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Visiting the Fallen: Arras: North

Peter Hughes



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Like Ypres, Arras was a front line town throughout the Great War. From March 1916 it became home to the British Army and it remained so until the Advance to Victory was well under way. In 1917 the Battle of Arras came and went. It occupied barely half a season, but was then largely forgotten; the periods before and after it have been virtually ignored, and yet the Arras sector was always important and holding it was never easy or without incident; death, of course, was never far away. The area around Arras is as rich in Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemeteries as anywhere else on the Western Front, including the Somme and Ypres, and yet these quiet redoubts with their headstones proudly on parade still remain largely unvisited. This book is the story of the men who fell and who are now buried in those cemeteries; and the telling of their story is the telling of what it was like to be a soldier on the Western Front. ??'Arras-North' is the first of three books by the same author. This volume contains in depth coverage of almost sixty Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemeteries and is a veritable 'Who's Who' of officers and other ranks who fell on this part of the Western Front. It provides comprehensive details of gallantry awards and citations and describes many minor operations, raids and other actions, as well as the events that took place in April and May 1917. It is the story of warfare on the Western Front as illustrated through the lives of those who fought and died on the battlefields of Arras.??There are many unsung heroes and personal tragedies, including a young man who went out into no man's land to rescue his brother, an uncle and nephew killed by the same shell, a suicide in the trenches and a young soldier killed by a random shell whilst celebrating his birthday with his comrades. There is an unexpected connection to Ulster dating back to the days of Oliver Cromwell and William of Orange, a link to Sinn Fein and an assassination, a descendant of Sir Isaac Newton, as well as a conjuror, a friend of P.G. Wodehouse, a young officer said to have been 'thrilled' to lead his platoon into the trenches for the first time, only to be killed three hours later, and a man whose headstone still awaits the addition of his Military Medal after almost a century, despite having been involved in one of the most daring rescues of the war. This is a superb reference guide for anyone visiting Arras and its battlefields.

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