

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

at the

175TH MEETING

of the

IMPERIAL WAR GRAVES COMMISSION

held at

32, GROSVENOR GARDENS, LONDON, S.W.1.

on

WEDNESDAY, 25TH JULY, 1934.

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PRESENT :

Major-General SIR FABIAN WARE, K.C.V.O., K.B.E., C.B., C.M.G.,  
Vice-Chairman, in the Chair.

Colonel G. L. PEPYS, C.B., D.S.O.,  
Representing the Secretary of State for India,

Lieut.-Colonel G. P. VANIER, D.S.O., M.C.,  
Representing the High Commissioner for Canada,

J. G. McLAREN, Esq., C.M.G.,  
Representing the High Commissioner for Australia,

C. KNOWLES, Esq., C.B.E.,  
Representing the High Commissioner for New Zealand,

G. W. KLERCK, Esq.,  
Representing the High Commissioner for South Africa,

Lieut.-General Sir GEORGE MACDONOGH, G.B.E., K.C.B., K.C.M.G.,

Admiral Sir MORGAN SINGER, K.C.B., K.C.V.O.,

The Rt. Hon. Lord Stanley, M.C., M.P.

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There were also present :

Lieut.-Colonel Sir FREDERIC KENYON, G.B.E., K.C.B.,  
Col. Sir GEORGE W. BADGEROW, C.M.G., C.V.O., M.D., F.R.C.S. (Canada),  
F. T. SPRANGE, Esq., (Australia),  
Lieut.-Colonel C. P. OSWALD, O.B.E. (Assistant Secretary, Finance),  
Lieut.-Colonel H. F. ROBINSON, C.M.G. (Director of Works),  
Major H. F. CHETTLE, C.M.G., O.B.E. (Director of Records),  
Mr. F. C. SILLAR,  
Mr. F. TYRRELL,  
Mr. B. S. CONYNGHAM GREENE.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN asked if it was the pleasure of the Meeting that the Minutes of the previous Meeting should be signed. This was agreed and the Minutes were signed.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN said that he would like to be allowed to express his gratitude for all the kindness which had been shown to him during his illness. Sir George Macdonogh, with whom he had worked in friendship for nearly eighteen years, had kindly undertaken a number of duties during his absence; except during the past few weeks when abroad, he (the Vice-Chairman) had been in daily touch with the office of the Commission through Colonel Oswald and had been carrying on his work. He could not say all he felt about the help which had been given him by the office, so he would merely like to place on record that he was profoundly grateful to Colonel Oswald and to the Staff of the Commission for the way in which they had carried on the work during this period, and proud of the efficiency and devotion they had shown.

Arising out of the Minutes of the previous Meeting, letters of thanks had been received from Lord Tyrrell and from Sir George Clerk, the latter becoming an Honorary Member of the Anglo-French Mixed Committee on his appointment as British Ambassador in Paris.

A very kind letter had been received from the organisers of the South African Pilgrimage, thanking the Commission for what they had done to make the tour of the War Cemeteries a success.

At the previous Meeting the Commission agreed that an expression of their thanks should be extended to Lord Arthur Browne for returning temporarily to their service,

and a letter had now been received from Lord Arthur thanking the Commission.

Since the last Meeting of the Commission a number of ceremonies had been held in France and Belgium, many of them connected with parties of British Ex-Service men on visits to the battlefields.

Another ceremony of interest was the visit to Rouen of a party of British Municipal Officials under the auspices of the United Association of Great Britain and France, when a wreath was laid at the foot of the plaque to the million British dead in the Cathedral.

At Shorncliffe on the 20th June, local school-children laid bunches of flowers on the Canadian Graves. This was in continuation of a practice which had been observed there for the past nineteen years.

A party of members from the Rotary Club at Southend-on-Sea had recently paid a visit to the battlefields in the course of which they inspected the Commission's Offices at Arras and the Arras Memorial. They were subsequently received by the Mayor of Arras and laid a wreath on the Town War Memorial.

Captain Murphy had recently visited the Rotary Club at Pontefract and delivered an address on the Commission's work to the members, who had expressed great interest.

