



**Folkestone
Museum**

Reverend David Railton M.C.
The Tomb of the Unknown Warrior
17th October 2020 – 24th December 2020

100 years ago, on the 11th November 1920 an Unknown Warrior was laid to rest at Westminster Abbey. This was to be the legacy of a remarkable man, David Railton.

The Friends of St Mary's and St Eanswythe's exhibition 'Reverend David Railton M.C.' opens at Folkestone Museum on the 17th October 2020 and reflects on his experiences of the First World War which led to his idea for the Grave of the Unknown Warrior.

The iconic image of the Tomb has been recreated, with the permission of Westminster Abbey and will be on display at Folkestone Museum, along with a recording of some of his private letters, courtesy of his family and a film on loan from the Imperial War Museum.

Born in London in 1884, Railton was the eldest of three children. He attended The King's School, then Macclesfield Grammar School, before moving on to Keble College, Oxford in 1904. Four years later he was ordained and it was whilst he was a priest in Folkestone, where he lived with his wife Ruby, that the First World War broke out and he volunteered to serve as an Army Chaplain.

In 1916 Railton was awarded the Military Cross for rescuing an Officer and two soldiers under heavy fire. It was in 1916 he returned from the front line to his billet at Erquinghem – Lys, France and in the back garden he came across a grave marked by a small wooden cross, the cross was inscribed to 'An Unknown British Soldier'. Railton reflected upon this some years later when he had returned to Britain and was the Vicar of Margate. In 1920 Railton wrote to the Dean of Westminster, Bishop Herbert Ryle, to present his idea of a funeral and burial of one unknown soldier that represented all those who have lost their lives. The Dean supported the idea and was, at first reluctantly, supported by King George V and the Government.

In November of the same year, the body of an unidentified British serviceman was selected by Brigadier General Wyatt and sent to Britain in a coffin made from oak from Hampton Court and affixed with a sixteenth-century sword from King George V's private collection. On the 11th day of the 11th month in 1920, the procession accompanying the coffin of the Unknown Warrior made its way to Westminster Abbey accompanied by an honour guard of 100 holders of the Victoria Cross. Within a week of the burial, over 1 million people had visited the grave in Westminster Abbey to pay their respects.

Poignantly, many other countries have since created a tomb for an unknown soldier, amongst them France, Belgium, Germany, Italy and the USA. In a fitting tribute to the man who had the idea for this moving homage to the Fallen, the coffin was covered by 'the Padre's Flag', the Union Jack that Reverend David Railton had used as an altar cloth during the war. This flag was donated to Westminster Abbey a year later and hangs to this day in the Abbey's St George's Chapel, near to the Unknown Warrior's final resting place.

Visitor Information:

Admission:	Free	Email:	museum@folkestone-tc.gov.uk
Opening Times:	Thurs -Sat, 10am – 4pm	Phone:	(01303) 257946
Address:	Folkestone Museum, The Town Hall, 1-2 Guildhall Street, CT20 1DY	Website:	www.folkestonemuseum.co.uk

