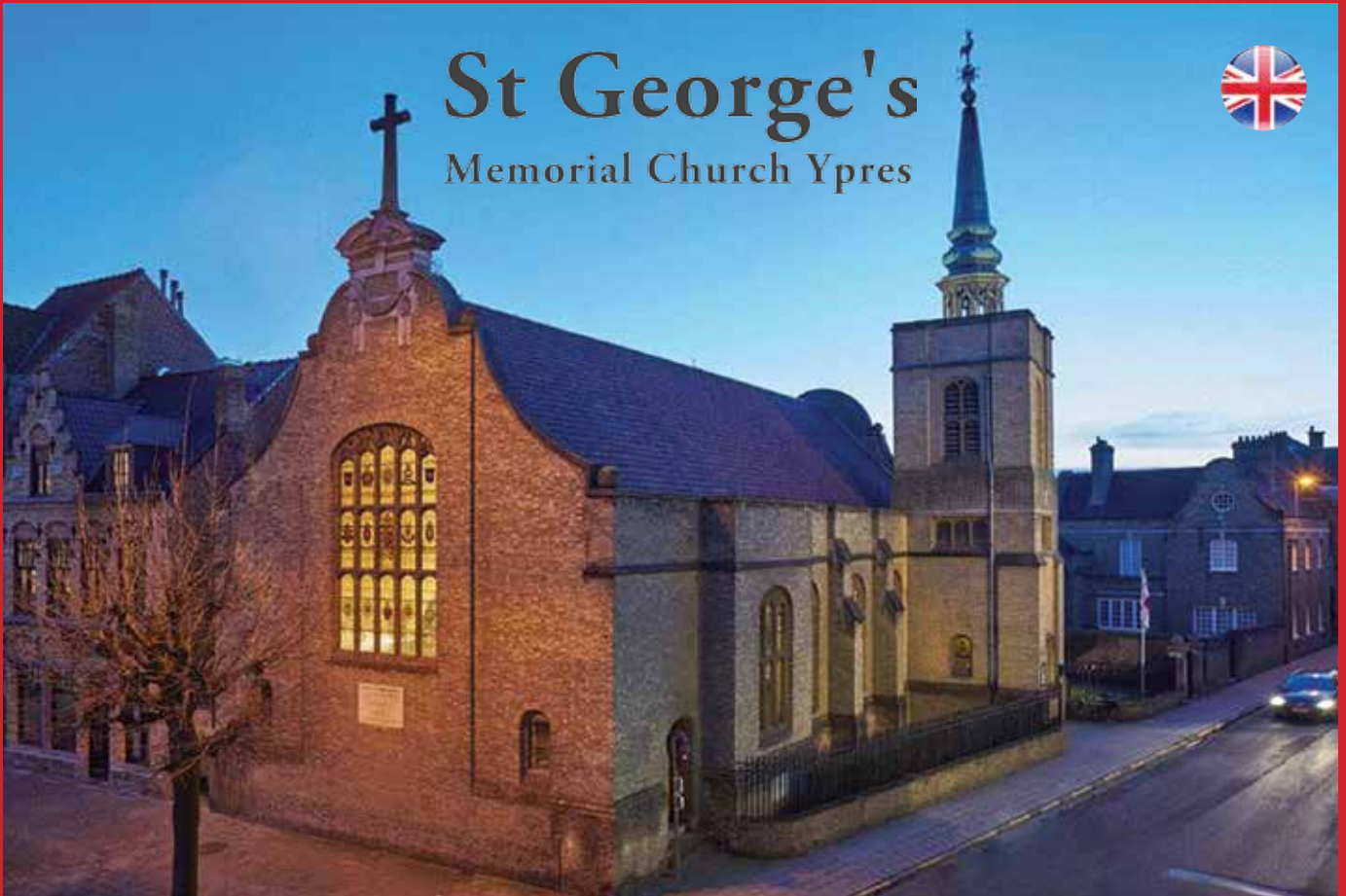


St George's

Memorial Church Ypres



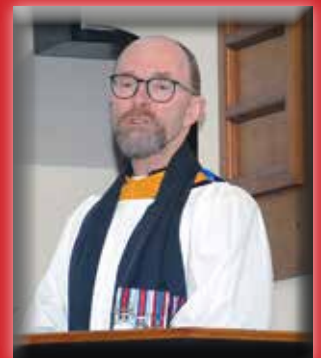
WELCOME FROM THE CHAPLAIN

Thank you for visiting this beautiful and very special church here in Ieper (which is the Flemish spelling of Ypres). For nearly 100 years, St George's Memorial Church has served as a witness to the service and sacrifices of soldiers from the United Kingdom and many Commonwealth countries in the defence of the Ypres Salient and indeed the rest of Europe in the First World War.

In the early days visitors or 'pilgrims' came to Ypres to visit the battlefields, often seeking the final resting places of their loved ones who had fought and perished in the struggle, or, if no grave was to be found, at least to walk in the footsteps of the fallen. Soldiers came with their own memories of the fighting, perhaps having lost friends or colleagues, or having been injured themselves and very often bearing physical or mental scars from the 'Great War'. Many came to remember, to pay tribute and to find some sense of peace and healing, which we now call a sense of closure. Often that came in part from a conviction that the fight and the huge sacrifice for the freedom of Belgium and the rest of Europe had, despite its great cost in human lives, been worthwhile.

The generation that fought in or had direct remembrance of the First World War has long passed away. But visitors still come to remember their sacrifice and often to search for the graves or the names of their family members: grandfathers, great-grandfathers, great-uncles and so forth. Soldiers and other military personnel who have fought in conflicts more recently also visit here, often with their own memories and with questions about the value of their own service. They also seek healing, peace and closure in this special and sacred place.

You are very welcome to St George's Memorial Church, and please do take time to look around or simply soak up the atmosphere of peace and prayer.



