

The 21st Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission was held on Tuesday 16th March 1920 at 3pm at the War Office. There were present:-

The Hon Sir George Perley High Commissioner for Canada, Lt Colonel G J Hoogben, representing the High Commissioner for Australia,, The Hon Sir Thomas Mackenzie, High Commissioner for New Zealand, A Blakenberg Esq OBE representing the High Commissioner for the Union of South Africa, The Hon Sir Edgar Bowring, High Commissioner for Newfoundland, G M Young Esq, representing the Secretary of State for India, Sir William Garstin,, General Sir C J N Macready, Admiral Sir Edmund Poe, Major General Sir Fabian Ware, Vice Chairman in the Chair, Colonel Lord Arthur Browne, Principal Assistant Secretary.

Brigadier General W WE Fairholme, Lieutenant Colonel Sir Frederic Kenyon, Major Chettle, OBE in attendance.

In the absence of the Chairman the chair was taken by the Vice-Chairman.

The minutes of the last meeting were considered. Arising out of the minutes the Vice Chairman reported that orders had been given to the Stationery Office to carry out the printing of "The Graves of the Fallen" for distribution.

The instrument appointing the Anglo Belgian Committee had been forwarded to the Foreign Office for communication to the Belgian Government. The French Authorities had been informed with regard to the proposed concentration of three cemeteries in Macedonia. The decision of the Commission as to the battle memorials at Salonika had been communicated to General Milne. He was not in a position to give any satisfactory figures with regard to the number of British dead in French Cemeteries and French dead in British cemeteries. So far as they had yet been made out they appeared to balance each other, but the figures received were conflicting and not sufficiently reliable to form a working basis.

The minutes were agreed to and signed by the Vice-Chairman.

2. The Reports of the 16th and 17th Meetings of the Finance Committee were considered.

The Vice-Chairman stated that a suggestion has been made by Messrs Deloitte Plender Griffiths & Co that having regard to the thorough audit of expenditure under sub-head A of the Commission's votes made by the Comptroller and Auditor General it was unnecessary for them to make a second audit and that they had proposed to accept the Comptroller and Auditor General's certificate. The Finance Committee were, however, of opinion that in view of the terms of Part VIII paragraph 1 of the Charter this was not a convenient procedure and that Messrs Deloitte should be requested to continue to audit the whole of the Commission's accounts.

He referred to the question of the Chichester Cemetery. The Municipal Council of Chichester had recommended three firms, but these firms considered that the work was not worth taking up.

Sir William Garstin moved the adoption of the Reports of the 16th and 17th Meetings of the Finance Committee. The motion was seconded by General Sir Macready and carried.

Sir George Perley enquired when a General Report would be issued.

The Vice-Chairman said he hoped that immediately after the close of the present financial year a General report would be issued not only for the past financial year but for the work done prior to that. He has before mentioned to the Commission that a draft Report had been ready in September but it was not then possible to deal with finance later than the previous March; the auditors had however promised a covering statement for the whole financial year shortly after its close so that a complete Report could be then brought out and he hoped it would be ready soon after April. Under the circumstances it was thought better to wait until then and endeavour to produce a really complete and satisfactory record of past work.

3. Protection of IWGC personnel in Macedonia – The Vice-Chairman stated that the Commission would remember that this matter had been brought up before when Sir Alfred Mond had undertaken to consult M Venizelos. The latter had no objection whatever to the personnel of the Commission being armed, in fact he considered that they ought to be armed in their capacity of “gardiers de cimetières”. He had also consulted other authorities, and as a result the Commission’s representative in Macedonia had been instructed to confer with the Greek Government and do whatever the Greek Government advised.
4. The Commission’s relation with the Treasury. The Vice-Chairman said that it would be remembered that the Chancellor of the Exchequer had been approached on the whole question of the relations of the Commission, which was an Imperial Organisation, with the Treasury. As a result the Chancellor had given certain undertakings. The members of the Commission had before them a letter from the Treasury which carried out those undertaking. The latter had not been replied to but he would read out a draft which it was proposed to send (reads letter).

