

Common sacrifice

[Alice Rawsthorn]

Simple white headstones, line after line. Clean angles of Portland Stone. Carefully engraved lists of names. The hallmarks of how we remember those who have died in conflict.

But these seemingly timeless structures have been part of our landscape for less than a century, created in the aftermath of a war with an unprecedented death toll.

Before this point in history, wars had been commemorated with statues of just the military leaders. The men in charge celebrated on pedestals, on columns, on triumphal arches.

But one man's work would begin to radically shift our perspective of how war could be commemorated.

That man was Fabian Ware, a former high-ranking civil servant, and a man with an unshakeable belief in the importance of the British Empire.

And while that may make him an unlikely candidate for creating such change, it would be this very belief that would lead him – and us - to a new way of thinking.

Ware wanted Britain to find a way to honour each and every one of its subjects at a time when it was asking so much of them. He felt compelled to find a way to mark their sacrifice to remember each individual who had given their life for the common cause.

During the four gruelling years of the First World War, Fabian Ware would lay the foundations for one of the most significant civic design innovations of our age.

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