

Three crested china models of war memorials at Clacton-on-Sea, Great Yarmouth, and Matlock Bath, all with appropriate matching crests



War Memorials

Dick Henrywood reflects on the monuments erected throughout Britain 'lest we forget' the sacrifices made on our behalf

A report that English Heritage has set up a fund to help repair war memorials reminded me that these structures have featured quite regularly in newspapers or on television recently. There seems to be increasing interest in this aspect of our military and social history and although the English Heritage initiative made the headlines, an organisation called the War Memorials Trust has been active in encouraging preservation for several years now.

With the announcement that the last surviving Great War veteran will be accorded a state funeral when the sad time comes, we will be recognising once again the huge sacrifices made by a previous generation. The war was an unprecedented conflict, with hundreds of thousands of fine young men dying in the trenches and whole communities devastated by the scale of the losses. Some families were decimated and the outpouring of grief following the war developed into a movement to remember the fallen. Committees were set up in virtually all cities, towns, villages and hamlets to erect suitable memorials, ranging from grand statues to simple stone crosses, and from magnificent stained glass windows to small rolls-of-honour located in churches or village halls.

As a result, war memorials have become part of our social history and add immeasurably to

our sense of local pride. Although interest in them may seem a touch macabre, there are at least two aspects which attract significant numbers of collectors – postcards and crested china.

Old postcards have always had their followers. The publishers produced attractive cards of every description, but their market also extended to news and social history, and the erection of local war memorials following the Great War attracted wide publicity. Virtually every war memorial had an unveiling or dedication ceremony, and the local photographers were on hand to record the event. Many of the photographers also published postcards, and it is these local views that are highly sought after. The example illustrated here, showing the memorial at East Stratton, a small Hampshire village between Basingstoke and Winchester, was published by Terry Hunt of Basingstoke who produced many fine real photographic cards of his local area. This one is just a good image of the memorial, but similar cards can be found with memorials surrounded by flowers following the unveiling event, or with the officials performing the ceremony itself, usually incorporating the date in the caption.

Other cards illustrated here are all real photographs of memorials in the West Country. The mass of floral tributes surrounding the memorial at Somerton tends to indicate that

the photograph was taken following the dedication ceremony, which for most places would have taken place in the early 1920s. As a general rule the value of any card is inversely proportional to the size and importance of the memorial. Large impressive memorials at places such as Brighton, Southampton and Bournemouth, are of relatively little interest to collectors, as are the mass produced cards from larger towns such as Weston-super-Mare. On the other hand, cards of small village memorials, particularly by local photographers are eagerly sought.

War memorial cards may be of significant interest to local historians but they are not of great financial value. With even the best cards priced typically at less than five pounds each, they would form a fine subject for a collector. With literally thousands of memorials up and down the country, the potential is vast.

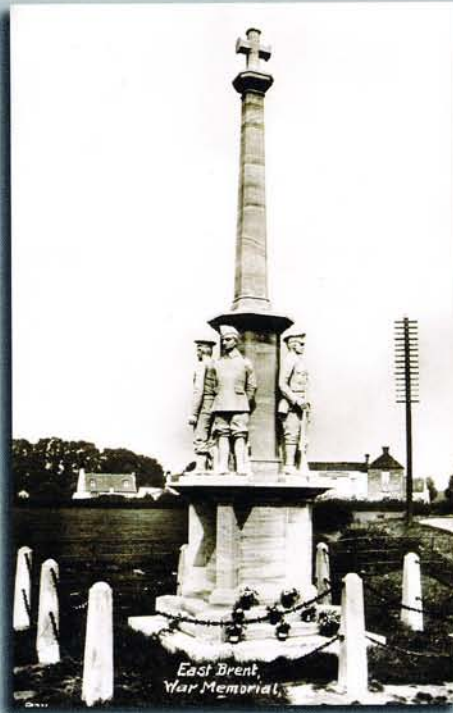
On a separate topic, the market for crested china was developed in the early years of the 20th century to satisfy the demand for cheap, cheerful souvenirs for day-trippers and holiday-makers. Various manufacturers competed to sell small novelty models decorated with local crests, and although the market was clearly greatest in seaside towns, virtually every place of significance had a crest and the china makers sold their wares throughout the land. Crested china models cover a vast range of subjects, many humorous in nature, but the makers also developed wares reflecting society's preoccupation with the war, notably models of tanks, guns, warships, and a host of other military hardware.