Some discussion followed on the wording of the reply. It was decided to omit reference to “control of expenditure”.

Sir George Perley raised the question of a Treasury representative on the Commission.

The Vice Chairman said that there was no representative but the Treasury has suggested the presence of a Treasury Representative on the Commission. He has discussed the question with one or two members of the Commission and he did not know whether they would generally consider it an advantage. There was also the difficulty that the Commission has no power to appoint a Treasury representative a member of the Finance Committee. There was a troublesome clause in the Charter which only allowed members of the Commission to be members of Committees. No one except a member of the Commission could be appointed to a Committee of the Commission, consequently the Finance Committee was partly advisory because anybody could be appointed on an Advisory Committee – and partly executive – that

is to say, there were occasions, on which a member, such for instance, as the High Commissioner for Australia, was not able to attend, and deputed a representative to take place. Such representatives were most useful to the Committee, but they had not got votes; they were only there in an advisory capacity. He has discussed the question with the Colonial Office draughtsman, who drafted the Charter originally, and he maintained that the clause was a customary one but he (the Vice-Chairman) suggested that it might be considered by the next Imperial Conference whether the Charter should not be amended in this respect. He thought that the Commission would agree that it would be most unfortunate to amend the Charter without submitting the whole thing to the Imperial Conference. Various Members agreed.

5. Estimates for 1920-1921

The Vice-Chairman read a letter which had been received from the Treasury regarding the Commission's estimates for 1920-1921.

- 6. Regrading of Salaries of Overseas Personnel.** The Vice-Chairman stated that it would be remembered that the regrading of the salaries of the staff in the United Kingdom had been put before the Commission after revision in consultation with the Treasury. The present proposals were for the overseas personnel and were drawn up on much the same principals as for the personnel in the United Kingdom. Sir Thomas Mackenzie asked if the details had been approved.

The Vice-Chairman stated that they had been approved by the Finance Committee as well as worked out by the Treasury and they were now put forward for the approval of the Commission. The following was the resolution he suggested:- "That the following increase of salaries in lieu of was bonus be approved as from January 1st 1920 (for details of these see Original Docs).

- 7. Resignation of Lord Plumer.** The Vice-Chairman stated that the Commission would remember that some time ago Field Marshal Lord Plumer had asked to be allowed to resign, as he was going to Malta and it would be impossible for him to take part in the work of the Commission – no steps had as yet been taken to fill his place, but he had discussed the matter with the Chairman. He (the Vice-Chairman) would shortly be resigning the Directorate of Graves Registration and Enquiries, and when he did so the Commission would have no direct link with the War Office. The Chairman had therefore suggested that the Commission should nominate Sir George Macdonogh, the Adjutant General, for as long as he was Adjutant General, in place of Lord Plumer. The Commission was not in a position to co-opt its own members, so that he did not think a resolution was necessary. Lord Plumer had never actually attended any meeting of the Commission but he had done much to help the work while he was in France and had taken great interest in the work of the Commission. He did not think that it was the place of the Commission to accept the resignation and appoint another member, as the appointments were made by Royal Warrant, Sir George Macdonogh had been consulted and was willing to serve. It was generally agreed that the appointment of Sir George Macdonogh was desirable.

8. **British Graves in Germany.** The Vice-Chairman stated that he had asked General Fairholme and Sir Frederic Kenyon to attend the meeting in connection with this matter. General Fairholme had returned from Berlin about a fortnight ago. The Commission had before then a memorandum on the subject and General Fairholme had also given him a useful questionnaire summing up the whole question. The first point which arose was the attitude to be taken with regard to the question of exhumation of bodies and their transportation to the United Kingdom or the Dominions. The Commission had received a number of requests, sometimes strongly expressed, that British soldiers buried in Germany should be brought back. The main idea underlying these requests was to get the bodies out of Germany and in most cases the relatives would be satisfied if they were buried in French Cemeteries. Others, however, wanted the bodies brought back to their homes. There was a considerable amount of sentiment in the matter. A typical case was that of a clergyman whose son had been taken prisoner by the Germans. He was only slightly wounded and in the father's view the Germans had killed him, and he did not wish the body to remain in that "accused" country. He suggested that General Fairholme might explain the general situation as regards this and other questions, to the Commission.

