

Commonwealth Graves Commission (CWGC) in Newcastle under Lyme



“Their names Liveth for Evermore”

Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC)

The CWGC is a global organisation which operates over:

- 23,000 locations
- more than 150 countries and territories

and

- commemorates almost 1.7 million individuals.

It is funded by the governments of the United Kingdom, Canada, India, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand.

The Commission was largely the creation of Fabian Ware ex-Journalist and Civil Servant who was too old to serve but went to France in 1914 with a Red Cross Ambulance Unit. He soon realised that the unprecedented level of casualties would require a practical and compassionate way to deal with the thousands of deaths that would arise.

Formed by Royal Charter May 1917, the Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC) was the successor to the Graves Registration Commission (GRC) created in the first year of the Great War. Its Charter directs the CWGC to commemorate all British Empire/ Commonwealth service personnel who died during the two world wars:

- First World War: 4 Aug 1914 - 31 Aug 1921.
- Second World War: 3 Sept 1939 - 31 Dec 1947.

The first date in each conflict is the day that Britain declared war on Germany. The end dates especially for WWI are more complicated. Although it is generally regarded that WW1 ended on 11 November 1918, different peace treaties stretched into the 1920s so the UK Government determined a cut-off date of 31 August 1921. In WW2 there was no Act of Parliament governing the official end of the conflict. So, during 1947, the IWGC consulted member governments and agreed that responsibility should end on 31 December 1947.

This means that other conflict deaths outside these two periods are not officially commemorated by CWGC but they are of course part of our national remembrance.

CWGC in the UK

It was decided in 1914 that there would be no repatriation of war dead to the UK. Instead they were normally buried close to where they fell. Therefore most war dead are laid to rest in CWGC cemeteries across Europe. There are only two dedicated CWGC cemeteries in the UK. However thousands of service personnel died whilst in the UK during both world wars. These people died either from wounds sustained in action

(often having been transferred by rail to UK Hospitals directly from the Western Front), from accidents, illness or natural causes.

These people are also the responsibility of the CWGC and are usually buried in local churchyards or in municipal cemeteries.

CWGC in Newcastle under Lyme

The town cemetery in Lymewood Grove is the final resting place of 101 service people who died, 62 from WWI and 39 from WWII. The CWGC is responsible for maintaining these graves in conjunction with the Bereavement Services of Newcastle Council.

Of those who died:

- their ages range from 18 – 53;
- there is one woman – Kathleen “Kitty” Ffoulkes WAAF¹;
- three were Commissioned Officers plus two First Officers from the ATA²;
- Eighteen were Non-Commissioned Officers (inc one section Commander from the Home Guard);
- seventy-eight Other Ranks;
- three had been awarded gallantry awards;
- Eighty-two served in the Army, four in the Royal Navy, eleven in the Royal Air Force, two in the ATA and three from the Dominions;
- Twenty-eight served in the local North and South Staffordshire Regiments;
- the majority were from Newcastle – 73 at least.

There are other service personnel who died in other conflicts or accidents/natural causes who are also buried in the Cemetery but who are not the responsibility of CWGC.

The graves are not in a single plot but are spread throughout the whole cemetery. There is however a cluster of graves in one area and this is shown in the attached map Annex 1.

How to read a headstone

CWGC headstones are familiar to many but there are a surprising number of variations. Some families chose not to use CWGC headstones and these are known as Private Memorials. There are some Military headstone marking the graves of people who fell outside the GWGC period of responsibility. They look very similar and two in particular

¹ Women’s Auxiliary Air Force

² Air Transport Auxiliary

Pte Bellingham who was killed in Afghanistan and Cpl Brady in a road accident in Germany in 1995 are buried within the cluster of CWGC burials.



A standard CWGC headstone.



The notches at the top signify a standard military headstone.

Cross of Sacrifice



The cross is usually found in sites with over forty commemorations and it varies in size depending on the size of the cemetery. Newcastle has this one.

It was designed by Sir Reginald Blomfield, the stone cross with downward sword reflects the Christian faith of the majority of those commemorated in the cemetery.

Initially known simply as the 'Great Cross', it later became known as the Cross of Sacrifice

The epitaph "Their names Liveth for Evermore" was determined by Rudyard Kipling along with the famous 'Known unto God' headstone inscription for unidentified casualties.

