

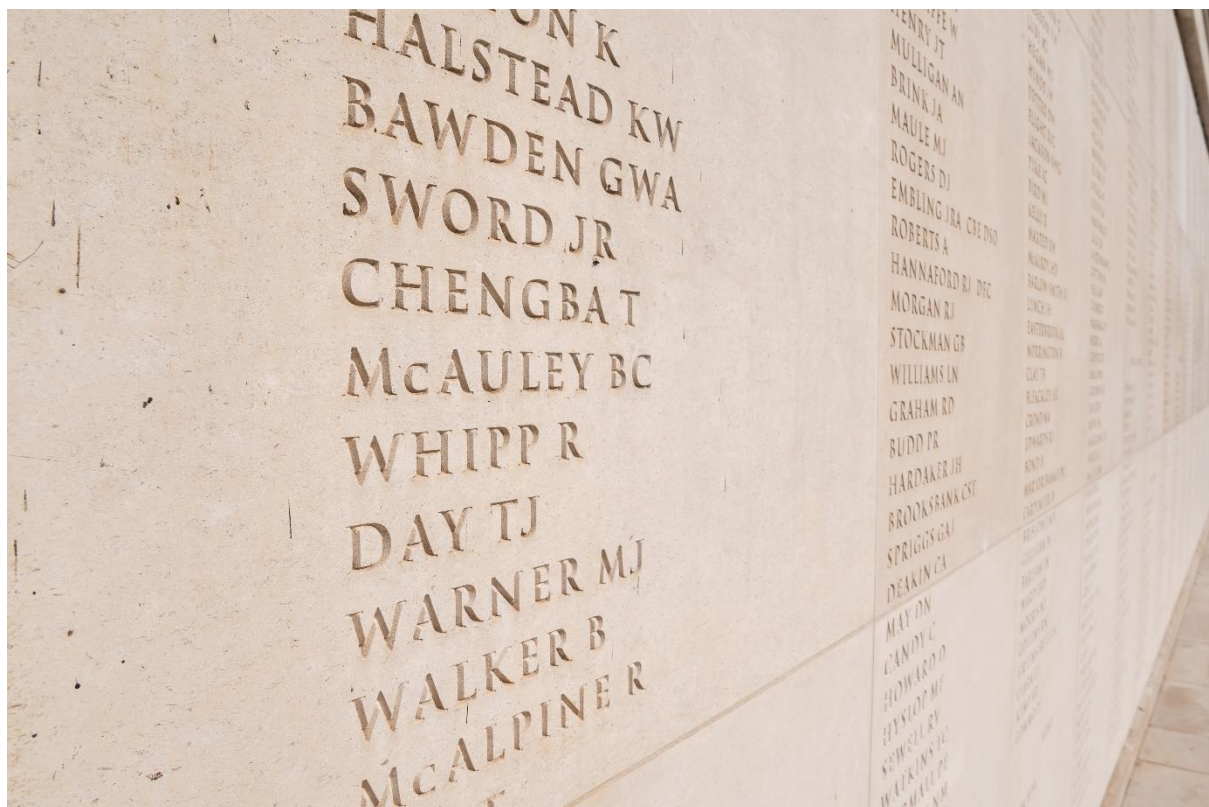
## National Memorial Arboretum Coach Trip

On 29<sup>th</sup> September the latest St John's Coach trip set off from the Church. This time we were headed for the National Memorial Arboretum near Lichfield and it was a place that I personally had wanted to visit for a long time, but never got around to it. We arrived in time to grab a coffee before the daily Act of Remembrance took place in the Chapel at 10.50. This consisted of a short recorded message and the Last Post followed by a 2 minute silence. After the service one of the guides explained how the Memorial had been conceived as an idea through to its building. It is part of the National Forest and they advise on the types of trees to plant and the care of them.

The main memorial, which can be seen from most places in the Arboretum is the Armed Forces Memorial, below, which stands on a mound and lists the names of over 16,000 service personnel who have been killed on duty since the end of WW2. None of these names are listed anywhere else in the country, unlike those from WW1 and WW2. It was sad to see the large space where future names could be added. Having spent 25 years in the Army I hope and pray that we will learn to live with our neighbours on this planet and that it will take a long time to fill in the blank areas.



The next image is a sculpture that represents the 4 Services, Army, Air Force, Navy and Marines bringing home a dead service person to his wife and child on the left and his grieving parents on the right side.



Some of the 16,000 names on the Wall of Remembrance

There are some very poignant memorials such as the one dedicated to those who were shot at dawn for cowardice in WW1, we now know they were suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder but of course it was not known about then. In the following photo the figure represents Private Herbert Burden who was shot at Ypres in 1915, aged just 17.





There is a Garden of Innocents, which is a memorial to all children who are victims of war or terrorism and this has a central elder tree that has been planted in memory of Anne Frank. Every year the blossom is cut off the tree on 12<sup>th</sup> June, on the anniversary of her birthday, so that it never bears fruit as the children who have been prevented for reaching maturity, like Anne.

The Memorial is set in 150 acres and has over 350 memorials, I was surprised at the range of memorials that are included, my thought had been that they would all be military related and whereas nearly 60% are the rest are non-military and cover a wide range of organisations, such as the Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society, Police, Fire Brigade and Ambulance Services, below. Despite its size the Memorial is running out of space and they have managed to secure another 80 acres so that it can continue to grow.



I was able to find the Memorial to my Corps, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, the one to The Royal Dragoons that Dad served in during the war and Sandra found the memorial to the sinking of HMS Hood where one of her relatives sadly died during the war.



On a lighter note the Memorial has a very nice reception with an Exhibition area and refreshment areas, including some very lovely ice cream, Jaffa Cake flavour was exceptional!



I know that Sandra and I will be returning to take in more of the memorials, the tranquillity and peace and the beauty of the grounds. If you were not able to join this trip then I can wholeheartedly recommend that you take some time out of your busy schedules and go to the Memorial, it certainly helps put things in to perspective.

Colin Nash