

# The Menin Gate at Ypres

*By Edwina Holden National Heritage Officer*



Over the weekend of 15<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> May I travelled to Belgium to visit the grave of my Uncle killed at the Battle of St Julien on 31<sup>st</sup> July 1917 when the Hertfordshire Regiment were decimated. I also laid an ROCA wreath at the Menin Gate in Ypres on the Saturday evening. Where else in the world would a main road through a town be closed at 8pm each evening for the amazing

Ceremony attended by so many people? About 20 people are allowed to lay wreaths in the formal Ceremony, shown on the metal stand and many others are laid on the steps after the Ceremony which is attended by hundreds of visitors each evening.

During Friday evening dinner I sat with a nice couple and asked the chap, Brian Kemp, what service he had been involved with. He said he served in the RAF and was the RAFA Standard Bearer on the Saturday evening service at the Menin Gate.

His wife asked about my service, when I said Royal Observer Corps I thought I would receive blank looks, but Brian told me that he was in the ROC before going into the RAF, serving on the Walkern Post, near Stevenage, which was at that time attached to Watford Group before it closed in 1968 - Small world! Now he knows about the Association he will be coming to the Laying-up of the ROC Banner at St Clement Danes in October.

I was also delighted to be able to find the name of the Great Uncle of our National Secretary, Jenny, for whom there is no known grave, he is among the thousands commemorated there."





**We will  
Remember  
them**