We now turn to some of those buried in the cemetery.

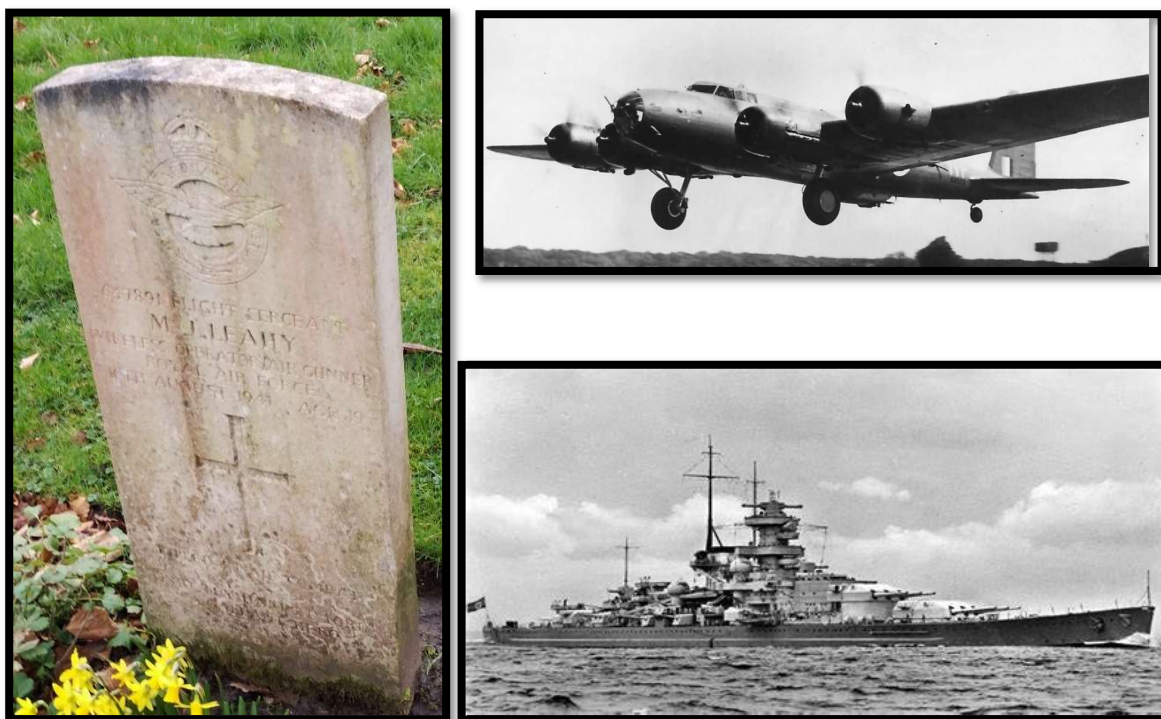
Lt Colonel John Donnellan (RAOC³)



Lt Col Donnellan is the most senior and one of the oldest soldiers buried in Newcastle. He died on 1 February 1947 at the age of 52. He was an Irishman born in Londonderry. Little is known of his service during the second World War other than he served in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps. However he was commissioned during the First World War in 1916 as a 2nd Lieutenant with the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. He was badly wounded during his service but remained a career soldier after the war ended. He was the son of John and Bridget Ellen Donnellan and husband of Annette Amelda Donnellan, of 14, Watlands Avenue, Wolstanton, Newcastle-under-Lyme.

³ Royal Army Ordnance Corps

Flight Sgt MICHAEL JOHN LEAHY (RAFVR⁴)



Michael was the son of Cornelius Frederick and Pamela Gladys Leahy and was killed in action on 16 August 1941. Michael was only 19 when he died and one of the 55,000 men and women of RAF Bomber Command who lost their lives during the War. Michael is untypical because he was killed in action but is buried in his hometown of Newcastle.

Despite only being 19 Michael was a Sergeant wireless operator and air gunner on a RAF Boeing B17 Flying Fortress, part of 90 Squadron.

On 16 Aug 1941 his plane "D" along with three others took off from RAF Polebrook in Northants. His mission was a day raid to Brest to bomb the German battle cruisers Scharnhorst and Gneisenau.