The number of visitors signing the Visitors' Books in the Cemeteries and at the Memorials in May was 9,795. The corresponding figures for June were 14,273.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN continuing said that after consultation with Colonel Robinson, he had recently arranged for two experts, Dr Desch and Mr Howe, to make a tour of the Cemeteries in

France and to furnish a report on the condition of the headstones and the method by which they were being preserved. The experts had made an exhaustive examination and it was hoped to lay their report before the next Meeting of the Commission. Quite briefly, their report was in favour of the treatment which the Commission had been adopting.

Another matter of interest arose out of the change in the Constitution of the Government of Newfoundland. It would be remembered that the Office of High Commissioner for Newfoundland in London had been abolished and as a consequence Sir Edgar Bowring had ceased to represent the Newfoundland Government on the Commission. As the result of semi-official enquiries which he (the Vice-Chairman) had made he had ascertained from the Governor that the Government of Newfoundland in Council would favour the continuance of the representation of Newfoundland on the Commission by Sir Edgar Bowring, and it was understood that Sir Edgar Bowring would be delighted to continue to serve on the Commission. An official letter was expected from Newfoundland confirming these arrangements.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN said that for a number of reasons it was desirable to hold a Meeting of the Commission's Anglo-Greek Mixed Committee and, as it was unlikely that he would be able to go out to Athens in the near future, he was arranging for Colonel Oswald to go out to the near East in the early Autumn and to attend a Meeting of the Anglo-Greek Mixed Committee. Colonel Oswald would subsequently proceed to Egypt to attend a Meeting of the Anglo-Egyptian War Cemeteries Executive Committee.

FINANCIAL PROVISION TO MEET ADDITIONAL  
COST OF FOREIGN CURRENCIES.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN then turned to the first subject on the

Agenda, and explained that the question before the Meeting was a most important one. It would be remembered that the total amount of the Endowment Fund when fully subscribed would amount to Five Million Pounds, and that the contributions to this total amount of the Dominion Governments' proportion had been completed, but that they had not yet been completed by the United Kingdom Government. The arrangements for the completion of the United Kingdom Government's payments had taken the shape of an agreement in Treaty form among all the participating Governments.

The object of the Endowment Fund of Five Million Pounds was to satisfy the relatives and the public that sufficient income would be supplied for the permanent maintenance of all the war cemeteries and memorials throughout the World. The estimate of the cost of carrying out this maintenance on which the capital sum was arrived at was based largely on the figures of 125 French francs to the £, and an estimated interest on the Five Million Pounds of  $4\frac{3}{8}\%$ . These figures would have brought in an income of £218,750. The estimate for the current year was £221,000 which included a certain amount of constructional work, not yet completed, so that broadly speaking it could be said that the original estimate of £218,000 was an extremely accurate one, and that in normal conditions the Commission would now be working within that estimate. The whole situation, however, had been altered owing to the change in the rate of exchange. With the franc at 80 the additional cost of carrying out the Commission's work in accordance with the generally accepted standard would be £65,000 per annum, and with the franc at 76 or any amount less than 80, the cost would be correspondingly greater.

The situation had been laid before the United Kingdom Government, who had indicated that for the ensuing year at any rate they would be willing to make up their share of this additional expense. With regard to the Dominions, who in the past few years had provided their share of the additional money required, no definite decisions as to the coming year had yet been made.

It would be generally agreed that the present time was not too early to begin to consider the financial position in the year beginning in April next, for if this additional £65,000 or whatever the sum might be, was not forthcoming in the ensuing year, it would be essential for the Commission to make very drastic economies in order to be able to carry on. The question of economies had already been exhaustively examined by the Commission and many economies had been introduced. It was possible that a few more economies, amounting perhaps to a few thousand pounds, could still be introduced without affecting the whole standard of the Commission's work, but if it were necessary to secure an economy in the neighbourhood of £65,000 the Commission's whole policy would have to be revised. One way of meeting this situation would be to reduce the Commission's Staff by 30, 40 or 50 per cent, and it would be necessary to consider if saving could be made by replacing British Ex-service labour in France and Belgium by Frenchmen and Belgians. Only in some such drastic way as this could an economy of this magnitude be secured.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN went on to say that he was putting the matter before the Meeting<sup>now</sup> and he would be grateful to the Dominion representatives if they could lay the facts before their Governments, in order that the Commission might take

a decision at their September or October Meetings, and in the meanwhile he would be glad to know if any representative of the Dominions wished to ask any questions.