*Reverend Richard
Clement*



THE CHURCH

St George's is an Anglican Church, part of the Church of England Diocese in Europe. It was built as a permanent memorial for the British and Commonwealth troops who gave their lives during the First World War. The architect was Sir Reginald Blomfield, who also designed the Menin Gate and the Cross of Sacrifice which is found in most CWGC cemeteries (and is also on the top of the east end of the church). In addition to the church, Sir Reginald also designed the Chaplain's House, the Pilgrim's Hall and the Eton Memorial School which was built for the children of the British community in Ypres. This building is now used as our Church Hall.

Almost everything inside the church is a memorial, either to an Army regiment, to individuals or commemorating those who died from particular schools (mostly in England and Scotland) as well as some other memorials such as the Army Air Corps and RAF window. Most of the Commonwealth countries who served in the First World War are commemorated here. We also have some very famous people commemorated here such as Sir Winston Churchill and Field Marshal Montgomery. Of interest to many Belgian people are the cushions or kneelers, which are all individually made using the cross-stitch technique and are typically English and found in many English churches.

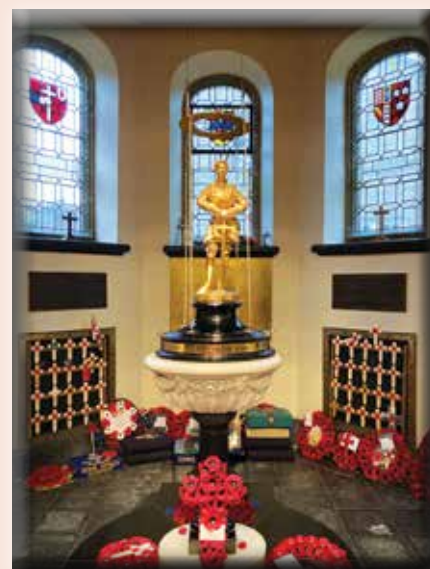


The foundation stone of St George's was laid on 24 July 1927 by Field Marshal Lord Plumer just one hour after the inauguration of the Menin Gate. The Bishop of Fulham consecrated the church on 24 March 1929, and it was then used as a church for the sizeable British community in Ypres.

Services are still held in St George's church every Sunday at 10.30am, as well as special memorial, commemorative or dedication services and also the Armistice Day service, which is the biggest service of the year here.