The Operations Book entry for the day (shown below) describes how they were attacked by five German fighters at 32,000' and was badly damaged. The attacks continued until the aircraft made it back to the relative safety of the English coast. Because of the damage sustained to the aircraft it diverted and crash landed on return to a base outside Plymouth. Three gunners, including Michael died during the engagement.

⁴ Royal Airforce Volunteer Reserve

OPERATIONS RECORD BOOK

*R.N. and A.C.F.
Chapter XX, and*

No. of pages used for day.....

of (Unit or Formation).....

Time	Summary of Events	Referen to Append
	<p>at 1040 hours and left at 1415 hours.</p> <p>Local flying training was carried out and one aircraft was used for cross country and navigation training.</p> <p>Local weather condition:- Cloudy, small amounts of low cloud early, but 9/10 at 3,500 ft by 1400 B.S.T. much medium and high cloud. Visibility 6-12 miles generally</p> <p>No flying took place and the Squadron was standing-down for the day.</p> <p>Weather:- Overcast with continuous rain until 1500 hours. 10/10 cloud at 400ft at first, lifting to 1000ft in afternoon. - visibility 2000 yards in rain, improving to 3-5 miles in afternoon.</p> <p>Air Commodore H.H.H. PRINCE BERNHARDT of the NETHERLANDS arrived by road at 1030 to interview air crews and inspect aircraft of the Squadron and left at 1200 hours.</p> <p>One aircraft carried out cross country flying, navigation and wireless training.</p> <p>Four aircraft were detailed for operations. Aircraft C & M took off to attack targets in DUSSELDORF but abandoned tanks owing to weather conditions. Aircraft J & D set off in company to attack the SCHARNHORST and CHEIBAU at BREST. Aircraft J attacked from 35,000 ft with 4 x 1100lb demolition bombs: the only opposition encountered was slight inaccurate FLAK. Aircraft D attacked from 32,000 ft with 4 x 1100lb demolition bombs and after leaving the target was attacked by 2HE 113a and 5 ME109Ps. The aircraft was badly damaged and the attacks were passed home and continued until our aircraft neared the English coast. The pilot made a forced landing at ROBROUCE (PLYMOUTH) and the aircraft caught fire. During the engagement three gunners were wounded and P/Sgt. GOLD-SMITH (fire controller) was also wounded. SGT. NEEDLE, H. 983086, SGT. AMBROSE, 646435, and SGT. LEAHY, died as a result of the combat. A narrative report is attached as appendix.</p> <p>Local weather condition:- Fair early with increasing cloud later, no low cloud at first, 2/10-4/10 at 2000-3000ft by midday and 7/10 at 3000 ft by 1600 hours - visibility mainly 6-12 miles.</p> <p>W/Cdr. P.F. WEBSTER, D.B.O., D.F.C., re-assumed command of the Squadron vice S/LDR. A.D. McLAREN, D.F.C., on return from leave.</p> <p>Local flying training was carried out during the day and one aircraft carried out high altitude training at 35,000ft.</p> <p>Local weather conditions:- Fair becoming showery - Cloud 9/10 at 1500 ft about dawn, becoming</p>	<p>A. D.</p>

Michael is commemorated on the <https://losses.internationalbcc.co.uk/loss/216388/> outside Lincoln.

Section Leader Leonard Dupree (Home Guard)



Leonard served with the 15th Staffordshire Battalion, Newcastle-under-Lyme Home Guard. He died 11 October 1940 aged 44, the husband of Kathleen.

Like most Home Guard he had served in the First World War as a Private with the 26th Royal Fusiliers in France. He was wounded 16 Sept 1916 and treated at 38 Casualty Clearing Station. He was discharged fit for duty on 4 March 1917. He was again wounded on 10 June 1917. This time he was injured in his right eye but discharged fit for duty on 11 Aug. He was promoted to lance corporal on 28 Feb 1918 and corporal on 25 Sept 1918. He

was posted on 31 January 1919 to 222nd Prisoner of War Company at Dieppe. He was demobilized on 18th March 1919 to his home in London.

