



Remembering 1914-18

*A Journal of my WWI
Centenary Experience*

Recording the Dead



Major-General Sir Fabian Arthur Goulstone Ware

A vital part of remembrance is the careful recording of who has died and where they are buried.

When a man called Fabian Ware – a former schoolmaster, examiner, inspector of education, journalist and editor – tried to enlist in August 1914, he was rejected as at 45 he was too old. Instead, he took command of a British Red Cross mobile ambulance unit – volunteers who went to the front lines. He soon realised the army had no official unit to record and mark the graves of those killed. His unit began doing just that, and he proposed an official organisation to do the job.

The government responded quickly, and in 1915 the Graves Registration Commission was created as part of the army, with Ware in charge. This not only helped relatives anxiously asking after their loved ones but also supported the troops' morale, as they knew they would not be ignored or forgotten should they fall. By October 1915 the unit had over 31,000 graves registered.

From the beginning, Ware was keen to make his work multi-national, and so, on 21 May 1917, the Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC) – renamed Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) in 1960 – was established by Royal Charter, with the Prince of Wales as President and Fabian Ware as Vice-Chairman.

The IWGC's vast work began in earnest after the Armistice: by then some 587,000 graves had been identified and a further 559,000 casualties were registered as having no known grave. Ware was active in approaching artists, architects and poets (among others) in order to design the best possible war memorials and cemeteries.

Pilgrimage

On your battlefield tour you are following in the footsteps of hundreds of thousands of people going to see the places made infamous by WWI and to visit the graves or memorials of relatives, friends or local men recorded on war memorials across the cities, towns and villages of Britain.

More recently interest has grown in men famous for their pre-war or wartime deeds – international sportsmen, notable politicians, Victoria Cross winners and so on – or for their later careers – Field Marshall Montgomery, Adolf Hitler and others. Hardly a family in Europe was untouched by WWI, for good or ill.

The first travellers journeyed across the English Channel almost as soon as the fighting stopped. Individuals and organisations offered guided tours or simply transport to

the Western Front. In 1920 the train from London Victoria Station to Ypres (with a boat crossing, of course) took 12 hours and cost 1-2s-11d (£1-15 in today's money), and the YMCA offered all-inclusive tours of the Somme for £6.

Your Journey

Your journey should help you to gain some sense of what it was like to live, survive, fight and perhaps die on the Western Front – and to begin to understand simple judgements do not work.

Fill in below the times and ways you actually travelled – not just copied off your planned itinerary!

	Method of travel & notes	Day	Time	Time taken
Departure from school				
Arrival at crossing (Dover or Folkestone)				
Arrival in France (Calais)				
Arrival at first visit or hotel				
Departure from hotel or last visit				
Arrival at Calais for crossing				
Arrival at Dover or Folkestone				
Return to school				
TOTAL TIME TRAVELLING				

How does your journey compare with those described in the 1920s?
