

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS  
of the 29th  
MEETING OF THE IMPERIAL WAR GRAVES COMMISSION  
held at  
HIS MAJESTY'S OFFICE OF WORKS  
on  
TUESDAY, 18th JANUARY, 1921.

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Present:

The Hon. SIR GEORGE PERLEY, K.C.M.G., High Commissioner for Canada.

Lieut.-Col. G.J. HOGREN, O.B.E. representing the High Commissioner for AUSTRALIA.

Colonel the Hon. SIR JAMES ALLEN, K.C.B., High Commissioner for NEW ZEALAND.

Sir R.A. BLANKENBERG, K.B.E., Acting High Commissioner for SOUTH AFRICA.

Lieut.-Colonel T. NANGLE, representing the High Commissioner for NEWFOUNDLAND.

Lieut.-General SIR A.S. CORBE, V.C., K.C.B., K.C.S.I., D.S.O. representing the Secretary of State for INDIA.

Admiral SIR EDMUND S. POE, G.C.V.O., K.C.B.

Mr. RUDYARD KIPLING.

Sir ROBERT HUDSON, G.B.E.

- and -

Major-General Sir FABIAN WARE, K.B.E., C.B., C.M.G., in the Chair.

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Colonel Lord ARTHUR BROWNE, K.B.E., Principal Assistant Secretary.  
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There were also present :-

- Mr. L.C. Christie, Legal Adviser, Department of External Affairs, CANADA.
  - Lieut.-Colonel ..... F.R. DURHAM, O.B.E., M.C.
  - Lieut.-Colonel ..... H. ELLISSEN, C.B.E.
  - Lieut.-Colonel ..... C.P. OSWALD, O.B.E.
  - Major ..... H.F. CHETTLER, O.B.E.
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In the absence of the CHAIRMAN the chair was taken by the VICE CHAIRMAN.

The minutes of the last meeting were considered and agreed to.

Arising out of the Minutes

THE VICE CHAIRMAN said that the Commission would remember that at their last Meeting they had appointed a small Committee to go into questions arising between the Commission and the War Office. As a result of this Committee's deliberations, an agreement had been drawn up under which the Commission would take over the whole London Office of the Directorate as soon as possible. The Committee had some hesitation about taking over the Effects Branch, but as the work done by that body specially interested the Commission they had settled to take at any rate part of it over. In the United Kingdom all the work would be taken over; in France and Belgium the registration work, but not the exhumation of bodies; that is to say, the work of concentrating isolated bodies and identifying them would continue to be done by the Army, and it was estimated that this would take another six or nine months.

It was decided that no steps were necessary to take over the work of the Army in Palestine and Egypt, as this would be finished very shortly, probably within a few weeks. Mesopotamia would be left over for the present. Germany also was reserved for further discussion which he would not then deal with as the Adjutant General had been unavoidably prevented from attending the meeting. In this connection he would like to mention that the Directorate in Berlin had recently held an International Conference on the question of graves, but as the Commission were pledged to the French and Belgians not to hold negotiations with the Germans without prior agreement with them, he had instructed the Commission's representative not to take part in these Conferences. The arrangements for taking over were working

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satisfactorily at present, but as the rates of pay offered by the Commission were rather smaller than those paid by the War Office it was necessary to negotiate with each individual, which would mean some slight delay.

The Vice Chairman mentioned that Mr. Fisher, the High Commissioner for Australia, was leaving this country. During his stay here he had been an active member of the Finance Committee. He moved the following resolution which was seconded by Sir George Perley and unanimously agreed to :

"The members of the Commission desire, before Mr. Fisher leaves them, to convey to him their sincere appreciation of the assistance which his wide administrative experience, and in particular his constant attendance on the Finance Committee, have been to them in carrying out their work."

2. REPORT OF THE 32nd MEETING OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE.

THE VICE CHAIRMAN said that in this Report the Finance Committee had approved the estimates for the coming year.

SIR JAMES ALLEN said that the cost of taking over from the Directorate of Graves Registration and Enquiries had been put at £70,000, and he understood this estimate would be sufficient. With regard to the care of graves in Australia there was some doubt about the policy to be adopted and it was difficult to make any estimate for this.