On the outbreak of the Second World War he volunteered for the Home Guard. Details of his death are not known but he was one of over 1,000 “Dads Army” men who died. Nor is it known what his connection with Newcastle was.

Aircraftwoman 2nd Class Kathleen Ffoukes (WAAF⁵)



“Kitty” was an Aircraftwoman; 2nd Class serving in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF). She died as a result of a tragic accident at RAF Sleaf, Shropshire, on 7 September 1943 - aged 22.

Opened in 1943, Sleaf was home to No. 81 Operational Training Unit (OTU) under 93 Group; Bomber Command. OTU's provided aircrew with their final training prior to flying operations with Bomber Command.

At 00:20 on 7 Sept 1943 a Whitley Bomber swung out of control and hit the control tower while taking off and burst into flames. Four crew members aboard the aircraft were killed and three others (Cpl Peate, and WAAFs Vera Hughes and **Kitty**) were killed in the tower. The aircraft's rear gunner was badly injured and two WAAF staff were badly burned.



She was the daughter of Arthur Edward and Nellie Ffoukes of Trefnant Abbots Way. Like all sudden deaths this must have come as a great shock to her family as they would have expected that she was in a safe posting. Her family chose a private memorial but included on it the crest of the WAAF.

She is also commemorated on the <https://losses.internationalbcc.co.uk/loss/107560/> outside Lincoln.

⁵ Women's Auxiliary Air Force

Lance Corporal Herbert Marlett MM⁶



Herbert St Clair Marlett is one of the three Dominion soldiers who are buried in Newcastle, a long way from home.

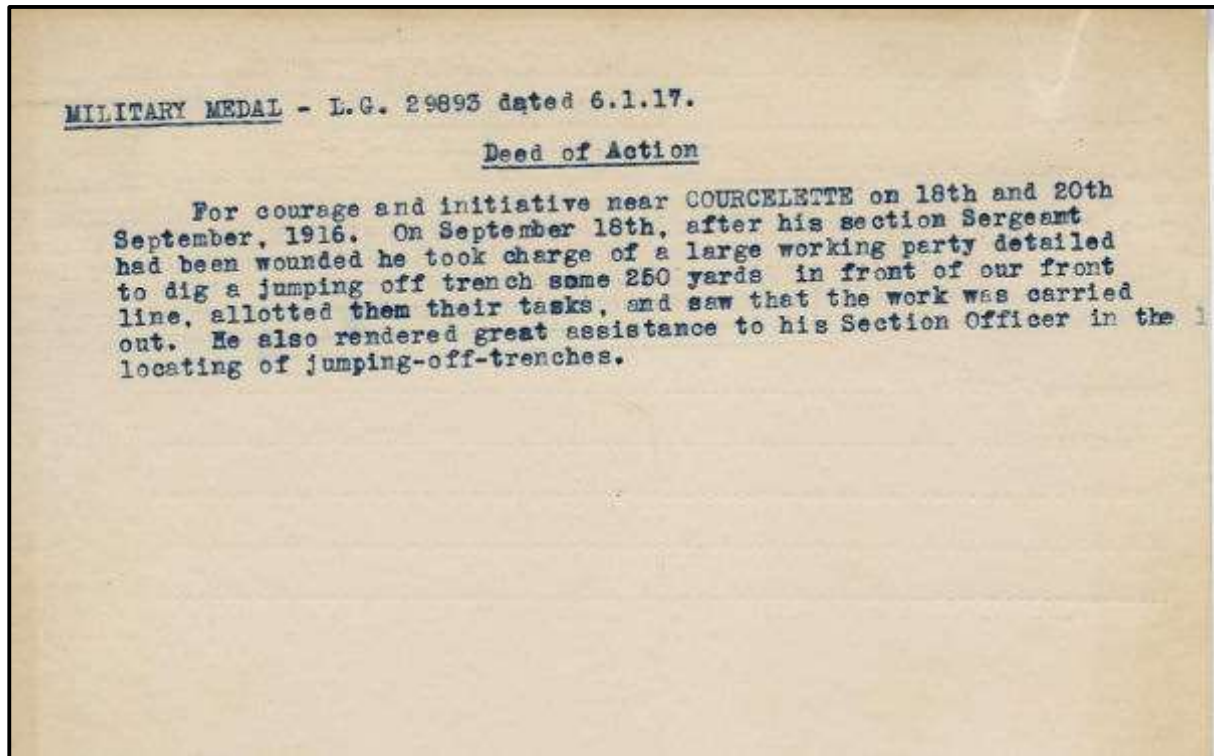
After the British Government made the decision not to repatriate their dead, Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand followed suit. This meant that Dominion troops who died in Europe or other theatres were often buried thousands of miles from home. Herbert Marlett is one of three Dominion troops buried in Newcastle.

