



A Tribute to the Fallen

*I returned to the fields of glory,
Where the green grasses and flowers grow.
And the wind softly tells the story,
Of the brave lads of long ago.*

Each year, my husband and I travel across France, through Germany and into Italy, passing numerous British and Commonwealth War Cemeteries. Some of these sites are huge, whilst others give rest to only a few of our fallen.

Irrespective of the numbers laid to rest in these cemeteries, the grounds and headstones are beautifully maintained. A tribute to those who 'answered the call' both in 1914-18 and in 1929-45.

*In the great glen they lay a sleeping,
Where the cool waters gently flow.
And the grey mist is sadly weeping,
For those brave lads of long ago.*

I defy anybody, who possesses a beating heart, not to be moved at the site of neatly set out, pristine, headstones – each representing at least one of our own.

Walking amongst the markers it is clear to see that no single age group or area was left untouched by the conflicts. Every, regiment, age-group and Commonwealth Country is represented. War Correspondents, Service Chaplains, Red Cross Nurses; Civilian Ambulance Drivers – the list is endless.

*See the tall grass is there awaiting,
As their banners of long ago.
With their heads high forward threading,
Stepping lightly to meet the foe.*

Marker inscriptions are often all the more poignant through the addition of family verses and quotes. 'A beloved son'; 'Home is the Sailor home from the sea'; '

Safe in the arms of Jesus'. The list is endless but, perhaps the saddest inscription is that which starkly states, 'Here lies a Soldier of the Great War. Known unto God'.

*Some return from the fields of glory,
To their loved ones who held them dear.
But some fell in that hour of glory,
And were left to their resting here.*

Before we leave a War Graves Cemetery, I always do two things. Firstly, I sign the visitors' Book, thanking the fallen for their sacrifice and, secondly, I shoulder my pipes and play the well-known bagpipe retreat – 'When the Battle's O'er' - in tribute to those who could not come home.

*March no more my soldier laddies,
There is peace where there once was war.
Sleep in peace my soldier laddies,
Sleep in peace, now the battle's over.*

*Carolyn Y. May
Parish Clerk*