THE VICE CHAIRMAN said they had made definite provision for the care of graves in Canada, and New Zealand had made its own proposals.

LIEUT.-COLONEL HOGBEN said they had not yet received the final figures from Australia, but he thought the cost to the Commission would be practically negligible.

THE VICE CHAIRMAN said there was a contingency vote for £10,000 which might cover any expenditure under that head. The Treasury representative thought it was undesirable to include more than that sum as they had no definite policy as regards Australia at present. The Commission would notice that last

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year much less than their original estimate was spent. As a result, the money they would ask from the British Parliament would be small because most of last year's vote was non-surrenderable and carried over. The estimate for taking over the Directorate of Graves Registration and Enquiries appeared as a separate item; the decision to take over their work had only been arrived at recently, and there had been no time to analyse the expenditure properly, so it was thought best to enter it as a lump sum. The Commission would realise that they had taken over all the enquiry and registration work of the Directorate so far as United Kingdom troops were concerned, and they were in a position to take over similar work so far as the Dominions were concerned.

There was another matter in the Finance Committee's Report to which he wished to draw attention. The Committee were not disposed to concur fully in the proposals which had been put forward by the Anglo-Egyptian Committee for increase of salaries but they had agreed that the increased salaries could be allowed (inclusive of all allowances except travelling allowance) as a bonus for one year only. The matter could be reconsidered at the end of twelve months.

SIR JAMES ALLEN said that the Committee had felt it was not justifiable to increase the salaries permanently up to what the Egyptian Committee had asked at a time when prices and the cost of living were so high, so they had decided to give the increase as a bonus and see what the result would be.

The adoption of the Report was moved by Sir James Allen, seconded by Admiral Sir Edmund Poe and agreed to.

### 3. TENDERS AND CONTRACTS.

THE VICE CHAIRMAN said he thought they could take the next few items together. From the papers before them the Commission would see that the third Priority Programme of 50 cemeteries containing about 53,000 graves was now being advertised for public tender. He was asking the Commission to pass resolutions similar to those they had passed in connection with previous tenders, giving the Finance Committee authority

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to consider tenders and place the contracts without further reference to the Commission. The same question arose in regard to Richmond Cemetery and Nairobi Cemetery, East Africa, and also the Cemeteries at Taranto, Bordighera and Faenza in Italy. The Director of Works would explain the work to be done in the three latter Cemeteries.

COLONEL DURHAM said the total cost of these three cemeteries would be about £8,000. In Taranto there were 52 graves, in Bordighera 92 and in Faenza 453. They had taken the Italian Cemeteries on the French scale of unit cost per grave. Nominally the cost worked out a little higher, but he thought that owing to the rate of exchange the Italian Cemeteries would eventually come out at a lower figure.

SIR ROBERT HUDSON enquired if they were able to take advantage of the present rates of exchange and if they could ensure doing so for the future.

THE VICE CHAIRMAN explained that they had covered themselves as regards exchange, for instance, their contracts up to March were covered; that is to say, the francs had been bought in advance. It was left to the Treasury to say when francs should be bought, and when the Treasury gave the word the purchase was made, and as a matter of fact much money had been saved on the first Programme owing to the rate at which they had bought. The other resolution they had before them was for the erection of headstones in Sweden. Here the exchange was against this country. There were also 14 graves in the Island of Oland where the cost would probably come to a little more than the average; and there were the out-of-pocket expenses of Mr. Baldwin, who was acting as the Commission's Agent in Sweden and who gave his services for nothing, except travelling expenses, etc. He would put these resolutions together before the Commission :-

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- (1) "That the Commission having considered a letter from the Comptroller and Financial Adviser dated 29th December 1920, No.24/N/5/F, reporting that contract No. 1920.C. for the construction of some 50 Cemeteries in France and Belgium was being advertised for public tender, authorise the Finance Committee to consider such tenders and place the contract in due course without further reference to the Commission."
  - (2) "That the Finance Committee be authorised to consider and accept tenders for the architectural treatment of the Military Plot in Richmond Cemetery at a cost of not exceeding £600."
  - (3) "That the Finance Committee be authorised to consider and accept tenders for constructional work to be undertaken at Nairobi Cemetery, British East Africa, at a cost of not exceeding £840."
  - (4) "That the Finance Committee be authorised to consider and accept tenders for the erection of headstones over 63 graves in Sweden at a cost of not exceeding £756."
  - (5) "That the Finance Committee be authorised to consider and accept tenders for constructional work to be undertaken at Taranto, Bordighera and Faenza Cemeteries respectively and to place the necessary contracts without further reference to the Commission."