Herbert was amongst the first men to volunteer to join the Canadian army shortly after the First World War broke out. He enlisted in the Canadian Engineers Division: 7th Field Coy on 23 September 1914 at Valcartier, Quebec.

Herbert was part of the Battle of the Somme which started on 1 July 1916 and continued until November 1916. During that period over 400,000 British and Dominion troops were casualties of whom around 95,000 lost their lives. During fighting in September Herbert distinguished himself in action and as a result, was awarded the Military Medal (posthumously) in 1917. His citation is shown below. In October he was wounded during the battle. He was transferred to a Military Hospital in Newcastle under Lyme but sadly died from his injuries on 3 December 1916 at the age of 23. Herbert's family opted for a private memorial.

⁶ Military Medal

He was born on 12 March 1893 at Fort William, Ontario and was the son of George H. Marlatt of Trail, British Columbia.



Full details can be found at :

<https://www.veterans.gc.ca/en/remembrance/memorials/canadian-virtual-war-memorial/detail/396230>

Pilot Officer Albert Darby DFM⁷ (RAFVR⁸)



Albert Darby was aged 23 when he was killed 12 April 1945 after taking off in a Lancaster bomber from RAF Wigsley on a Day Training flight - air-to-sea firing practice. His plane flew into the sea north of Spurn Head.

Albert, who was a flight engineer had been promoted to Pilot Officer and had also been awarded the Distinguished Flying Medal (DFM) in October 1944.

He was the son of Albert and Gertrude Darby, of Newcastle-Under-Lyme. His Brother William also in RAF Bomber Command died on service in November 1944 during a night bombing raid. He was shot down during an attack on the

Dortmund-Ems canal, crashing at Heerde in Holland where he is buried.



⁷ Distinguished Flying Medal

⁸ Royal Airforce Volunteer Reserve

Both [Albert](https://internationalbcc.co.uk/) and [William](https://internationalbcc.co.uk/) are commemorated at <https://internationalbcc.co.uk/> outside Lincoln.

Sgt George and Private Ernest Pepper

This is a grave marking the burial place of two brothers George and Ernest Pepper. Like the Darby's this was another family who suffered a double loss of sons during conflict. Sadly it wasn't uncommon.

Ernest was pre-war regular soldier who died in March 1914 before the outbreak of World War 1. His brother George did however serve and died during WW1 and is within period of responsibility. So, sensibly and compassionately CWGC allowed for both brothers to be buried and commemorated together.



Private Gareth Bellingham



Gareth Bellingham is the last service person to be buried in Newcastle. Although his death in Afghanistan in 2011 is outside the CWGC's Period of Responsibility he rests alongside John Donnellan, Leonard Dupree and Albert Darby. Gareth was a member of 3rd Battalion the Mercian Regiment (Staffords), serving as part of a Combined Force was killed in Afghanistan on Saturday 18 June 2011.

His unit (C Company) had been sent to Afghanistan in April 2011 as part of Combined Force Nahr-e Saraj (North), commanded by the Danish Battle Group.

On 18 June 2011, Gareth's unit was deployed with Number 3 Tolay (Afghan National Army) to an area near Khar Nikar in the Upper Gereshk Valley, Helmand province.

