

# THE MUSLIM BURIAL GROUND

Iain Wakeford 2016

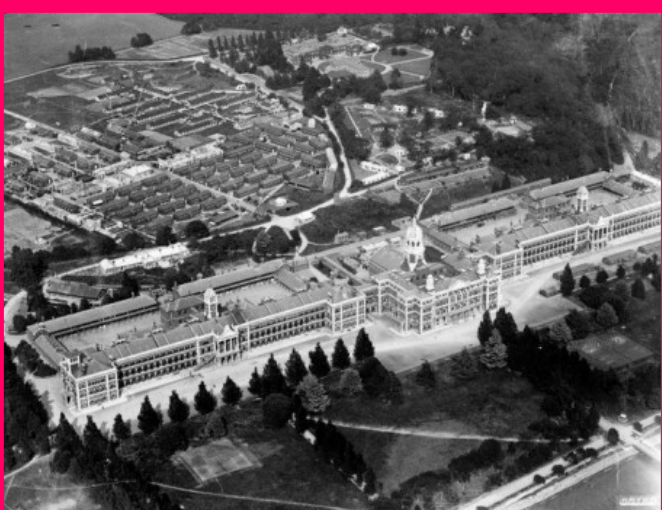
For centuries most countries of Europe had been expanding their empires into most of the other continents, so that by the time the archduke of Austria-Hungary was assassinated, it was perhaps inevitable that the ensuing conflict would become not just another European war, but a war of the world – the First World War.

Amongst those of the British Empire, over three million soldiers from the Indian Sub-Continent (modern-day India, Bangladesh and Pakistan) were deployed between 1914 and 1918, with the first troops (most of whom had never set foot outside India before), being sent to Egypt on the 8<sup>th</sup> August 1914 to be held in reserve. It wasn't long before they were posted to the western front (still dressed for the Egyptian sun in their khaki uniforms). So many were killed or wounded that by November 1914, there was pressure on the military to set up special hospitals in this country to cope with injured Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus.



