

**In Memory of
Serjeant SIDNEY MERCHANT MM
70217, 19th Bn., Machine Gun Corps (Infantry)
Who died, age 25, on 26 March 1918
Son of William and Alice Merchant,
of Ye Red Lion, Faringdon, Berks.
Remembered with honour
Faringdon War Memorial and
ARRAS MEMORIAL**



Commemorated in perpetuity by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

The French handed over Arras to Commonwealth forces in the spring of 1916 and the system of tunnels upon which the town is built were used and developed in preparation for the major offensive planned for April 1917. It continued to be used by field ambulances and fighting units until November 1918.

The cemetery was enlarged after the Armistice when graves were brought in from the battlefields and from two smaller cemeteries in the vicinity.

The cemetery contains 2,651 Commonwealth burials of the First World War. In addition, there are 30 war graves of other nationalities, most of them German.

During the Second World War, Arras was occupied by United Kingdom forces headquarters until the town was evacuated on 23 May 1940. Arras then remained in German hands until retaken by Commonwealth and Free French forces on 1 September 1944.

The Arras Memorial commemorates almost 35,000 servicemen from the United Kingdom, South Africa and New Zealand who died in the Arras sector between the spring of 1916 and 7 August 1918, the eve of the Advance to Victory, and have no known grave. The most conspicuous events of this period were the Arras offensive of April-May 1917, and the German attack in the spring of 1918.

Both cemetery and memorial were designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens, with sculpture by Sir William Reid Dick. The memorial was unveiled by Lord Trenchard, Marshal of the Royal Air Force on the 31 July 1932 (originally it had been scheduled for 15 May, but due to the sudden death of French President Doumer, as a mark of respect, the ceremony was postponed until July).