During the patrol, a local Afghan was injured by an improvised explosive device. As C Company were providing security, insurgents fired upon the patrol and Gareth was fatally wounded. He was aged just 22. Full details can be found at

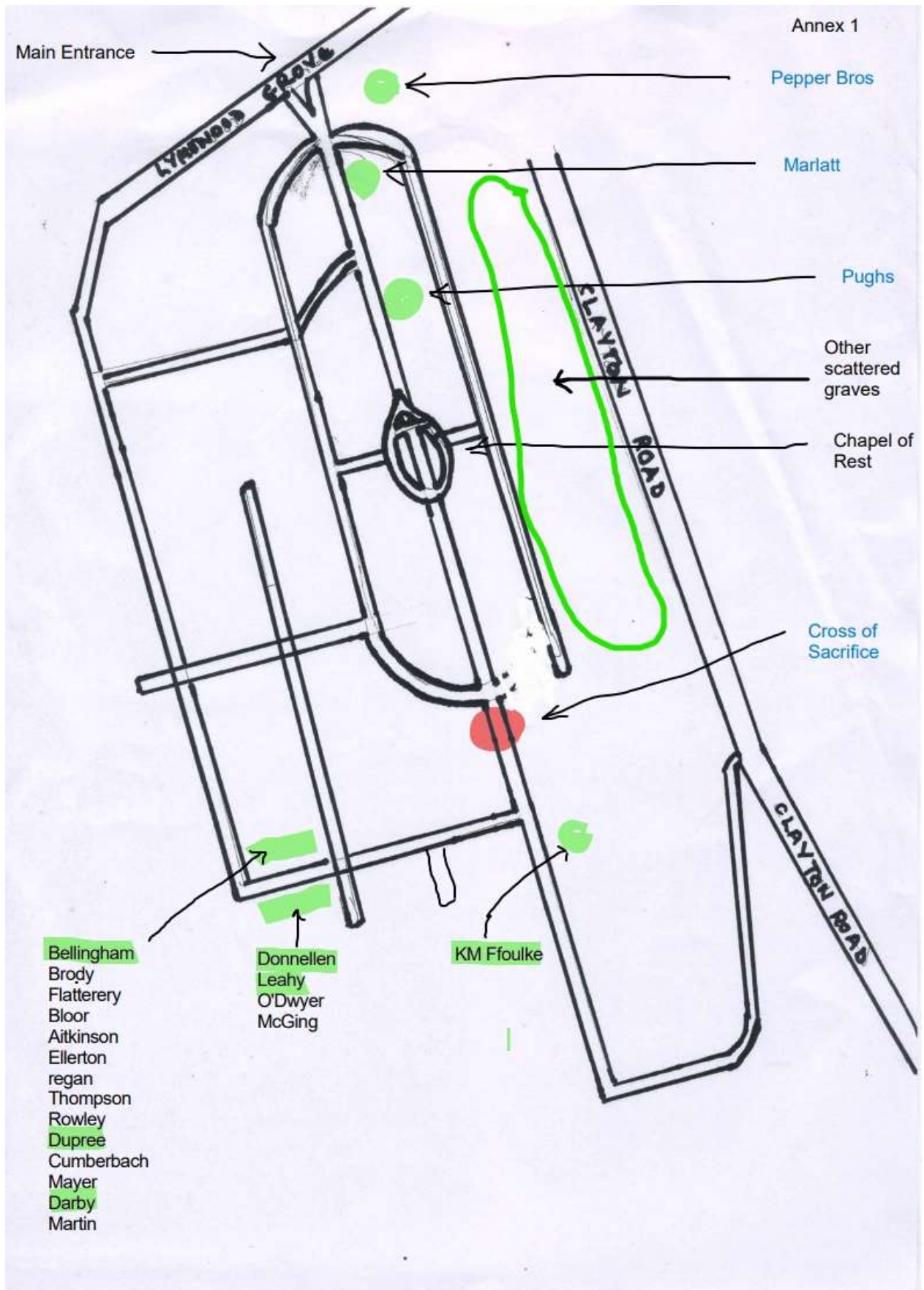
<https://www.gov.uk/government/fatalities/private-gareth-lestie-william-bellingham-killed-in-afghanistan>

“Their names Liveth for Evermore”

Author: Colin Agar CWGC Volunteer Tour Guide

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COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES COMMISSION Caring for the fallen



Sources of Information and Acknowledgments:

- Commonwealth War Graves Commission
- International Bomber Command Centre
- National Archives
- MoD
- <http://www.home-guard.org.uk> » [The Home Guard - History of the Home Guard 1940 to 1944](#)
- <https://www.rafcommands.com/>
- Government of Canada Veterans Affairs