

## THERE BUT NOT THERE

Spoken in Carlops Church, Sunday 11 November 2018

by Guy Walters

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to present this “Tommy” to the community of Carlops for safe keeping in this church.

[There but not there](#) is a poignant tribute commemorating 100 years since the end of the First World War. It is part of the inaugural campaign from the charity [Remembered](#). Each of the Tommies, and their commemorative packaging, have been made by veterans employed by Royal British Legion Industries.

The charity aims to commemorate, educate and heal ...

*Commemorate* those who died in the First World War wherever there is a Roll of Honour

*Educate* all generations, particularly today’s younger generation, born over 100 years after the outbreak of World War 1, to understand what led to the deaths of 888,246 British and Commonwealth service personnel

*Heal* today’s veterans who are suffering from the mental and physical wounds of their service

Monies collected by the project will contribute to the work of the following charities:

[The Royal Foundation](#)

[Walking with the Wounded](#)

[Heads Together](#)

[Combat Stress](#)

[Help for Heroes](#)

[Project Equinox: Housing Veterans and Medical Students](#)

[Commonwealth War Graves Foundation](#)

The *There but not there* Tommies are made from a perspex similar to that through which our Spitfire pilots saw their war. These statuettes, with their brilliant clarity and telling outline, offer a silent message. No placard; no noise; not one word needed.

The charity offers to inscribe a name on the base, but whose name would you choose? Would it be Douglas Victor, from Fairliehope, who was a pioneer of the RAF? James Kirkhope, the Church Warden’s son? William or Hugh McGill, two brothers lost from Habbies Howe? Alex Farquharson or George Garden from Rutherford? All these names are remembered on the war memorial outside this church. Or should this Tommy be called after David Urquhart,

a labourer from Rutherford? His name does not appear on the memorial, but he gave his life all the same, and is listed in The Book of Remembrance for Tweeddale.

With all the publicity around the centenary of the Armistice of 1918, it is easy to remember the fallen, their names are writ large. When news and documentary images concentrate on infantry life in the trenches of the 1914-18 war, and the poppy symbol harks back to Flanders Fields, it is often overlooked that today is also about remembering those who have given their lives in service to their country since the cessation of those hostilities 100 years ago today.

This Tommy is to remember all those – army, navy, air force, police, fire and ambulance service personnel from the Carllops community – who have died or who are suffering from the mental and physical wounds of their service in the last 100 years.

It not just those who have died that we should commemorate with this silhouette, but also all those families who have lost loved ones through conflict and those who have suffered life-changing injuries through public service.

I commend Peter Jackson's film *They shall not grow old*. Bringing old black and white film back in colour to look like new brings a whole new perspective on what it was like leading up to and during the 14-18 War.

Many who join the services do so because they are looking to become part of a unit of which they can be proud. Few join the armed services just they have an inclination to violence, and these are weeded out fairly quickly. The training is designed to form tight-knit groups capable of working under extreme conditions.

What comes out so strongly in Jackson's film is the camaraderie and humour of the troops, even in the worst of circumstances. This is the glue which holds the units together through the awful experiences they endured. There are also their shared experiences which made life even more difficult to explain to others outside the services. This is more so today as so few, in comparison to 100 years ago, have been in the services. It is little wonder those who leave the services miss the closeness of the regimental, squadron or ship family.

This is made worse when the departure is against their will, forced by medical discharge due to illness or injury. Without work or direction, they can quickly spiral downwards into depression caused by missing their mates, or living with terrible memories that no one else can relate to.

As well as the fallen, we should remember the many men who suffered after the Great War, being left with no job to go to and no one at home they could relate to any more. Their families were often oblivious to the horrors they experienced.

It is a sad fact that there is an epidemic of suicides among former soldiers. At least 23 British military sufferers of post-traumatic stress disorder have died in suspected suicides between January and August this year, 2018. That is more than double the total of eleven soldiers killed fighting Afghanistan's Taliban from 2013-14. Whilst the MOD have made huge inroads into the aftercare of service personnel injured in conflict in the last ten years much of the care of those suffering from PTSD comes from charitable foundations.

I therefore conclude by asking that you also remember those with hidden wounds caused by experiences they suffered whilst serving in the armed and emergency services, and when charitable requests come around, please remember them.

Perhaps, like the memorial to the unknown soldier, this “Tommy” should not be given a name, in order that it may represent all those lost, injured or suffering as a result of service to their country. Who will you remember at 11 o’clock today? I hope you will allow this figure, this Tommy, to carry their name in your heart.