The resolutions were moved by Sir George Perley, seconded by Colonel Hogben and agreed to,

SIR GEORGE PERLEY said he would like to refer to the Cemetery at Courcellette in which the great bulk of the graves were Canadian. He would be glad if this Cemetery could be brought into an early Programme if possible.

#### 4. MEMORIALS TO THE MISSING.

THE VICE CHAIRMAN said the Commission would remember that they had originally decided to commemorate the missing in the cemeteries nearest to the spot where each man fell, but after going into the question they found that it would probably take

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at least five years to collect the information necessary to enable this proposal to be carried out, and in the meantime they had to decide on the area of each cemetery in order to acquire the land; it was necessary that if the missing were to be commemorated in the cemeteries they were constructing that they should have some plan which would work concurrently with the acquisition of the sites. This could be done without difficulty if the missing were not to be commemorated topographically but by units, that is to say, that cemeteries along the front line should be assigned to different regiments units or groups of units so that the missing of all that unit or group of units could be commemorated in a particular cemetery. A paper on the subject by the Director of Works was before them in which he suggested that the Record Houses or Chapels should be used for the commemoration of the missing. Incidentally this would provide money for the erection of these Record Houses or Chapels where at present the unit cost of £10 a grave might not be sufficient to pay for their inclusion in the cemetery, that is to say, they could adopt the principle that a certain sum of money should be allotted to each cemetery for each missing man who was to be commemorated in that cemetery. He thought it should be recognised that it was the duty of the Commission to spend in erecting a memorial to each missing man at least the cost of the headstone of the man who had a grave. Roughly this would work out at about £5 per head, and if it was agreed that this amount could be spent, then sufficient money would be available to erect, for example, Record Houses in the cemeteries concerned, and at the same time to inscribe the names of the missing on panels on the walls of these Houses.

The main principle the Commission had to decide first was whether the relatives of the missing would be satisfied that their dead should be commemorated in this way, namely, by units and not in the cemeteries nearest to where they fell. There was unquestionably a strong desire on the part of many relatives to be able to go back to the actual spot

where their boy fell and find a memorial to him there. That was impossible, but the next best thing for them would be to have a memorial in the nearest cemetery. The difficulty in giving effect to this desire was as he had said mainly the impossibility of collecting the necessary information in a reasonable time. It was not possible to give the exact numbers of missing the Commission would have to deal with, but there would probably be between 200,000 and 250,000. The example before them which had been worked out by the Director of Works, was a case of a small unit with a small number of missing, and the design had been drawn up by Sir Reginald Blomfield.

MR. RUDYARD KIPLING said he had had many strong letters from people to whom the regimental idea conveyed nothing and who much preferred that the names of the dead should be commemorated near the place where they fell. This meant a great deal to many of them. They were only interested in that one little piece of France which <sup>was</sup> ~~as~~ of importance to them. He would like to make one matter clear. In the paper before them, it was said that the inscription had been furnished by him. All he had done was to furnish an inscription for the memorial to the missing in Italy and he had no idea that the same inscription would be used for a missing memorial in France.

THE VICE CHAIRMAN said that the inscription on the design before them was only an adaptation of the Italian inscription. It had been used in order to make the design clear to the Commission; it was not intended that this should be the actual inscription to be engraved on the memorial.

MR. RUDYARD KIPLING said he would be glad if this could be put on record so that it was clear that the inscription on the design before them was adapted from an inscription he had made out for the Italian memorial, and that it was not intended for memorials to the missing in France. He personally objected to the proposal to commemorate the missing regimentally and was

only ready to agree to it if it proved to be inevitable in which case he could of course be prepared to defend the decision. He thought he was voicing the wishes of a great many of the next of kin. Was it the opinion of the Commission that it was inevitable that the names of the missing should be recorded in Record Houses in certain specified areas irrespective of where the <sup>men</sup> ~~war~~ fell? He recognised that they had to consider the question of expense and also delay.

