



Weston's war memorials

'In the aftermath of the First World War, the people of Britain needed a focus for their grief, loss and pride. War memorials were erected across the UK in the greatest wave of remembrance this nation has ever seen.'

UK War Memorials

Everyone knows of a war memorial somewhere - but how many are there? The Imperial War Museum is attempting to compile a register of all the memorials in Great Britain. Believe it or not such a thing has not existed until now (so far there are 37,780).



The statue of Winged Victory in Grove Park © Tom Simpson

Every settlement around Weston that existed in 1914 has some sort of memorial and in some cases more than one. Usually these were in, or nearby, a church but some were rolls of honour in schools or places of work. This alone gives the modern reader an idea of the vast scale of loss experienced as a result of the First World War - every family in the country was affected in some way.

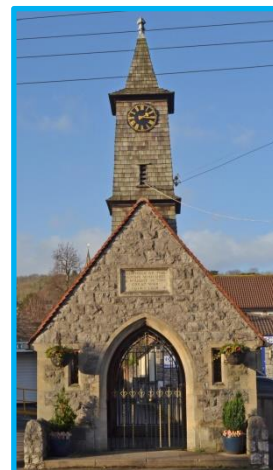
To make this task manageable we have confined our research to Weston's immediate area and include only a brief description of what you can see. The list is in geographical order clockwise around Weston super Mare. Separate sheets are available which cover each of the memorials in greater detail.

Grove Park - A statue of Winged Victory with her arms outstretched stands at the centre of the Grove Park war memorial. The statue holds an olive branch in her right hand, symbolising peace. On and around the monument are plaques commemorating soldiers and civilians who died in both World Wars.

At some point in the mid-1970s the olive branch mysteriously disappeared. The town council found detailed images of the item and it was restored in 2018 with a £6,200 grant from the War Memorials Trust.

Hutton Moor - On the wall of the Post Office building on Warne road, there is a plaque commemorating men of the Weston Post Office who died in the First World War. A similar plaque below lists Post Office men who died in the Second World War.

Kewstoke - St Paul's Church, Kewstoke, has memorials to the dead of both World Wars. Three wall-mounted stone tablets, two of which are decorated with carvings of soldiers and sailors, commemorate those who died in the First World War. A simple oval plaque honours the memory of those who died in the Second World War.



The gate and clock tower memorial in Worle © Peter Johnson

Worle - A Stone Lychgate with a clock tower dedicated to 'Those of this parish who died and fought in The Great War' stands on the High Street in Worle. Inside there are plaques listing the fallen of the First and Second World Wars. At nearby St Martin's Church, a stone column with a cross on top commemorates the sacrifices made in both World Wars.

Locking - In St Augustine's Church there is a plaque to commemorate John Glimstead of the Royal Engineers who died during the battle of Passchendaele in the First World War.

Uphill - St Nicholas Church in Uphill contains a plaque to commemorate the loss of Major R B Graves-Knyfton of Uphill Manor. He died in India shortly before the end of the First World War, having been wounded fighting the Ottomans in Iraq in 1916.



Hutton's cross memorial © Mark Charlesworth

Hutton - In Hutton, a stone cross surrounded by a semi-circular wall forms a memorial to the dead of both World Wars, military and civilian.

More information on Weston's war memorials including a list of the dead can be found on The Imperial War Museum website, Historic England's website and at warmemorialsonline.org.uk.

Unexpected controversy

Remembrance has become such a feature of our national identity that few people appreciate how controversial these monuments were when they were proposed after the Great War. Where they should be built, what they should look like and say were all up for debate.

One of the first and most controversial decisions made by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission was that none of those who fell fighting abroad would be brought back to Britain. Given the scale of the losses, and the difficulty of identifying many of the dead, this was understandable but it was very hard for the families back home. Outrage grew when people learned that the United States had paid for all its' war dead to be brought home.

Those who could afford to, travelled to Europe (and further afield) to pay a final tribute to their loved ones but this option was not available to everyone. Naturally, communities wanted a local memorial where the dead could be remembered – somewhere their names would be present even though their bodies would not.

Many towns and villages held competitions for the design of the monuments but this was not straightforward. Some communities wished to celebrate 'Our Glorious Dead', marking sacrifices made to defend our way of life. Others, however, opted for the far more sombre 'Lest We Forget', taking a far more ambivalent attitude to a conflict that had devastated many communities and destroyed the prosperity of Western Europe.

The memorials built abroad were equally contentious. For some, particularly disabled veterans, who received only a small pension from the government, the vast sums expended on building memorials to the fallen, such as the one at Thiepval in The Somme, would have been far better spent providing for those left unable to work because of the conflict.



The Thiepval Memorial © Mark Charlesworth

However, with the additional losses both military and civilian in the Second World War and in subsequent conflicts, remembrance has become of increasing importance. Armistice Day now constitutes one of the key days in our national calendar, as can be seen from the attendance at the many services held every year at memorials all over Britain.



Weston-super-Mare
Town Council