

What Exactly are Non-Coms?

(Non Commemorations)

Answer: Casualties of war whose names were never officially recorded by the authorities (most were buried in unmarked paupers graves)

Before we carry on you need to understand the difference between a CIVIC tribute and an OFFICIAL tribute -

Official Commemoration .v. Civic Commemoration

In order to understand the content of this newsletter, it is absolutely imperative that you understand the difference between an **Official Tribute** and a **Civic Tribute**. This is not always understood and can lead to utter confusion. Each casualty of the war should have an **official commemoration** (paid for and maintained by the government) – this can be in the form of a headstone where they were buried or in the case of men whose remains were never found or identified, an entry on one of the government's memorials to the missing men. A **civic commemoration** is a private tribute often funded by parish council's and local authorities where a man hailed from or was employed. The men's names that appear on private (civic) tributes will more often than not also appear on an official tribute somewhere else. Sometimes we come across men's names on local civic tributes who do not have any form of official commemoration. It is these men who will take priority because this means the country they died for has forgotten their sacrifice! Try not to get the two confused.

The vast majority of men whose names appear on a civic tribute should **ALSO** have an official tribute. If not then it's possible their name has been forgotten! If you are transcribing a civic war memorial and come across a name(s) that you can't trace on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission searchable website it's possible (even probable) that you have discovered one of these men! Unfortunately the authorities will not assist you. It's up to you alone to get the record put straight. If you decide you want to do this, we shall be happy to assist you in any way we possibly can. Just get in touch with us.

This is a good example of confusion between a civic and official commemoration - *Some people in Medway seem to under the mis-guided impression that the Chatham Naval Memorial is in fact the town's civic tribute to the fallen men of Medway and surrounding areas! Of course this is nonsense, the Chatham Naval Memorial is in fact an official military memorial to the fallen sailors from ships that were based at Chatham during the war. The vast majority of sailors mentioned on it came from all over the UK and it's Dominions.*

CWGC Non Commemorations

During this work on local memorials we have identified some men whose names although inscribed on a local civic memorial, are not actually recorded by the Government or Commonwealth War Graves Commission as "war casualties". This means that the man concerned will have no official commemoration anywhere. Of more concern is the fact that men like this are not entitled to an official war headstone paid for and maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission from public funds. Many of these men's graves are literally falling apart. Sadly we have often been unable to locate a man's grave even after walking round local cemeteries and churchyards for hours on end. It is a sad fact that often these men were buried quietly in paupers graves without any kind of headstone. Where and when possible, we carry out minor repairs to these graves ourselves. If these deaths had been properly recorded in the first place, this disgraceful situation would never have arisen.

The reason(s) why these men's deaths were not recorded is many and varied. Sometimes they died of wounds after being swiftly discharged from the service. Sometimes the families simply didn't bother to ensure their names went forward. It would be unfair to place all the blame at the door of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission because the Ministry of Pensions in the years following the war often failed to give the then IWGC the names of men

who died as a result of war wounds or of illnesses aggravated by war service. This resulted in old soldiers, sailors and airman being forgotten...

Whenever we have identified a man that comes into this unfortunate category, we have immediately made a note of the circumstances. It is our intention to present these cases to the CWGC and apply pressure to have their deaths properly recorded as war casualties. The problem here is that the CWGC will not act unless they are given a variety of documentation evidence including the following:

- Death certificate
- Copy of service records (from National Archives)
- Photo of name on memorial
- Newspaper cuttings
- Any other supporting evidence

It takes considerable time and money to obtain these kinds of documents. Even if the evidence we submit is eventually accepted and a man's name eventually added to their records, these costs are never re-imbursed to researchers like us. This is a scandalous situation as it doesn't encourage people to come forward with information in the first place! The Australian, Canadian and New Zealand Governments treat their war dead (and researchers like us) with far more respect and will pay in full for investigations of this sort. All they require is for you to draw their attention to a non-commemoration and then they most helpfully and professionally do the rest (without it must be said the tardy delays we have come to expect from our own Commission and the MoD).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission does not take kindly to criticism of this nature and amateur researchers brave enough to raise their heads "above the parapet" are often unfairly labelled as "Commission Bashers". This is clearly nonsense, we care passionately about the men we research. The Commission's clerical and horticulture workers have always and still do a great job but most of the Commission's good work was done years ago. In our opinion the Commission has become very complacent. It seems happy to stand on the sideline and watch private individuals like us do all the hard work. The commission has utterly failed those men who were forgotten 85 years ago...