SIR JAMES ALLEN said he did not like the regimental idea and was not persuaded that they had sufficient evidence to show that their original proposals were impracticable. He thought they could get the information from the regimental records and he hoped that they would be able to find some way out of it as he felt sure very strong feeling would be created.

SIR GEORGE PERLEY said that as he understood it the real difficulty was that carrying out the original design meant postponing the completion of any cemetery.

THE VICE CHAIRMAN agreed and said that it would make it impossible in many cases to tell the French or Belgians exactly what areas of land would be required.

SIR JAMES ALLEN said that he thought a small Committee might be appointed to go into the question in detail and report to the Commission.

THE VICE CHAIRMAN said he would be most grateful if such a Committee were appointed as the question was an extremely difficult one and a decision was imperative if the work of construction was to proceed normally.

MR. RUDYARD KIPLING asked if the Army Committee of the House of Commons could not help.

THE VICE CHAIRMAN said he had asked them to do so but so far they had done nothing.

SIR ROBERT HUDSON agreed that it was no use relying on the Army Committee. He was a new member of the Commission and hesitated to offer his opinion at present, but he thought the regimental proposal would provoke criticism from people who felt very

keenly on the matter. For that reason he supported the proposal to form a Committee, and the thought that their report should be drawn in such a form that it could be made public if necessary.

After some further discussion it was proposed by Sir James Allen:-

(1) "That a Committee of five members be appointed to enquire into and report on the question of the best means of commemorating the missing with a view to such commemoration being made, if possible, in the nearest cemetery to where the missing soldier fell.

(2) That the members of the Committee be:

Col. The Hon. Sir James Allen.

Mr. Rudyard Kipling.

Lt.-General Sir A. S. Cobbe,

Lt.-Colonel G. J. Hogben.

Lt.-Gen. Sir George Macdonogh,

and the Vice Chairman of the Commission.

The resolution was seconded by Mr. Rudyard Kipling and agreed to.

THE VICE CHAIRMAN said that he understood that there was no objection on the part of the Commission to £5 being taken tentatively as the amount per head available in designing memorials to the missing.

This was agreed to.

5. PROVISIONAL, SPECIAL AND MEMORIAL CROSSES.

THE VICE CHAIRMAN said the next question was that of provisional special and memorial crosses, which had been postponed from the last meeting. He thought that this might be also referred to the Committee they had just appointed.

This was agreed to.

6. DEFINITION OF WAR GRAVES.

THE VICE CHAIRMAN said that the question of what was a War Grave was one of extreme complication, and, owing to the legal interpretation of the Charter they were drifting into a

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position which he was sure was not intended when the Charter was drafted. The date at which the War ended had not yet been fixed, and consequently the graves of any troops who might be killed on Active Service at the present time were still counted as War Graves. He thought that that was not the intention of the Charter. On the other hand, there were extraordinary anomalies. No British troops were regarded as on Active Service during the War unless they had actually left this country for a theatre of War or unless they belonged to a Unit under orders for Active Service, but in the Dominions all the troops were on Active Service.

COLONEL LORD ARTHUR BROWNE explained that the point was that under the Charter they had power to deal with the graves of sailors and soldiers "who shall have fallen in the present war" and the word "Fallen" was defined "died from wounds inflicted, accident occurring or disease contracted while on Active Service".

The first point was the interpretation of the words "Active Service." In the Navy all officers and men were on Active Service throughout the War, in the Dominions also they were on Active Service by virtue of proclamations issued by the Governors declaring them to be on Active Service; but soldiers raised in the United Kingdom were not on Active Service unless they formed part of, or were attached to, or under orders for, a unit in a theatre of War. There were a very large number of graves scattered throughout the United Kingdom which might or might not come within this category, and had to be investigated as to whether they came within the terms of the Charter. He was anxious to fix a date and get a decision that service in the United Kingdom of British Soldiers was equivalent to Active Service so that they need not investigate cases of deaths of serving soldiers occurring before that date. This would ease the work very greatly and would also do away with many anomalies. The date suggested was the date when the Treaty of Peace with Germany came into force which was January 10th 1920.

