

# OUR WAR GRAVES YOUR HISTORY

## TOWER HILL MEMORIAL



When Britain went to war in August 1914, her merchant fleet accounted for nearly half of the world's steam tonnage. Civilians serving on merchant vessels, from ocean-going liners to the smallest fishing boat, would play a vital role in the war effort by supplying the nation and the armed forces with food, transporting raw materials for the manufacture of munitions, maintaining ordinary cargo and passenger trade, and transporting troops and matériel to theatres of war. Targeted by enemy forces, more than 2,000 merchant vessels were lost during the war, and over 13,000 lives were lost.

During the Second World War, the merchant fleets were once again called upon to keep Britain fed and her armed forces supplied. At any one time it is estimated that more than 140,000 merchant sailors were at sea across the world. In all, almost 4,800 ships of the Merchant Navy and fishing fleets were lost during the war, and almost of 36,000 lives were lost.

The Tower Hill Memorial commemorates more than 36,000 merchant seamen who died during the First and Second World War and have no grave but the sea. The First World War memorial was unveiled by Queen Mary on 12 December 1928 and the Second World War extension was unveiled by HRH Queen Elizabeth II on 5 November 1955.

### Key CWGC features to look out for:

Designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens, the Tower Hill Memorial takes the form of a vaulted corridor, while the 1939-45 Extension, designed by Sir Edward Maufe, resembles a garden of remembrance. At the entrance to the extension are two sculptures of merchant seamen by Sir Charles Wheeler, who also designed the depictions of the Seven Seas upon the memorial walls.



### Points of interest...

Commemorations: **36,071**  
First World War: **12,187**  
Second World War: **23,884**

Casualties from the following nations;

Australia	Malta
Barbados	Netherlands
Belgium	New Zealand
Canada	Norway
Chile	Portugal
China	Rhodesia
Denmark	Sierra Leone
Estonia	Singapore
Gambia	South Africa
India	Spain
Ireland	Sweden
Jamaica	Trinidad
Japan	UK
Latvia	

### Things to look out for...

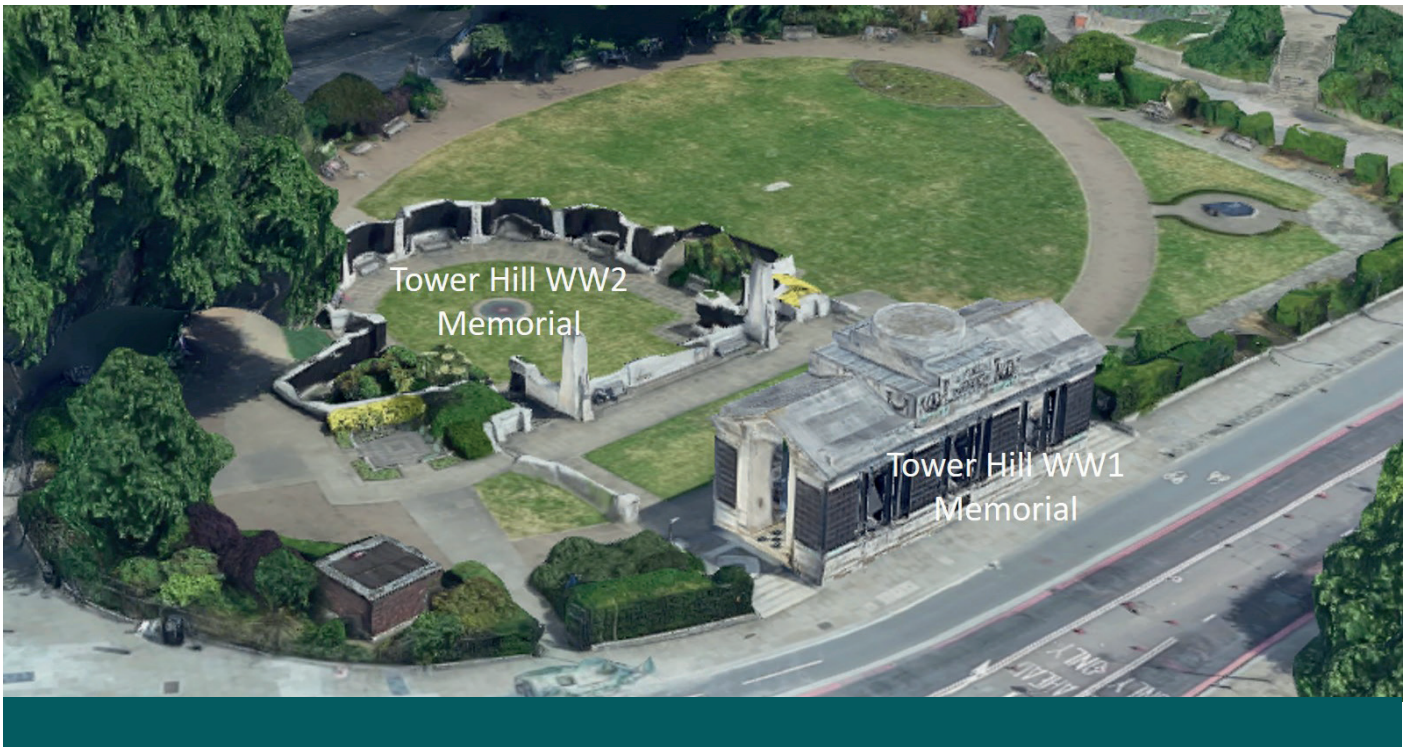
The youngest – **Cook Redan Sydney Jeffries** aged just 13 when he died. (Pier 7, Course 2, Column H).