John Morecombe's Work

We support the superb work of our peer **John Morecombe** (aka Jack Clegg). John is truly the pioneer of this kind of work and we remain grateful for his kind help and assistance. His superb and brutally honest website includes forgotten Ashford men (submitted by us) -

"Here we are in the 5th year of the 21st century, 87 years after that day in 1918 when the guns fell silent. Whilst the majority of people once again prepare to honour the memory of "The Fallen", they remain blissfully unaware of the greatest deception ever perpetrated on our nation – the confidence trick to end all confidence tricks, epitomised by the well known phrase "THEIR NAME LIVETH FOR EVERMORE". Nothing could be further from the truth. The terrible reality which belies the myth sold by "THEIR NAME LIVETH FOR EVERMORE" is that tens of thousands of "The Fallen" still remain uncommemorated, they STILL have no official grave or memorial, they are still not listed by the CWGC nor recognised by any official source as casualties of the Great War. Their names DO NOT "Liveth for Evermore", they are truly forgotten men, lost in the void between truth and myth, a myth that constitutes the greatest ever hoodwink of our nation. Nobody could ever imagine the true scale of the shortfall in CWGC records. It is nothing short of scandalous!"

We couldn't have put it better ourselves John...

Our Own Non-Commemoration Work

We have been active in this type of research since 1999 when alongside John Morecombe, we were probably one of only a handful of people undertaking work of this nature. We immediately recognised the seriousness of the problem and the huge numbers of forgotten casualties who were never recorded by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

In January 2000 we formally submitted to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission the case of **Private 10619 William KNOCK** (4th Worcestershire's) whose name appears on the Ashford War Memorial. William was **KILLED IN ACTION** 9th October 1917 on the Somme in France. Despite the fact his name was recorded on Soldiers Died Great War, the CWGC did not record his name on their Roll of Honour which was very surprising given the fact he was actually Killed in Action! In February 2005 after a very tardy investigation the Ministry of Defence finally decided that William's name should be added to the CWGC death indexes. William's name will soon be added to the Addenda Panel on the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing. Without our intervention this man would have remained forgotten forever. Neil Clark then made the suggestion that the Commission should trawl through Soldiers Died Great War and try and identify fallen men like William Knock who had been forgotten. This entirely sensible suggestion was merely met with a blank stare from the Records Supervisor who replied that "Soldiers Died Great War contained many factual errors and omissions" (much the same as the Commission's own database). Of course he had completely missed the point that Neil was trying to make – a search like this would "flag up" potential missing men and further enquiries could then be made to establish the truth. The "upshot" of this was that nothing was done...

In August 2003 we submitted a further **Seventeen** men's names to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission for belated commemoration. All Seventeen men's names appear on various war memorials in the Ashford area. In fact 12 appear on a single tribute – Ashford Town civic war memorial! Alarming none are recorded by the government as war casualties! We simply couldn't comprehend why these men had been forgotten like this for more than 80 years! No one seems to have realised or cared enough to do something about it.

The Ashford Town memorial clearly displays the names of **13** utterly forgotten men. This figure equates to about 4% of the total men commemorated on it. This is a significant figure and rather makes a mockery of the local branch of the Royal British Legion (RBL) who have regularly paraded in front of it for 90 years! Until we got involved no one even knew of these forgotten men's status.

In October 2005 Neil Clark received welcomed news confirming that a further Six men's names had been approved by the Ministry of Defence and that the Commonwealth War Graves Commission was adding their names to it's Roll of Honour. More importantly from our point of view, these men's graves will now be properly recorded and regulation war headstones erected for those who have no existing headstone – Brilliant!

We were extremely impressed with the army taking only **2 weeks** to make their adjudication. This is surely a fine example to those other sloth-like government departments. Credit where it's due.



Batch 1 MoD Submission 2003

* Our special thanks is due to **Christine Smith** (Ashford Borough Council) for her valued assistance in tracing burial sites etc..

1. Knock W (Ashford War Memorial)	APPROVED APR 2003
2. Baker A.J (Ashford War Memorial)	APPROVED MAY 2006
3. Catling G.L (Ashford Cemetery, Peterborough)	APPROVED OCT 2005
4. Cloke F.W (Ashford War Memorial)	APPROVED JUNE 2006
5. Collins C.N (Ashford War Memorial)	REJECTED MAY 2006
6. Fisher A.L (Ashford War Memorial)	REJECTED SEPT 2006
7. Gleave J.C (Wye – Grave Only)	REJECTED OCT 2005
8. Holder R.G.W (Ashford War Memorial)	APPROVED OCT 2005
9. Hoskins H.F (Ashford War Memorial)	REJECTED OCT 2006
10. Ingall A.L (Ashford War Memorial)	APPROVED OCT 2005
11. Machin A.S.H (Ashford War Memorial)	APPROVED OCT 2005
12. Page W.R (Ashford War Memorial)	REJECTED OCT 2006
13. Quinnell J.W (Ashford War Memorial)	APPROVED JUN 2006
14. Rossiter E (Ashford War Memorial)	APPROVED OCT 2005
15. Sharp E.S (Crundale War Memorial)	REJECTED OCT 2006
16. Sinden W.A (Boughton Aluph War Memorial)	APPROVED OCT 2005
17. Usherwood J.J (Ashford War Memorial)	APPROVED JUN 2006
18. Millais J.E (Warehorne Church Plaque)	REJECTED 2007