The second point was that, as things stood at present, a soldier dying in Ireland or Mesopotamia or the Indian Frontier

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at the present time would be entitled to a War Grave because no Order in Council had yet been issued under the Termination of the War Act defining the end of the War, and consequently the war was still technically going on. Soldiers killed in Ireland would be included because the definition of Active Service included operations against armed rebels. In suggesting the date 10th January 1920, he wished to point out the risk of personal liability the Commissioners might run in incurring expenditure that might be ultra vires.

MR. RUDYARD KIPLING thought that the Commission had authority to declare that there was a date on which the War ended from their point of view, and that they could adopt the date when the Treaty of Peace with Germany came into force.

THE VICE CHAIRMAN said that he thought they could even take the date of the Armistice if they thought fit, and that any common-sense decision would be accepted.

COLONEL SIR JAMES ALLEN said that he thought they should rather take 10th January 1920; that would leave time for clearing up, for instance, there were many Australians and New Zealanders who did not come home for a long time after the Armistice.

SIR GEORGE PERLEY asked how the soldiers in Germany could be entitled to War Graves if the War with Germany was over.

COLONEL LORD ARTHUR BROWNE said that they were legally on Active Service as they were in military occupation of a foreign country.

THE VICE CHAIRMAN said that if the Commission would give him an indication of the date they would prefer he would have a resolution drafted to lay before the next meeting.

It was agreed that this should be done and that the 10th January 1920 should be the date adopted.

#### 7. STAFF OF THE COMMISSION.

THE VICE CHAIRMAN said there were the ordinary resolutions before them.

#### APPOINTMENTS.

"That the Commission hereby approve of the Appointments of the under-mentioned Officers and of the payment to them out of the funds of the Commission of the approved salaries as from the dates set out against their names :-

<u>NAME.</u>	<u>APPOINTMENT.</u>			
A.G. DRUMMOND.	Quantity Surveyor France.	1.11.20.	300	T.L.39507/19 of 19.9.19.
R.H.B.KINNEAR.	Inspector of Materials, France	1.11.20.	300	F.C.Res.G.5. of 13.7.20.
J.A.G.HARRISON.	Clerk i/c Enquiry Bureau, France.	7.12.20	350/15/ 400.	F.C.Res.L.7. of 11.10.20.
T.J.G.LANGDALE.	Clerk i/c Enquiry Bureau, France.	8.12.20.	350/15/ 400.	F.C.Res.L.7. of 11.10.20.
A.E.KELK.	Clerk i/c Enquiry Bureau.	29.12.20.	350/15/ 400.	F.C.Res.L.7. of 11.10.20.

PROMOTION.

"That the Commission hereby approve of the Promotion of the Officer under-mentioned and of the payment to him out of the funds of the Commission of the approved salaries as from the date set out against his name:

R.C. KIRTON from 2nd Grade Clerk to Junior Accounting Clerk, Grade B, London, from 1.1.21. at £300/25/400.....F.C.Res. 3 of 25th Meeting I.W.G.C."

The resolutions were moved by Admiral Sir Edmund Poe, seconded by Sir Robert Hudson and agreed to.

8. PROGRESS REPORT.

THE VICE CHAIRMAN said that the ordinary Progress Report had been passed round for the Commission to see. It was summarised from the weekly Reports.

There was one other matter which he had to bring before them. He had for some time been in correspondence with a father who wished the following inscription put on the headstone of his boy's grave :-

"A noble son sacrificed for capitalism."

The father was perfectly sincere in his belief and hoped the Commission would allow the inscription. He wanted the Commission to know that he was rejecting it on the ground that

it would cause pain to others. General Cobbe had just handed him a letter from General Locke-Elliott complaining of the condition of a Cemetery in Marseilles. Their Deputy Controller in France had actually left for the South of France, and had been instructed to inspect this Cemetery and report what arrangements could be made for care and maintenance.

SIR JAMES ALLEN said he would <sup>like</sup> ~~like~~ to know the condition of the headstones that were already erected in cemeteries. The Commission would remember that it had been reported that the wet was soaking up from the concrete bases of the headstones and he would like to know if it had been stopped.

THE VICE CHAIRMAN said he would have enquiries made.