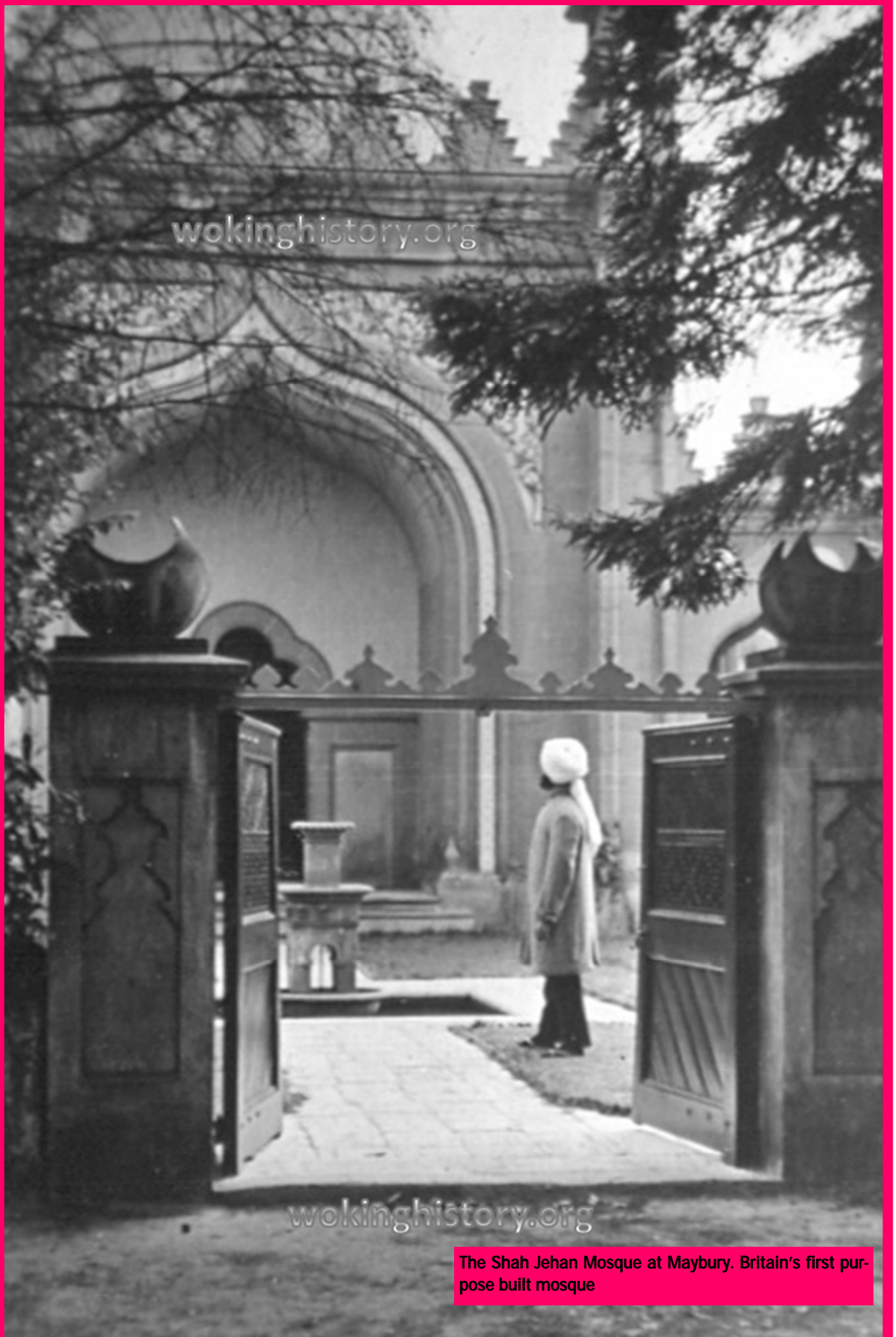
Under the dome of Brighton Pavilion

One of the places chosen was Brighton Pavilion where nine kitchens were apparently set up in the grounds to cater for the various religions, and a marquee erected as a Sikh temple, whilst the Muslims used the lawn in front of the Dome to pray.



The Royal Victoria Hospital at Netley housed many Indian Soldiers.

Other hospitals along the south coast took in Indian troops, in the New Forest at New Milton and Brockenhurst, and at Netley near Southampton, whilst Brighton General Hospital and the York Place School in the town were also especially converted to cope with Indian soldiers.



