A memorial event aimed at remembering those who fought at the Battle of the Somme and also raise awareness of Commonwealth War Grave Commission WW1 headstones has taken place in Tunbridge Wells cemetery.

On 9 July the Friends of Tunbridge Wells Cemetery at Hawkenbury, thanks to help from the CWGC Living Memory Project, held the memorial service at the WW1 Cross of Sacrifice on a sunny Saturday morning. It was followed by an exhibition and also a tour of some of the WW1 graves within the cemetery.

The ceremony saw 150 people from across the community in attendance - including special guest, veteran William Alfred Hunt MM who served with the QORWK Regt in North Africa, Sicily, Italy and Austria.

Before the service commenced a red ribbon was placed adjacent to each of the 75 graves to honour those from the town who died in the First World War. Robert Atwood, Chairman declared, ‘The Battle of the Somme was a particularly striking example of the tragic cost of human conflict in terms of wasted or damaged lives and bereft families for friends and foe alike. Hundreds of Tunbridge Wells families suffered in this way.’
The Friends of Tunbridge Wells Cemetery together with the support and co-operation of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC)

All 75 WW1 Portland Stones marked with red ribbons

Memorial Service Conducted by The Reverend Gareth Jones, Pastor Pantiles Baptist Church, Chaplain 129 (Tunbridge Wells) Squadron ATC

Cadets from The Skinners’ School CCF with Event Commander (EC), Flt Lt Tim W Blackwell JP RAF (VR) T Commanding Officer: 129 (Tunbridge Wells) Squadron Air Training Corps.

Welcome speech, Robert Atwood
Readings

The laying of seven wreaths around the base of the Cross of Sacrifice.

Music

The Last Post & Reveille
A time for listening and reflecting

The Skinners’ School CCF with William ‘Alf’ Hunt MM

A time for coming together as a community

Mrs Rita Scales, Cllr Mrs Julia Soyke, Deputy Mayor, TWBC, Mr Fred Scales

St. John’s Ambulance Cadets with William ‘Alf’ Hunt MM and Cadet Superintendent, Mr Martyn Steers.

Mr Fred Scales, Mrs Sara Browne, Mrs Madeleine Duffield, Mr Barry Duffield DL.
History Students from Skinners’ Kent Academy

Respect

Talking to Journalists

Listening to stories

Cadets from TWGGS

A time for taking photographs

Peter Blackwell with Angelo Duarte from the CWGC
A time for friendship and admiring medals

Displays in the Friends chapel with flowers and refreshments

Historical information

Tour of the War Graves with Ann Bates
Remembrance

They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.

13 November: Remembrance Sunday followed by RBL Lecture by Alison Sandford Mckenzie on the ‘Belgian Refugees’.
2 December: 7.30 pm, Lecture by Chris Jones on ‘Broadwater Down and Tunbridge Wells.’

Please help us with our research

At the Living Memory Event, the following gravestone was brought to our attention by a member of gathering.

The text reads:
In Fond Memory of Ewart only son of J.B. and E.C Richardson. Died Oct 22nd 1918 while a prisoner of war at Lamsdorf, Germany. Aged 19 years.

This heart-breaking inscription is made even more poignant after reading this advertisement in the Sevenoaks Chronicle and Kentish Advertiser from 20 December 1918. His family were still asking for information months after he had died.

Do you know anything about Ewart, his family or even the war camp? We would be interested to hear from you.

Future Events:
6 August: 10.30am, FWPC tour to Frant churchyard, Speldhurst church and churchyard and Rusthall cemetery. Please contact David Bushell (bushell327@btinternet.com)
10 September: Heritage Open Days, Exhibition and Guided Walk on Memorial Symbolism
3 November: 10am, Fungi Walk with Martin Allison
The Friends would like to hear from any family with information and pictures about the lives of their Tunbridge Wells relatives who died or were wounded in WW1. Please contact June Bridgeman, jbman@btinternet.com

The Friends Group was set up in 2014 with these aims:

- To further the protection, conservation and sympathetic enhancement of the Tunbridge Wells cemetery for public benefit and enjoyment;
- To record and foster its heritage of monuments and its ecological importance: and
- To foster its appropriate use as an educational resource for the community.

We have the following projects in hand, with more to follow:

- Researching and recording the lives of the people buried in the cemetery
- Recording the plant and wild life
- Clearing up around the graves
- Identifying the graves in need of restoration

Membership details:

The current annual subscription is £10

Cheques payable to: The Friends of Tunbridge Wells Cemetery.

Please contact:

Barry Melbourne Webb, 32 Birling Road,
Tunbridge Wells, Kent,
TN2 5LY. Tel: 01892 525500

We hope to see you soon and do keep in touch by visiting:

Website: foftwc.wix.com/foftwc
Facebook: www.facebook.com/TunbridgeWellsCemetery
Twitter: TW Cemetery @FoHCTW

Editor Caroline Auckland

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