



The Memorial to the Missing of the Somme

By Gavin Stamp

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Edwin Lutyens' Memorial to the Missing of the Somme at Thiepval in Northern France, visited annually by tens of thousands of tourists, is arguably the finest structure erected by any British architect in the twentieth century. It is the principal, tangible expression of the defining event in Britain's experience and memory of the Great War, the first day of the Battle of the Somme on 1 July 1916, and it bears the names of 73,000 soldiers whose bodies were never found at the end of that bloody and futile campaign. This brilliant study by an acclaimed architectural historian tells the origin of the memorial in the context of commemorating the war dead; it considers the giant classical brick arch in architectural terms, and also explores its wider historical significance and its resonances today. So much of the meaning of the twentieth century is concentrated here; the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing casts a shadow into the future, a shadow which extends beyond the dead of the Holocaust, to the Gulag, to the 'disappeared' of South America and of Tiananmen. Reissued in a beautiful and striking new edition for the centenary of the Somme.

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Editorial Review

Review

[a] moving and eloquent book Literary Review as a piece of architectural analysis it is impressive The Spectator Stamp has provided an invaluable, detailed and illuminating study Guardian the value of Stamp's book lies in its eloquent account of the genius of the vision of Edward Lutyens ... who created in the Monument to the Missing at Thiepval the central metaphor of a generation's experience of appalling loss. Observer This book is a gem...an eloquent, moving lament for the futile waste and industrialised killing of the First World War, and indeed of the 20th Century - an elegy which resonates powerfully today. Sunday Telegraph Much, much more than architectural history, for here, encapsulated in marmoreally angry prose, is an account of that collective act of mass murder, without parallel in history, known as the Great War. An unforgettable, passionate book. -- A.N. Wilson Evening Standard Perfectly formed and beautifully written, this book is a minor masterpiece, a paragon of its genre. It will move all but the hardest heart to tears at the folly, and the glory, that is man. -- Ross Leckie The Times

About the Author

Gavin Stamp is a well known architectural historian and writer. He has taught at Glasgow School of Art and held a research post at Cambridge. He lives in London.

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