

My favourite historical site

By Mrs. Wood

A historical site that continues to make a great impression on me are the Somme battlefields and cemeteries of World War One in Northern France.

I was lucky enough to visit these with my Grandad who had served with the Manchester Regiment in WW1. At that time it was not unusual to see ammunition stored at the side of the cemeteries awaiting the weekly collection by the Army.

There is a poignancy and a serenity to the cemeteries that leaves you feeling, at one level overwhelmed, but also appreciative of the personal sacrifice each soldier made. Each cemetery has its own story to tell; some are small (15 graves) others are huge (Tyne Cot commemorates 11,956) some are battlefield cemeteries commemorating the men where they fell, others are field station cemeteries where those who died of their wounds are buried.

One particular cemetery that has left a lasting impression on me is the Devonshire Cemetery just outside of Mametz. This cemetery houses 163 men and is long and thin in shape, as was the trench from which these men 'went over the top.' The inscription on the gate as you enter reads **"The Devonshires held this trench, the Devonshires hold it still..."** If you would like to find out more about this cemetery you can read it here.

<http://www.greatwar.co.uk/somme/cemetery-devonshire.htm>

George Herbert Harrison, the only son of the Harrison family who built the West Hill in 1834 is also buried on the Somme, at a cemetery called Heilly Station Cemetery. Second Lieutenant Harrison fought with the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment and died on August 21st 1916, aged just 20. He is commemorated on the cenotaph in Stalybridge.

You can find out more about the Commonwealth War Graves at <https://www.cwgc.org/>

And the Somme Battlefields of WW1 at <http://www.greatwar.co.uk/somme/index.htm>