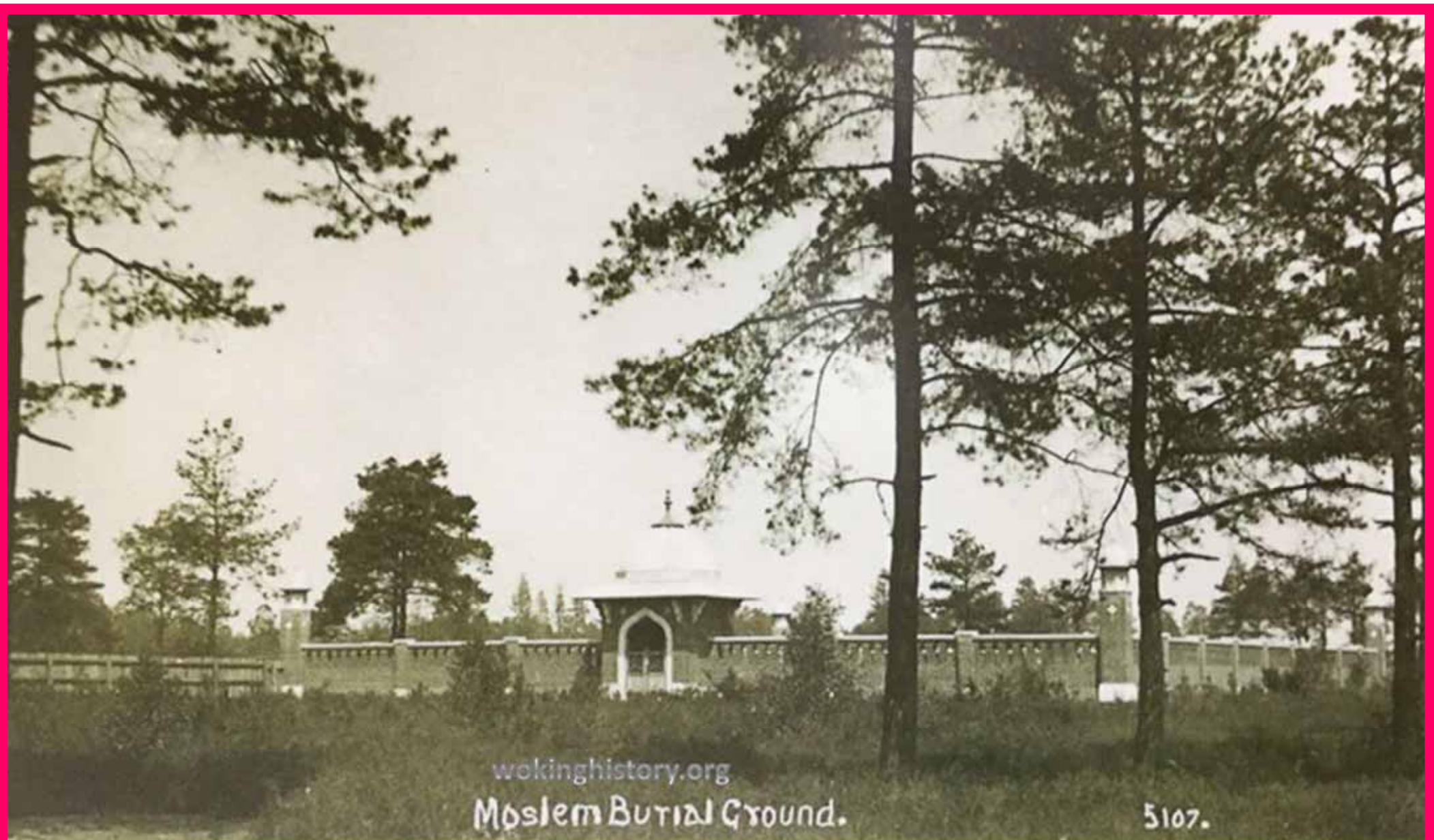
The Shah Jehan Mosque at Maybury. Britain's first purpose built mosque



The Lady Hardinge Hospital for wounded Indian Soldiers at Brockenhurst in the New Forest

But whilst the hospitals could help with those able to recover, there was growing disquiet about what was happening to those unlucky enough to not survive their treatment. Special crematoria were set up at Patcham, Netley and Brockenhurst for Hindu and Sikh soldiers, but the Muslims needed somewhere to be buried and so all eyes turned to the Shah Jehan Mosque at Maybury, the first purpose built mosque in this country. Unfortunately most the land around the mosque was now occupied by buildings (the London & South Western Railway Servant's Orphanage on one side and the massive aircraft factory of Martinsydes on the





The Muslim Burial Ground in its original glory.

إِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

FOR GOD WE ARE AND TO GOD WE GO

In memory and honour of all Muslim soldiers who  
gave their lives for Britain in both World Wars