General Fairholme stated that the representatives of the Military Department in Berlin which dealt with war graves, were opposed in principle to the exhumation of German bodies and their transportation back to Germany; he supposed because of the expense and difficulty of finding transport and the general unsettlement of the whole country. No case, however, had yet arisen in Germany that he knew of and they were not in favour of it. On the other hand, there had just been a revolution and he could not say what the result would be as regards their particular work. The Germans had undertaken to allow no British bodies to be removed from their resting places in Germany without the previous consent of the Imperial War Graves Commission. He had been instructed to make that request and the Germans had agreed, their pretext being the practical difficulties connected therewith – the want of transport and the sanitary considerations involved. At the same time the Germans hoped that they would not be considered by the British Public or the British Press as obstructive.

Sir Thomas Mackenzie asked what the position was as regards exhumation.

The Vice-Chairman said nothing had been settled and they would see from the memorandum before them that a decision should be come to in order that the Commission might know whether they could erect permanent headstones on the graves or not.

Sir William Gaskin enquired if exhumation would mean the exhumation of all, or only of those bodies where the next of kin desired it.

The Vice-Chairman said he could only give his personal opinion, which was that, if exhumation were allowed, an agitation in Parliament and in the country might arise that all bodies should be brought back at the expense of the state. Colonel Hoogben stated that he anticipated the question would arise and had consulted the Commonwealth Government upon the point. The reply was that if the Commission was satisfied with the existing arrangements for the care and maintenance of the

graves in Germany they did not desire that any special representations should be made to the Commission. He thought from this that it was evident the Commonwealth Government did not desire any action to be taken as regards exhumation.

The Vice-Chairman stated that he did not think anything should be done without consulting the French and Belgians in the matter, and one suggestion that he ventured to put before the Commission was that it might be better not to come to any decision until the opportunity had been taken to ascertain their views at the forthcoming meetings of the Anglo French and Anglo Belgian Mixed Committees.

Sir Thomas Mackenzie stated that he thought so far as New Zealand was concerned, that his Government would not favour general exhumation, but would support the cases of those relatives who wished to remove the bodies in which they were interested.

The Vice-Chairman stated that he would like General Fairholme to tell the Commission how the Germans were caring for the graves, so far as he had been able to look into the matter, and also what was the attitude of the German Authorities generally towards British graves.

General Fairholme stated that the attitude of the Germans, so far as he had been able to gather, was very correct and helpful. The Officers with whom he or his subordinate had been in contact has shown every disposition to assist them, and the few Cemeteries which he had been able to visit were well cared for. On the other hand, the French who had our parties ever since the Armistice, making general enquiry after their missing, had told him that they had found about 50% were not in a satisfactory condition but that this had been put right as soon as representations were made. He thought that generally speaking there was every disposition to attend to and look after our graves well. The great difficulty they has was in obtaining full and accurate information as to the number of British dead buried in Germany, and where they lie, because on the one hand owing to the revolution, when the Soldiers Councils took possession of the Army Corps Headquarters, there was great confusion. Many papers could not be found. Besides, they had a very reduced staff to cope with the questions, because they has no money. For instance, they had not been able to send officers over here to enquire after their graves, simply because they could not afford it. In principal, they treated British graves in the same manner as if they were German, and those cemeteries that he saw in the vicinity of Berlin were well marked, mostly with small concrete blocks marked with the man's name, the year of their birth and death, but nothing else. These were small but perfectly distinctive. The nationality was not given, and French, Russian and British and even German graves were mixed up in the same line. He thought the Germans were under the impression that under the Peace Treaty they were expected to provide permanent memorials at their own cost, that is to say, if they put up a memorial of a semi-permanent nature they considered it was their duty to renew it from time to time, such for instance, as non crosses etc. All the bodies were in single graves and they were all buried in pre-existing cemeteries, these being no cemeteries for British prisoners of war only. No case of common graves had been reported.

