

Return of the UNKNOWN WARRIOR

Derek Leach

During the 2012 wreath laying ceremony, at the Marine station, by the plaque that commemorates the bringing ashore of the body of the unknown warrior our chairman gave the following speech.

At the end of the First World War it was the idea of an army chaplain in France that all the unknown soldiers lying dead in France should be honoured in a unique way.

So it was that the remains of one unknown Tommy from four different battlefields, Aisne, Arras, Somme and Ypres, were exhumed and taken to a temporary chapel where they were wrapped in Union flags. There, a senior British officer touched one of the bodies. That body, inside a plain coffin, was taken to Boulogne with sacks of soil dug from the spot where the soldier had died so that the French earth that he was defending would cover the warrior in Westminster Abbey.

On 10th November 1920, the body was placed in an oak coffin, loaded on HMS



Unknown Warrior, Marine Station with Honour Guard

Verdun and brought to Dover escorted by 6 destroyers. People lined the cliffs at Dover and other vantage points. National and local civic leaders waited at Admiralty Pier. The body went by rail with people lining the track all the way to London. On the following day the body went in procession through the streets of London to Westminster Abbey where it was laid to rest among the kings, the great and the good, representing the hundreds of thousands of British troops with no known grave or whose identities were unknown.



Remembrance