55 female casualties including 66-year-old **Amy Ellis** (Panel 26)

The eldest – two 74-year-olds **Second Engineer Officer Frederick Perry** (panel 82) and **Greaser James Killey** (panel 29).

One sailor was awarded the **George Cross** – you will see the letters G.C. by their name. (Panel 92)

# Discovering CWGC graves at Tower Hill Memorial



The Memorial has separate sections for the First and Second World War.

## The sinking of the *Lusitania*

The largest loss of life commemorated upon the memorial is from the sinking of the RMS *Lusitania*. On 7 May 1915, the *Lusitania* was torpedoed by a German submarine in the Irish Sea. Carrying almost 2,000 passengers and crew, she sank in under 20 minutes. Commemorated here are more than 350 personnel who died in the sinking, including Assistant Matron **Karen Jorgensen**, from Denmark (Panel 11). Two 14-year-old lads also died while serving on the ship, **Thomas James Quinn** and **Harold Joseph Wright**. The crew was also representative of the very international nature of the Merchant fleet. **Patrick Brown** was from Ireland, **C Myiebeckie** was from Poland and **AA Sternberg** was from Finland; **John Leech** had been born in Jamaica and **Jose Ulgar Leon** was from Spain; **Etienne Suerre** was from France and **Frank Savage** had been born in the USA – and this was just one ship. Across the merchant fleet, sailors came from across the globe and are today remembered together on the Tower Hill Memorial.



*The sinking of the Lusitania*



## Family connections

There are many stories of those from the same family who lost their lives in the world wars. On this memorial, you will discover a number of brothers but also cases of fathers and sons. **John Burman** died in March 1917 aboard SS *Antonio*. His son, **John Harris Burman** was killed aboard RFA *Francol* in March 1942 (Panel 51). Elsewhere on Panel 104, you will find **Albert Craig** and his son **Edward** who died together when SS *Stonsa Firth* was lost in November 1944.

Two of the youngest merchant seamen killed in the Second World War were **Kenneth Lewis**, 14 and his brother **Raymond**, 15. The boys are believed to have forged a letter from their father to sign up. Both died when their ship, SS *Fiscus*, was sunk in October 1940 by German submarine U-99. They are commemorated here on Panel 49 of the Second World War extension. Tragically, there are even three brothers who are all commemorated here. **William Stiff** was 19 when he was killed in 1940 (Panel 66), his younger brother **Charles** was just 16 when he was killed in 1941 (Panel 88) and their brother **Joseph** was 21 when he died in 1942 (Panel 14).

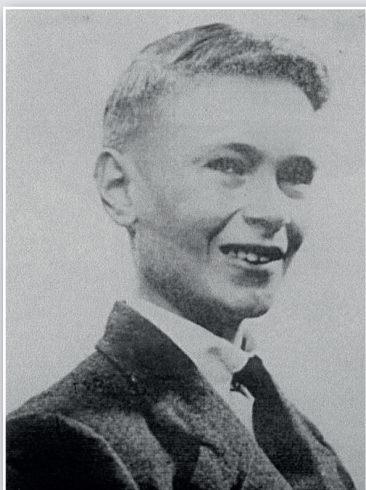


*John Harris Burman*

## Awards for bravery

As would be expected on a such a large memorial, there are many sailors who were awarded gallantry medals for their brave actions. You will often spot these by the use of letters recorded after their names, such as V.C. (Victoria Cross) or D.S.M. (Distinguished Service Medal).

On Tower Hill Memorial, there is one sailor who was awarded the George Cross (GC), **Apprentice Donald Owen Clarke** (panel 92). Clarke was awarded the George Cross for his bravery on the tanker *San Emiliano*. On 9 August 1942, *San Emiliano* was hit by two enemy torpedoes. Apprentice Clarke and several others were badly burnt when the ship caught fire, but they managed to get into a lifeboat. Clarke took up an oar and rowed without complaint for two hours to save the lives of everyone on board. Only once the boat was clear of danger did he stop. Exhausted, he laid down in the bottom of the boat and only at this point did the others realised the terrible extent of his injuries. Nothing could be done to help him or ease his pain but to keep the sprits of this comrades up he sang until succumbing to his injuries the following day. He was 19 years old.



*Donald Owen Clarke  
(Courtesy of Brian Watson)*

There are many interesting stories behind those who were awarded medals for their bravery. Look out for those who have Army awards such as the Military Cross (MC) or the Military Medal (MM). Almost always, these are to men who had served in the Army in the First World War and then later served in the Merchant Navy. One of these is **Second Engineer Adam Findlay**. During the First World War, he was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal and the Military Medal while serving on the Western Front with the Gordon Highlanders. He was killed when the fishing trawler *Nisus* was sunk in March 1941. The *Nisus* was employed as a minesweeper.