Following the end of the war and the appearance of the war memorials, it was not unnatural for the same manufacturers to model them in miniature. A group of three examples shown here depict the memorials at Clacton-on-Sea in Essex, Great Yarmouth in Norfolk, and Matlock Bath in Derbyshire. The smaller two are both unmarked and are worth around £20 each. The larger, more impressive example from Great Yarmouth is by Willow Art and is worth £40 or so. These three are all relatively common but others can be quite rare and can command significantly higher prices. The scope for collectors is much more limited than with postcards, since far fewer were made, but the rewards for unearthing a rarity could be significant. Examples from the south and west are uncommon, but look out for Plymouth, Romsey and Warminster.

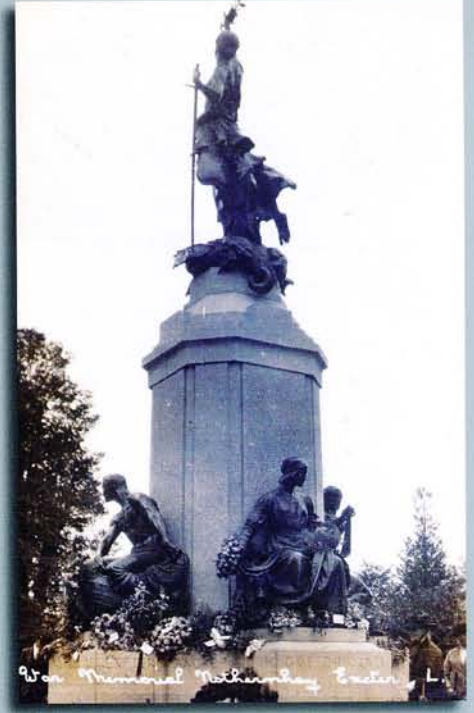
We must not, of course, forget the most important of all the memorials, the Cenotaph in Whitehall. Originally constructed as a temporary memorial in wood for an armistice ceremony in 1919, it was rebuilt permanently in stone to a design by Edward Lutyens and unveiled in 1920. This is common as a crested china model, usually decorated with the arms of the City of London, obviously considered by the makers to match the memorial, although it



The memorial at East Stratton, Hampshire, on a card published by Terry Hunt of Basingstoke. Posted locally in 1923



The memorial at East Brent, near Highbridge, sculpted by Emery of Burnham-on-Sea and unveiled in 1921. Not postally used



The memorial in Northernhay, Exeter, sculpted by John Angel and unveiled on 24 July 1923. Posted at Honiton in 1924



The war memorial at Somerton in Somerset, in the Market Square, opposite the church, unveiled in 1922. Not postally used



Real photographic postcard showing the war memorial at Castle Cary, one of very few built surrounded by water. Not postally used



A model of the Cenotaph in Whitehall, made by Florentine and decorated with the crest of Sidmouth

actually stands in the City of Westminster, not the City of London. Crested memorials almost invariably bear the appropriate local arms, but the Cenotaph can somewhat incongruously be found with unrelated crests from all over the country. The example shown here is by Florentine China and bears the crest of Sidmouth, a fine Devon seaside town far remote from the memorial itself. Many other manufacturers made similar models, including the major firms of Arcadian, Carlton, Corona, Goss, Grafton, Podmore, Savoy, Shelley, and Willow. Other

makers and trade names found include Alexandra, Balmoral, Birks, Botolph, Coronet, Cyclone, Kingsway, Regis and Victoria.

Today, the Cenotaph forms the focus of our remembrance service in November each year, and as a representative of all the memorials, large or small, in cities, towns and villages up and down the land, it provides a focus for us all to remember the horrors of war.

Dick Henrywood is a consultant specialising in collectors' items and collectable British pottery.