

the menin gate

overview

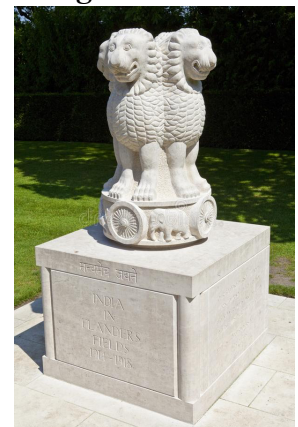
As the first “Memorial to the Missing” and the location for the nightly “Last Post” ceremony the Menin Gate is one of the most important monuments of the war.

Designed by Sir Reginald Blomfield and built by the British government, the memorial was unveiled on 24 July 1927.

It is placed on the main road out of the town that led Allied soldiers to the front line of the Ypres Salient. The lion on the top, looking towards the front line, is a symbol not just for Britain but for Flanders.

It is sobering to think that the Menin Gate commemorates just a small fraction of casualties from the British Empire: soldiers who died in the Ypres Salient before 15th August 1917 and who have no known grave.

A large number of Indian casualties are commemorated on the Menin Gate, and there is a special memorial to their sacrifice on one side of the gate.



Q. The war ended on November 11th 1918. Why then do you think the cut-off date of August 15th 1917 was chosen for this memorial?

Q. Why is a lion on the top of the monument?

- a. Because it is the animal used to represent courage
- b. Because it is the animal used to represent Britain
- c. Because it is the animal used to represent Flanders
- d. All of the above

Q. Why was the Menin Gate was built at this particular spot?

- a. Because this was the gate of the town closest to the fighting
- b. Because this was the gate used by troops on their way to the front
- c. Both of the above

independent tasks

Q. Take the time to explore the memorial. How many Commonwealth soldiers do you think are commemorated here?

There are Latin inscriptions set in circular panels either side of the archway, on both the east and west sides: "Pro Patria" and "Pro Rege" ('For Country' and 'For King').

Q. If you could place two further inscriptions on the North and South sides of the Menin Gate, what would they be?

Q. Despite their massive contribution, New Zealand and Newfoundland soldiers are not commemorated on the Menin Gate. Why?

Q. If you can, find a panel on the memorial where a name has clearly been removed. Take a photograph.

Q. Why do you think names are still occasionally removed from the Menin Gate?



In his poem 'On Passing the New Menin Gate', Siegfried Sassoon attacked "this sepulchre of crime...a pile of peace-complacent stone". The Austrian writer Stefan Zweig, in contrast, said that it was "more impressive than any triumphal arch or monument to victory that I have ever seen".

Q. Why do you think that Sassoon was so critical of the Menin Gate?
