to Kitchener were erected in the wake of his death and after the First World War ended. For example, as well as the one referred to here, there is a further memorial to him on Horse Guards Parade in London and a memorial tower raised by the people of Orkney near the location of Kitchener's death.

Teaching suggestions

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

- War memorial designs: the Kitchener memorial is an example of a traditional memorial type and can be used as a local example of how memorial designs vary from statues of significant individuals to local memorials commemorating many people from the same community.
- The history of the early days of the First World War: War Memorials Trust's lesson plan on the Kitchener memorial, available from www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org, provides suggestions for using this memorial as the basis for a lesson about the early part of the First World War and Kitchener's role in the recruitment of a large army.
- What we can learn from examining war memorials: because this memorial contains a lot of information about Kitchener and his career, it is a good example to use when considering what we can learn from different kinds of memorials and teaching pupils to look for evidence about the past.

Useful links

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

- War Memorials Online record: www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk/node/156026

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

For further information and resources please contact the Learning Officer at:
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