

1950's MEMORIAL MANIA KEEPS THE QUEEN BUSY

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On the 25th October, 1958, The Queen unveiled what was then known simply as the 'Brookwood Memorial'. It commemorated almost three-and-a-half thousand men and women of the Commonwealth land forces who died during the Second World War and whose grave was unknown (and who were not at that time commemorated on any 'campaign memorial'). Some were secret agents who died working for the allies undercover, such as SOE operative Violette Szabo (who was trained at nearby Wanborough Manor), whilst most were 'normal' soldiers lost at sea, killed during aerial combat, or who died in raids where their bodies were not recovered or identified.

Of course since then some bodies have been discovered and through modern techniques identified, but until (or unless) the panels are replaced they will still be commemorated here.

The Military Cemetery at Brookwood is owned and looked after by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. It is entirely separate from



The circular memorial to those from the Second World War with no known grave was designed by Ralph Hobday and unveiled by the Queen on the 25th October 1958.

the now local authority owned Brookwood Cemetery, but the original owners of the cemetery, the London Necropolis & National Mausoleum Company, offered part of their site in 1917 'for men and women of the Commonwealth and American forces, who died in the London District of wounds sustained in battle during the First World War', which is how the largest military cemetery in the country can be found in our area.

Earlier this year, to mark the 100th anniversary of the opening of the Military Section at Brookwood, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission opened an exhibition 'For Then, For Now, Forever' detailing the history of the Commission and the work it does at Brookwood and elsewhere. It will be on show for the next few months in the Grade I listed Canadian Records Building in the Cemetery (opposite the Memorial) and is well worth a visit.

During the Second World War the military cemetery at Brookwood was extended to accommodate those from that conflict - including not just members of the



The Queen had unveiled the RAF Memorial at Runnymede on the 17th October 1953.



Commonwealth, but men and women from other allied countries such as Belgium, Czechoslovakia, France and Poland. Perhaps the best known section, however, is the American Military Cemetery owned by the United States Government and looked after by the American Battle Monuments Commission - 4½ acres of America that you don't need a plane or passport to visit.

The Brookwood Memorial, designed by Ralph Hobday and unveiled by the Queen in October 1958, is now known as the 'Brookwood 1939-1945 Memorial' with the creation of the 'Brookwood 1914-1918 Memorial' nearby (unveiled on the 4th November 2015), for those who died in similar circumstances during the First World War.

Memorials to missing members of the Royal Navy were erected at Chatham, Portsmouth and Plymouth, but there is, of course, another WWII memorial to missing airman not far from here at Runnymede which was also unveiled by the Queen five years previously.

The Air Forces Memorial was designed by Sir Edward Maufe (the architect of Guildford Cathedral), with a sculpture by Vernon Hill and painted ceilings and engraved glass (with Paul H Scott's poem) being designed by John Hutton. Maufe also designed the nearby Magna Carta Memorial (unveiled by the Queen on the 28th July 1957).

With Runnymede's and Brookwood's numerous memorials to those who lost their lives to secure our freedom's - we are lucky locally to have so many beautiful and peaceful places where we can quietly contemplate the past (and hope perhaps for a better future)!



The Magna Carta Memorial was unveiled by the Queen in July 1957