So there you have it – Out of **18** submissions, we have **11** outright successes. Without doubt this has been a worthwhile project. Eleven men will now have their names placed on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Roll of Honour and all will now be entitled to have their graves recorded and maintained from the public purse forever more. In the cases of messrs Baker, Cloke, Holder, Machin, Rossiter, Sinden and Usherwood they were buried in paupers graves without any kind of headstone! These men will now get shiny new war graves paid for by the country they gave their lives for.... **FANTASTIC NEWS!**

We continue to seek out men like these who have been forgotten by the country/towns/villages they gave their lives for. We envisage making further submissions in the future as more cases come to light. Ashford civic War Memorial alone contained the names of no less than 13 men whose deaths were never officially recorded. **One of these men (William Knock) was even killed in action on the Somme!**

APPEALS FROM BATCH 1

We are appealing against the following rejections to the Naval Historical Branch in Portsmouth

HOSKINS H.F
PAGE W.R

Unfair and Harsh Rejection
Unfair and Harsh Rejection

Hopefully our appeals will be successful and these 2 brave men will be similarly honoured. Note – neither man presently has a headstone.



Batch 2 MoD Submission 2007

All these Cases Were Finally Approved in April 2008

2.1	BATT	G	Egerton War Memorial
2.2	DIXON	W.A	Dover Newspaper
2.3	HANDS	H	Egerton War Memorial
2.4	HUSK	A.F	Tilmanstone War Memorial
2.5	INWOOD	W.J	River War Memorial
2.6	MACLAREN	A.L	Mersham War Memorial
2.7	SWAFFER	W.G	Charing Heath War Memorial
2.8	TUKE	B.M	Sutton Valence War Memorial
2.9	WOODS	F	Stamford War Memorial, Lincs
2.10	SWANSON	H.S	Stamford War Memorial, Lincs



Batch 3 MoD Submission

These Cases were submitted August 2008

All these Cases Were Finally Approved in July 2008

* Kyle Tallett found all these Sittingbourne Non-Coms

3.1	BAKER H.J (Sailor)	Sittingbourne War Memorials
3.2	HOLLIS C.G (Sailor)	Sittingbourne War Memorials
3.3	PACKHAM A.T (Soldier)	Sittingbourne War Memorials
3.4	RALPH G.H (Sailor)	Sittingbourne War Memorials
3.5	SMITH C.V (Soldier)	Sittingbourne War Memorials
3.6	TICKNER E (Soldier)	Sittingbourne War Memorials
3.7	TYLER L.C (Soldier)	Sittingbourne War Memorials
3.8	WEST S.J (Sailor)	Brenzett War Memorial



Additional Non-Commemoration Cases Under Investigation

1. BICKERSTEPH E.R	Speldhurst War Memorial
2. BLACKMAN F.J	Higham War Memorial
3. HART S.C	Ashford
4. KIDD P	Sidcup War Memorial
5. HOLDSTOCK J	Eynesford War Memorial
6. WHITE G.J	Mick Mills Submission (Bufs)
7. KIBLER P.G	Wye College War Memorial
8. PARKER F	Speldhurst War Memorial
9. UDEN J	Lympne War Memorial
10. WARREN A	Vickers Factory Crayford
11. JELLIS P.E	Kent County Council War Roll
12. BAKER S.A	Speldhurst War Memorial
13. HOLLIS C.G	Sittingbourne (Kyle Tallett)
14. HOOK S.H	Sittingbourne (Kyle Tallett)
15. LAMKIN J	Sittingbourne (Kyle Tallett)
16. MILLS E.W	Sittingbourne (Kyle Tallett)
17. GILHAM F	Maggie Stephenson-Knight (Dover)
18. MAY W.J	Maggie Stephenson-Knight (Dover)
19. ROBUS G.F	Maggie Stephenson-Knight (Dover)
20. SMITH A.A	Maggie Stephenson-Knight (Dover)
21. MATTHEWS S.W	Sheerness War Memorial
22. GILHAM P.J	Sheerness War Memorial
23. APRAY E	Sheerness War Memorial