The Vice-Chairman said that the next point raised by General Fairholme was whether it would be contrary to British sentiment that our dead should lie under gravestones paid for wholly or partly out of German funds, and if it was decided that a uniform pattern gravestone should be adopted, would public sentiment throughout the Empire be opposed to the use of a gravestone made in Germany?

Sir Thomas Mackenzie thought that public opinion would certainly be opposed to it.

The Vice-Chairman said he agreed. The War Office was at present making arrangements for checking and registering the graves. All the cemeteries were to be visited and the inscriptions on the temporary memorials corrected. In the meantime he proposed that General Fairholme should continue to represent the Commission in Berlin, not only to carry on the diplomatic work, but also to get ready for construction, nothing definite however, could be done towards the construction work until certain important principles of policy were decided eg, were headstones to be erected. He did not think they could start on the headstones until the French and Belgians had been consulted.

Sir William Garstin thought they must first settle the question of exhumation. He asked if the Commission was to be the deciding authority on this point.

The Vice-Chairman said he thought that the Commission, as representing the different Government of the Empire would have to make a recommendation to those Governments. The Belgians had officially as the British Government what their proposals about exhumation were. The Commission had as much authority over these graves in Germany as over those in France.

Sir George Perley asked what obligation was there on the Germans to provide memorials under the Peace Treaty.

The Vice-Chairman said that it was provided that they should maintain and care for the graves and that facilities should be given on both sides for taking the bodies back to their homes. There was no clause about the erection of memorials.

Sir George Perley said he understood the Vice-Chairman to say that the Germans considered they were responsible for the memorials under the Peace Treaty.

General Fairholme said that they were responsible for maintenance and he supposed they interpreted impression that the French were less concerned than the British would probably be as regards the question of uniformity of the permanent gravestones in Germany. He had come across a cemetery not far from Berlin where Indians were principally buried; these were in some cases marked with crosses and a memorial had been put up by their comrades.

Sir George Perley asked how many dead there were in Germany.

The Vice-Chairman said he could give a definite answer but there were at least 6,000, exclusive of the occupied zone. When relatives asked that bodies should be brought back it was possible at present to tell them that transport was not available and he thought they would have the support of the Government in taking that line. The question arose as to whether the Commission should go on with the work of erecting the headstones. If this was done and satisfactory arrangements were made by General Fairholme with the Germans for looking after the graves, it is possible that there might be less desire to bring bodies back. He asked Sir George Perley what the feeling in Canada was on the subject.

Sir George Perley said that his opinion was that the question had better be left for the time and discussed with the Committees in Paris and Brussels. He thought that if the Secretary of State, who was also Chairman of the Commission, was prepared to say on behalf of the Government that there was no objection to the Commission deciding that graves should remain in Germany, that it would be safe to pass a resolution to that effect.

Sir Thomas Mackenzie agreed that the matter should be postponed.

The Vice-Chairman said that the next question they would have to settle would be the replacement of the temporary crosses. These would be falling to pieces and there would be difficulties caused by the desire of relatives to put up their own headstones. Whatever way they decided they would have difficulties in connection with this.

Sir Thomas Mackenzie thought that the sense of the meeting should now be taken as to whether exhumation should be allowed. Personally he thought that those who wished to remove the dead from Germany should be allowed to do so.

Admiral Poe asked if it was to be all their own expense or at the public expense.

Sir Thomas Mackenzie suggested that those who wished to remove bodies from the cemeteries might do so as their own cost.

Sir William Garstin said that if they were given this privilege they would then ask for facilities to do it and they would find it was impossible.