THE BAPTISMAL FONT

The marble font was donated by the RAF, and the family of Field Marshal French donated the beautiful cover. This includes a statue of Saint George, patron saint of England and of this church. In the baptistry is also the memorial plaque for John McCrae with the words of his famous poem 'In Flanders Fields'.



THE SIR JOHN FRENCH MEMORIAL



This is a striking memorial opposite the entrance door of the church, which includes a large marble bust of Field Marshal Sir John French, the 1st Earl of Ypres. Until his death in 1925 he played a major role in the plans for building this church. In 1924 as President of the Ypres League (which has now been reformed as the New Ypres League), he made an appeal to raise money for the building of an English church in Ypres, but sadly didn't live to see St George's built. The memorial itself was designed by Sir Reginald Blomfield and the bust was made by the American sculptor, Jo Davidson.

THE BELLS

Since the church tower was built (funded by Sir James Knott in memory of his two sons, James and Henry, both killed in the First World War and now buried next to each other in the Ypres Reservoir Cemetery) there was a desire to put bells in the tower. The project to install bells, started in 2016, was made possible through the financial contribution of many people and organisations.

The 8 bells were cast at the foundry of John Taylor & Co in Loughborough, the last remaining bell foundry in England. They were then transported on vintage flat-bed lorries to Ypres, installed in the tower and then consecrated in October 2017. It is the first set of English change-ringing bells in Belgium and only the second on the European mainland. Each bell commemorates different people and organisations, such as the Knott family bell (no 6), the ANZAC bell (no 7) and the Harrow School bell (the tenor bell, no 8). We currently have a small team of local

bellringers, with visitors also coming from the UK and elsewhere in the world to ring these lovely bells.



THE ETON MEMORIAL SCHOOL

Between the First and Second World War, there were a large number of British men in Ypres (largely ex-soldiers) who mostly worked for the Imperial War Graves Commission. Many of these men married local women and they then had children. They wanted their children educated in English at a British School, and so the school was built next to St George's Church. This was mostly funded by Eton College and was opened in April 1929. It was a busy and thriving school, with often well over 100 pupils and a large playground which is now the church garden. The school closed in May 1940 just before the Germans arrived and it never reopened.



Eton Memorial School hosting a reception for Eton following a Rededication Service

THE SECOND WORLD WAR AND AFTERWARDS

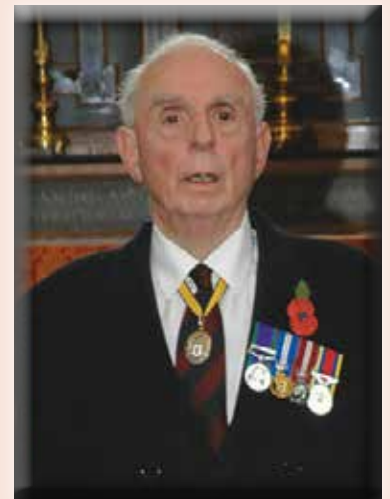


Buglers from our partner, The Last Post Association play The Last Post at a ceremony

Before the arrival of the Germans at the end of May 1940, many objects were taken from the church and hidden in the attics of ordinary Ypres residents. The stained glass windows were replaced by ordinary windows. The memorial plaques were removed from the walls, as were the plaques on the chairs and many of these were then hidden safely away (although some chairs were used in the German Officers' Mess). Most Britons were evacuated to the United Kingdom before the Germans arrived.

The Germans treated the church itself with respect and very occasionally church services were held by them. The central heating of the church was placed in the local hospital where the heating had failed. In 1955 the Canadians paid for a new central heating system in the church. St George's Memorial

Church survived the Second World War well, with only minor damage from the impact of a bomb in Elverdingestraat. However, very few of the British families returned to Ypres and the nearby Chaplain's House and Pilgrims' Hall were sold in 1963 to raise funds for the upkeep of the Church. From 2004, all the original buildings were designated as historical monuments.



Sir Edward Crofton, Bt, gives the Exhortation on Armistice Day, 11th November 2025



St George's
Memorial Church Ypres

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Website: <https://www.stgeorgesmemorialchurchypres.com/>

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