**SHAIKH ABDUL WAHAB**  
SOWAR  
29th Lancers (Deccan Horse)  
16.7.1915

**ZARIF KHAN**  
SEPOY  
127th Q.M.O. Baluch Light Inty.  
22.7.1915

**SARMAST**  
RIFLEMAN  
57th Wilde's Rifles (F.F.)  
22.7.1915

**MAHRUP SHAH**  
SEPOY  
129th D.C.O. Baluchis  
16.9.1915

**SIKANDAR KHAN**  
SEPOY  
82nd Punjabis  
25.9.1915

**BAGH ALI KHAN**  
SEPOY  
82nd Punjabis  
29.9.1915

**KHAN MUHAMMAD**  
SEPOY  
108th Infantry  
9.10.1915

**BOSTAN**  
DRIVER  
9th Mule Corps  
19.10.1915

**MEHR KHAN**  
SOWAR  
19th Lancers (Fane's Horse)  
24.10.1915

**FAZAL KHAN**  
NAIK  
93rd Burma Infantry  
14.11.1915

**HANSA**  
FOLLOWER  
Army Hospital Corps  
7.12.1915

**ABDULLAH**  
FOLLOWER  
32nd Signal Company  
16.12.1915

**SHER GUL**  
SEPOY  
57th Wilde's Rifles (F.F.)  
18.12.1915

**SHAIKH MOHIUDDIN**  
BEARER  
Army Hospital Corps  
5.1.1916

**ASGHAR ALI**  
FOLLOWER  
Army Hospital Corps  
29.1.1916

**KALA KHAN**  
DRIVER  
2nd Mountain Battery  
2.2.1916

**ALLA DITTA KHAN**  
SOWAR  
15th Lancers (Cureton's Multani's)  
3.2.1916

**BABU**  
FOLLOWER  
Followers Central Depot  
3.9.1919

**MIRZA IQBAL ALI BEG**  
GENTLEMAN CADET  
Royal Military College, Sandhurst  
23.6.1920

**MOHAMED BEN HAMOU**  
SOLDAT  
F.F.L.  
13.1.1941

**MOHAMED BEN TAHAR**  
BRIGADIER  
F.F.L.  
17.6.1941

**JAN MUHAMMAD**  
SEPOY  
16th Punjab Regiment  
14.8.1944

**IBRAHIM YOLKOFF**  
SOLDAT  
F.F.L.  
5.8.1945

**MUHUMMAD**  
MASALCHI  
Indian Army Medical Corps  
17.9.1945

**KHWAJA DIN**  
PIONEER  
Indian Pioneer Corps  
19.1.1946

**KARAM KHAN**  
GUNNER  
Royal Regiment of Indian Artillery  
9.7.1946

**YOUSSIF ALI**  
LDG. AIRCRAFTMAN  
Royal Air Force  
12.5.1947

other), so the government had to look to Horsell Common for the closest piece of open land where a special Muslim Cemetery could be created.

The eight-foot high courtyard walls, with turrets in each corner and the 20ft high domed entrance, was designed by T H Winney and built by local builders 'Ashby & Horner' – the site not quite square being 120ft x 100ft.

Originally there were nineteen men buried here (eight others from the Second World War joining them) before vandalism in the 1960's meant that the cemetery was no longer secure enough, and the bodies had to be re-interred in Brookwood Cemetery.

Of course now the Grade II listed site has been restored to its former glory – in fact probably more glorious than it was originally – with the 'Muslim Cemetery Peace Garden' formally being opened by HRH The Earl of Wessex on the 12<sup>th</sup> November last year. The twenty-seven bodies remain in Brookwood Cemetery, but as well as being listed on memorial stones, the men are also commemorated in the garden by twenty-seven Himalayan Birch trees - an odd choice perhaps given that on the rest of Horsell Common the Preservation Society are actively cutting down the native birch in order to promote the growth of the internationally endangered heath land!

Whatever the controversy about the garden, the Muslim Burial Ground is yet another unique piece of our international (as well as our local) history. Another part of Woking's history that we should be justifiably proud of.