Mr Blakenberg pointed out that people would then make comparisons between Germany and France and would complain about being able to remove bodies from Germany but not from France.

General Macready thought that from the point of view of the Commission they should not accept the principle that those only who could afford it should be allowed to bring bodies from Germany. After some further discussion Sir George Perley moved that the matter should be postponed to the next meeting.

Sir Thomas Mackenzie agreed.

Admiral Poe pointed out that they should first get Government approval of whatever they settled.

The Vice-Chairman said that he understood that Sir George Perley had moved and Admiral Poe had seconded that the consideration of the question should be postponed until the next meeting. This was agreed to.

The Vice-Chairman added that he understood that he had instructions from the Commission to consult the Chairman about the matter, and that it should be discussed at the forthcoming meetings of the Anglo-French and Anglo-Belgian Committees.

9. Peace Treaty with Turkey.

The Vice-Chairman read the clause which they were endeavouring to get included in the Peace Treaty with Turkey and explained how the matter stood.

10. Memorial to South Africans in Delville Wood.

Mr Blakenberg said that the South African Government recognised the principle adopted by the Commission that headstones should not be put on graves unless the remains were interred there, but Delville Wood had special associations for South Africans. It was twice fought over in 1916 and over 1,000 South Africans lost their lives there. The pace had been churned up with shell fire that they had not been able to trace the remains of many of their men. The Union Government therefore thought the circumstances were exceptional and had instructed him to please with the Commission to treat Delville Wood as a special case and to erect headstones in the cases of men where there was undoubted proof that they were buried in the Wood. He hoped that the Commission would give favourable consideration to their desire. He wished to mention that the Union Government were trying to purchase Delville Wood, but that there were difficulties in the way. If they put up the headstones it would mean that while they knew who the men were, the headstone itself would practically be over a vacant grave.

The Vice-Chairman said he thought Mr Blakenberg was not present when a similar question was discussed by the Commission before. It was then summed up very tensely by Mr Kipling, who objected to what he called "dud graves". Sir Frederic Kenyon had been asked to go into the question and put up a recommendation as to how the graves of the missing should be commemorated.

Sir Frederic Kenyon explained that in the ordinary way, where they knew that a man had been killed but the body had not been recovered, his name would be commemorated in one of the nearest cemeteries,. The present proposal, which the architects had approved, was that the name should be inscribed on the wall of the cemetery,. He did not think there was any reason why they should adopt a different line in this particular case. Even in Delville Wood there were a large number of British dead other than South Africans who were known to have fallen there and whose bodies had not been recovered. He did not know if the Union Government attached special importance to having a headstone over the grave of each man in preference to a record of the name on the wall, or whether they were acquainted with the proposals of the Commission.

Mr Blakenberg said that he had instructions to press strongly for headstones if it were possible, but only in cases where they had undoubted proof that the men whose remains had not yet been recovered were buried in the Wood.

Sir Frederic Kenyon said the same thing applied to all the missing of the Union of South Africa contemplated putting up headstones he did not quite see how it was to be done. If they had a grace space in front of the stone, it suggested a grave, which might be regarded as fraudulent. If, on the other hand, headstones were put up so as to show that there was no body there, it merely meant a group of headstones jammed up together, and he thought the effect would be bad, and people would not be able to approach them. The names could either be put on tablets or carved on the actual walls, and if the South African Government were going to put up a special memorial, the names of the dead could be carved on it although the architects as a general rule preferred the idea of carving them on the wall to putting them on a special cenotaph, but no doubt they would consider the wishes of the Union Government.

The Vice-Chairman suggested that the definite proposals of the Commission should be sent to Mr Blakenberg and perhaps Colonel Kenyon would ask one of the architects to show an actual design for one of the proposed memorials to the missing dead. After some further discussion it was decided that Mr Blakenberg should be provided by the Principal Assistant Secretary with papers relating to the proposals of the Commission on the matter.

