

The Friends of Darwen Cemetery

THE voluntary group of local people was formed this year to tidy-up the town's old cemetery and to have some of the old headstones put back in position. The Friends group are also interested in preserving the heritage and tradition of the cemetery and are especially keen on helping to look after the 90 or so war graves dotted around the several acres of the site.

The group also need the help of local young people and children from primary schools have already started to help with design work and ideas. We hope to plant flowers and position some seats in a small circular area and make it a place of peace and quiet.

The cemetery was laid out by the local council about 150 years ago. Previously, people were buried close to their local church. But, of course, gradually the land around churches became full and it was necessary for the town to lay out a new and larger cemetery.

Many of the important people who built our town of Darwen are buried there, such as Eccles Shorrock who built India Mill and the famous chimney in the 1860s.

About 60 years ago a second town cemetery was opened just across the main road. It is called the Eastern cemetery.

In recent years the old cemetery has fallen into disrepair and a lot of work needs to be done. Many gravestones were laid flat because the council were frightened of them falling over and hurting people. And there is a lot of litter and bushes have overgrown many graves. The Friends group really need YOUR help.

+ THERE were two world wars in the last century. The Great War of 1914-18 and the Second World War of 1939-45. Millions of people, soldiers and civilians, died in these wars.

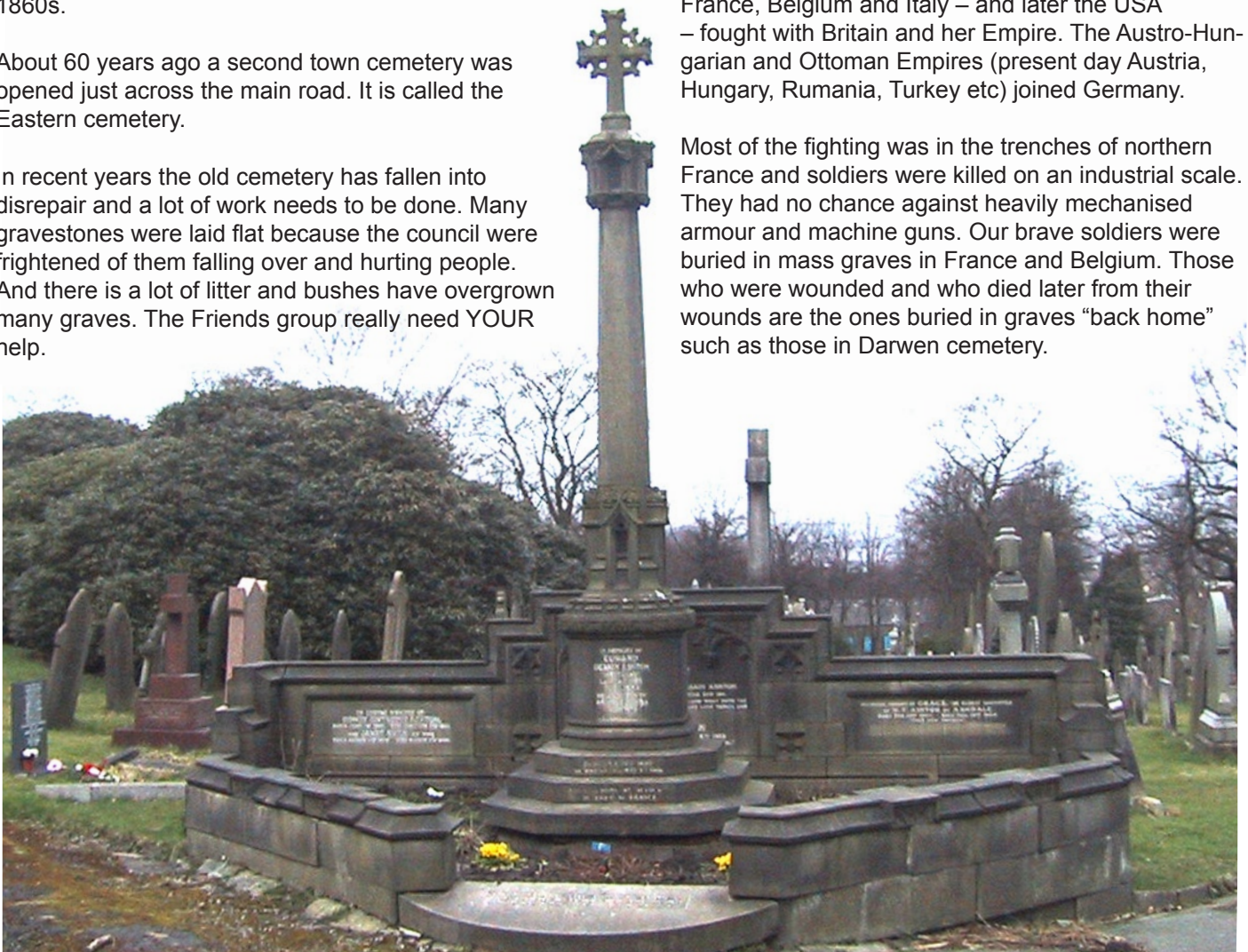
+ Why did the First World War start? Basically it was because of German imperialism. They wanted to be top dogs - instead of Great Britain. Both countries used their industrial might to take over large areas of the world and it was only a matter of time before they teamed up with their pals - their allies - and started fighting us.

France, Belgium and Italy - and later the USA - fought with Britain and her Empire. The Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires (present day Austria, Hungary, Rumania, Turkey etc) joined Germany.

Most of the fighting was in the trenches of northern France and soldiers were killed on an industrial scale. They had no chance against heavily mechanised armour and machine guns. Our brave soldiers were buried in mass graves in France and Belgium. Those who were wounded and who died later from their wounds are the ones buried in graves "back home" such as those in Darwen cemetery.



Edward Deakin Ashton, a second lieutenant, was killed on the first day of the Battle of the Somme.



The Ashton Memorial.

More information: Friends web site: www.darwencemetery.org.uk