The memorial in the Muslim Cemetery Peace Garden



# BROOKWOOD MILITARY CEMETERY



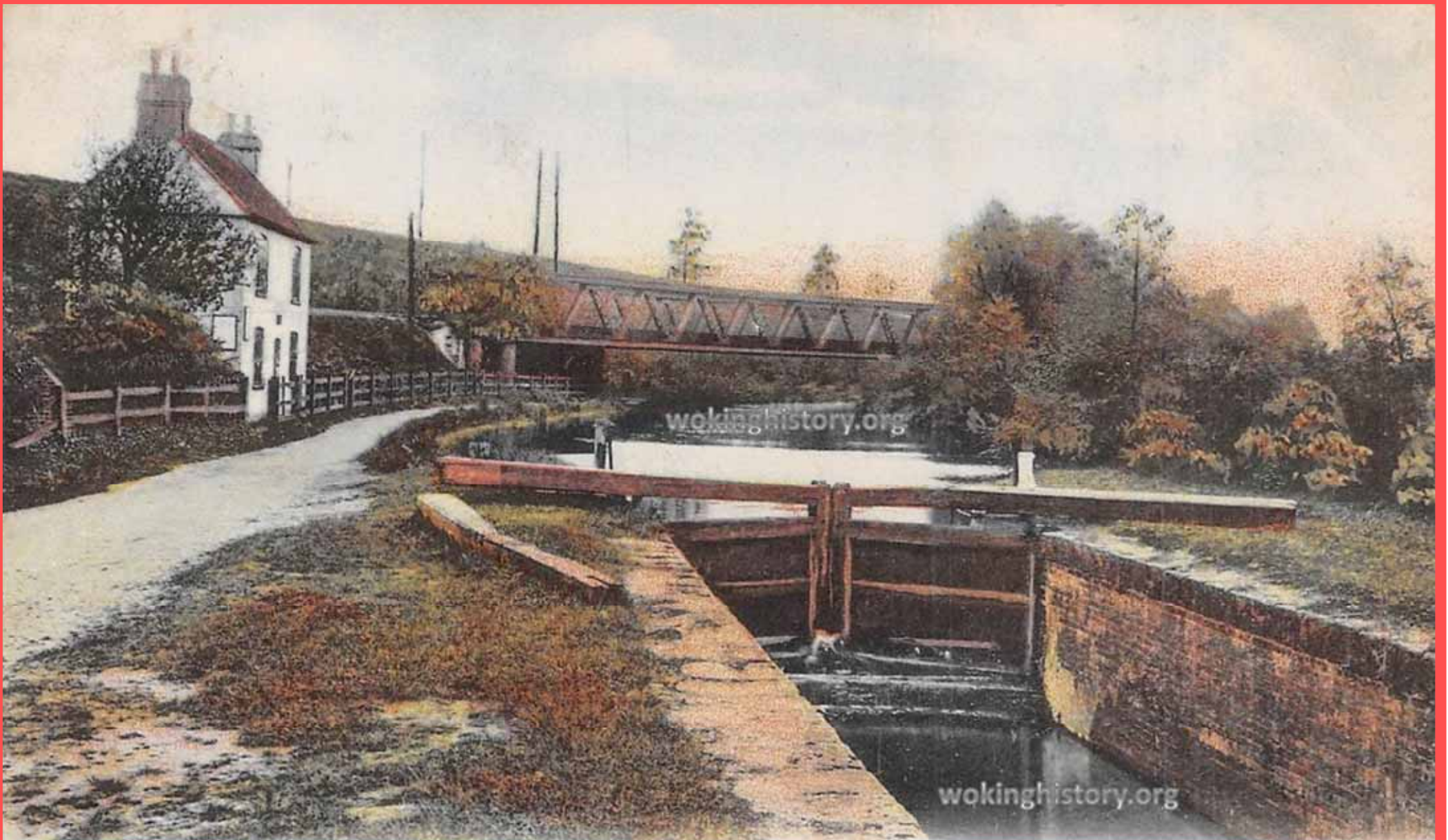
The new 1914-18 Memorial dedicated to the memory of more than 260 First World War servicemen who died in the United Kingdom, but have no known grave

In August 1914, even before the war started, the Necropolis Company offered an area 'of about an acre' – 'for the free internment of soldiers and sailors who have returned from the front wounded and may subsequently die', but it was not until the Imperial War Graves Commission was set up in May 1917 that their offer was taken up. Edward Stanley, the 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Derby, the Secretary of State for War, reached agreement with the London Necropolis Company to use much more than just one acre and it soon became the largest military cemetery in the country administered by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

The cemetery was for military personnel who had died in the London District – not just as a result of injuries sustained at the front, but also those who died during training or of sickness – such as fifteen year old Thomas Andrew Knowles, who died of influenza in 1918 (one of an estimated 70 million worldwide who died in that particular pandemic).

The site was not just for British Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Nurses, but for those of the Commonwealth too, with sections dedicated for those from Australia, Canada, Newfoundland, New Zealand, South Africa, and the West Indies, with a memorial also for those 'whose graves could not be found'.

## THE BISLEY BRANCH RAILWAY



Last year I dealt with the early history of the National Rifle Association's ranges at Bisley, which opened in 1890 with a branch railway line from Brookwood Station into the camp. During the Great War that line was extended as the ranges were handed over

to the military for training – some 150,000 men going through the camp between August and November 1914 alone!

By 1916 the barracks had grown to such an extent that the branch line had to be extended

westward, to link Pirbright, Deepcut and Blackdown camps – the work partially carried out by German Prisoners of War – but after the war things returned to normal and the tracks were eventually removed (although others were laid once more during the Second World War).