11. Agency of the Commission in India.

The Vice-Chairman said it would be remembered that at the 7th Meeting of the Commission it was agreed that the Government of India should be appointed Agents of the Commission in India if willing to act. They had now received information from the Secretary of State that the Indian Government had agreed to the proposal. They had appointed an Advisory Committee to act as the channel of communication between the Commission and the Indian Government.

Mr Young explained that there had been some question about this Advisory Committee. It was not a body with powers of its own but as a matter of fact it consisted of members of one of the Departments of the Government of India, who would deal with the matter.

The Vice-Chairman said that the resolution suggested was:- "That in accordance with the instructions of the Commission at their seventh meeting, on the 17th December 1918 the Governor General of India in Council be constituted the Agency of the Commission for India and Aden; that the Agency be granted the general and financial powers necessary to enable it to carry out the purposes specified in Part V Section I (i-v) of the Charter and that it be an instruction to the Secretary to prepare the necessary instrument for signature in accordance with Part VII Section 4 (i) of the Charter.

That such powers be exercised subject to such instructions as may be issued from time to time by the Commission and under their general control".

The resolution was moved by Mr Young, seconded by General Sir N Macready and agreed to.

12. Private Memorials in War Cemeteries in Egypt.

The Vice-Chairman stated that they had had trouble in Egypt because the Red Cross Commissioner had encouraged people to erect private memorials in cemeteries and a large number had been erected. As this had been done, he had at the time approached the Red Cross and suggested to them that they should complete their work by erecting memorials of the same kind to those who could not afford to erect them themselves. The Red Cross however, were unable to do so. They were therefore faced with the fact that there were a large number of private memorials in these Cemeteries. They were all more or less alike, being marble crosses costing about £5 each. What the Anglo-Egyptian Committee proposed to do was to gather these together in separate parts of the cemeteries where they could all be together, and then construct the remainder of the cemetery in accordance with the ordinary Commission design. They were not giving permission for memorials to be erected in the future, but they were only dealing with those which had already been erected.

Sir William Garstin said he wondered what argument they would use to these people who were attacking the Commission for not allowing private or cruciform memorials in France and Belgium when they learnt that these had been allowed in Egypt.

The vice-Chairman pointed out that they had not allowed them. What they were doing in France at present was that those private memorials which had been erected before the General Routine Order forbade their erection were not being removed without consulting the relatives and so far, in the few cases in which the relatives had been consulted, they had almost all agreed.

Sir George Perley asked if this meant that they were giving them exactly the same right of keeping what had already been put up as was given to the relatives of the men in France.

The Vice-Chairman said this was so, although it had never been admitted that the Commission had not the right to remove these headstones if they wished to, and he did not wish to be committed to saying that now. As a matter of practice, relatives had been consulted up to the present and had agreed to their being taken down; the alternative in Egypt was to take them all down, and there was such a large number there – this could not be done. The resolution he proposed was:-

That instructions be issued to the Anglo- Egyptian War Graves Executive Committee to use their discretion (i) as to the extent to which already erected private memorials should be replaced by regimental headstones or (2) as to the extent to which graves marked with private memorials may be moved from one cemetery or part of a cemetery to another”.

The resolution was moved by Sir Williams Garstin, seconded by Sir Edgar Bowring and agreed to.

13. The Vice-Chairman said the next item was a resolution thanking the Belgian Government for the facilities they had accorded for the importation of articles required for the Commission’s work. He had had some hesitation as to

whether this could be submitted to the Commission, as when it was looked into it was found that the Belgians had not given very much. However; he thought that they might pass the following resolution:-

“That the Imperial War Graves Commission desire to place on record their appreciation of the Belgian Government in according facilities to the Imperial War Graves Commission in connection with the importation into Belgium of the materials necessary for carrying on their work”

The resolution was proposed by Sir George Perley, seconded by Sir Edgar Bowring and agreed to.

