

No Common Monument

In early 1917, the German Army pulled back from the devastated Somme battlefield to a new trench system fifteen miles to the east, leaving for the British Army a wasteland of shattered trenches, mud filled shell holes and ruined villages.

Within a few weeks, three wooden crosses had been erected on the white chalk top of the Butte de Warlencourt in memory of the soldiers of the 6th, 8th and 9th Battalions DLI, who had died during the unsuccessful attack on the hill on 5th November 1916.



The Butte de Warlencourt, 1917.
From a sketch by Rev C Lomax, Chaplain to the 8th Battalion DLI.



King George V and General Byng by the 6th Battalion DLI's Cross on the Butte de Warlencourt, 13th July 1917.
[Ref No: D/DLI 2/6/10 (420)]

The more ornate Brigade Cross to the men of the 151st Brigade (6, 8 & 9 DLI) was specially made by the 9th Battalion DLI on the orders of Lieutenant Colonel Roland Bradford VC. This cross was designed by Captain Robert Mauchlen MC and made by Private Sutton from wood supplied by the Royal Engineers, with lettering by Sergeant Mitchell.

All three crosses remained on the Butte until autumn 1926 when they were brought home to the North East.

On 26th June 1927, the 6th Battalion's Cross was unveiled and dedicated by the Bishop of Durham in St Andrew's, South Church, Bishop Auckland.

During the service the Bishop said
"We have come together this morning for a most moving and significant service. The wooden cross which we have received for preservation in this church as a memorial of the 6th Durham Light Infantry is no common monument. It comes to us from the very scene of the achievement which it commemorates, and as we look at it and mark its rude simplicity we cannot escape the influence of the associations of anguish, tragedy and deathless valour which are gathered about it". [Auckland & County Chronicle, 30th June 1927]

At a similar service on 1st July 1928, the 8th Battalion's Cross was unveiled in Chester-le-Street Parish Church by Colonel Turnbull, who had commanded the battalion on the Western Front from April 1915 to May 1917.

Meanwhile the Brigade Cross had been placed in the Regimental Chapel in Durham Cathedral without ceremony in early 1927.

Today, all three wooden crosses remain in their final resting places in County Durham, permanent reminders of the Battle of the Somme in 1916.



151st Brigade's Memorial Cross
Regimental Chapel, Durham Cathedral, 2006.



151st Brigade's Memorial Cross on the Butte de Warlencourt, 1922. [Ref No: D/DLI 2/6/10 (423)]

8th Battalion DLI's Memorial Cross
Chester le Street Parish Church, 2006.



6th Battalion DLI's Memorial Cross
St Andrew's, South Church, Bishop Auckland, 2006.