14. **Staff Appointments, Promotions and Resignations.**

The Vice-Chairman said there were the ordinary resolutions, but there were one or two things to which he would like to call attention. The increased salary for the appointment of Director of Works, which was held by Colonel Durham, had been approved at a previous meeting, but he had omitted to mention that the increase in his salary had been made conditional on Colonel Durham entering into a three years agreement. He was glad to say that Colonel Durham had accepted that agreement and he (the Vice-Chairman) was now asking for authority to enter into the same agreement with regard to the Commission's Legal Advisor, Major Phillips. He was also asking the Commission to approve of the promotion of Major Holden to the post of Principal Architect.

Sir Thomas Mackenzie enquired if Major Holden was taking some one else's position.

The Vice-Chairman said no; he had been working for the Commission from the beginning and it had been suggested that he should be out in as one of their principal architects in France. The Commission would get his half time. He has carried out the design of two cemeteries under Sir Reginald Blomfield. He regretted also to have to inform them that Colonel Branch had resigned, as he was returning to his profession as Lawyer. He had done most valuable work for the Commission as Controller of Administration and it was with great regret that they were obliged to agree to his resignation. Colonel Branch came at a time when the whole work of the Secretariat wanted pulling together, and he had carried out his duties in a most efficient manner. He would like the permission of the Commission to express their good wishes to him in his new start in life and their appreciation of what he had done. Colonel Lafontaine was also leaving for the same reasons and no doubt the Commission would like to express appreciation of his work.

The following resolutions were proposed by Sir William Garstin seconded by Sir Edgar Bowring and agreed to:-

That the Commission hereby approve of the appointments of the undermentioned officers and of the payment to them of the funds of the Commission of the approved salaries as from the date set out against their names:- (For details of these see original document).

“That the Commission hereby approve of the promotion of the officer undermentioned and of the payment to him out of the funds of the Commission of the approved salary as from the date set out against his name: (For details of this see original document).

“That the Commission accepts the resignation of the undermentioned officers as from the date set out against their names:- (For details of these see original document).

“That the Vice-Chairman, be authorised to offer the appointment for three years service from the 1 of January last to Major C K Phillips, OBE as Legal Advisor at a salary of £800 using by £40 a year to £1,000”.

Sir Thomas Mackenzie enquired if they got the whole of the services of the Legal Adviser for the salary given.

The Vice-Chairman said yes. The idea was that the Treasury notified to the Commission that these officers should understand that if the work went on their appointments would not definitely terminate at the end of three years. At the end of three years, the question would be reconsidered. There was no intention of giving them the idea that their work would automatically cease at the end of three years.

Sir Thomas Mackenzie thought that was the right attitude to adopt.

15. Other Business

The Vice-Chairman said the Commission would be interested to hear that Colonel Messer, who was previously in the employ of the Commission, had recently been sent to Holland to investigate the question of the graves there. He had returned that day and a Report would shortly be submitted from him:-

There was another point he wished to mention.

Two questions were to be asked in the House of Lords on the 23rd instant when it was expected there would be a full dress debate. The first question was by Lord Selborne and read as follows:-

“To ask H.M. Government whether it is not the fact that during the war large numbers of crosses of a permanent character in stone or marble or wood, were erected over the graves of fallen soldiers in France and Flanders, by their comrades or by their families; and whether it is the intention of the Imperial War Graves Commission to pull down these memorials”.

The second question was by Lord Balfour of Binleigh:-

“To call attention to the failure of the Imperial War Graves Commission to meet the wish of great numbers of wives and parents of fallen soldiers for a cross as the headstones of their husbands and childrens' graves; and to move a resolution”.

Sir George Perley enquired what comments there had been regarding the headstones which had been put up in the Tea Room at the House of Commons.

The Vice-Chairman said that he had heard no comments on the matter. He has asked Mr Churchill's Private Secretary, but nobody had said anything so far as he knew. He thought the genuine impression was favourable. On the other hand, of course, the campaign against the policy of the Commission was still going on.

Fabian Ware
Chairman