Colonel Vanier, Mr Knowles and Mr Klerck all requested the Vice-Chairman to supply them with a memorandum setting out the points to which he had just referred.

It was suggested that this memorandum should include the economies which the Commission had already made as well as those which were in contemplation if the additional sum necessary to meet the change in the rate of exchange was not forthcoming.

MR KNOWLES further requested that the memorandum might indicate clearly what the additional sum required would be at the various rates of exchange.

#### REPORT OF THE 233RD MEETING OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE.

COLONEL OSWALD in response to a question by the Vice-Chairman invited the attention of the Meeting to item No. 3. which was the usual resolution authorising the Vice-Chairman to incur certain expenditure during August.

COLONEL OSWALD also referred to the work which had been authorised on the Naval Memorial at Portsmouth, and explained that it was considered desirable to make a thorough inspection of the memorial and that this could not be done without undertaking the work referred to.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN also referred to the item which dealt with the Cemetery at Amara, and mentioned that the Screen Wall had now been constructed.

It was proposed by Sir George Macdonogh, seconded by Mr McLaren and agreed:

2. "That the Report of the 233rd Meeting of the Finance Committee be adopted."

REPORTS OF THE 22ND AND 23RD MEETINGS  
OF THE STAFF COMMITTEE.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN referred to the 22nd and 23rd Meetings of the Staff Committee and recalled that the representatives of the Commission's Staff in Belgium had asked that the Ministry of Labour might be requested to arbitrate on the subject of their wages. The matter had been discussed by the Staff Committee and eventually it had been decided to write a letter to the representatives of the men saying that the Commission were quite prepared to submit the question to the Ministry of Labour, where it would be heard by a properly constituted Court. The letter had, however, made it clear that the Commission would regard the decision of the Court as binding. The letter further pointed out that if the whole question of the 10/- allowance was before this Court it was quite possible that, instead of recommending no reduction in pay and allowances, a further reduction might be thought justified.

It was proposed by Colonel Vanier, seconded by Lord Stanley and agreed:

3. "That the Reports of the 22nd and 23rd Meetings of the Staff Committee be adopted."

REPORT OF THE 6TH MEETING OF THE  
EDUCATION COMMITTEE.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN said that he had unfortunately been unable to attend this Meeting, but Sir Edmund Phipps had taken the Chair and all the other members of the Committee had attended.

As a result of a circular sent out by the Commission thirteen fresh applications for the Commission's Education grant had been received and sixteen applications for the renewal of the grant. After careful consideration of all



these cases the Education Committee recommended that they should all be granted. If this proposal was adopted the sum authorised by the Finance Committee would not be exceeded.

It was proposed by Mr Klerck, seconded by Sir Morgan Singer and agreed:

4. "That the Report of the 6th Meeting of the Education Committee be approved."

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON WAR GRAVES  
IN THE UNITED KINGDOM.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN recalled that this Committee had been appointed earlier in the year and that Sir Morgan Singer had kindly consented to act as Chairman. The other members were Sir Frederic Kenyon, Sir Herbert Ellissen, Mr Housden (representing New Zealand) and Lord Arthur Browne. The Committee had gone into the whole question exhaustively and their report was now before the Meeting. It would be noticed that Colonel Oswald had written a memorandum on the financial aspect of the proposals, and that the amount of extra expenditure involved was a matter which would need very careful consideration. It might be said generally, however, that the views of the Committee were contained in the 5th paragraph of Sir Morgan Singer's letter which accompanied the report. This stated that the Committee felt that if the report was interpreted reasonably it would go a long way towards meeting the difficulties foreseen by the Assistant Secretary, Finance.

SIR FREDERIC KENYON in response to a question from the Vice-Chairman explained that the Committee found at the outset that they had no choice but to accept responsibility for all war graves, since they were bound by the terms of their

Charter to do so. He considered that any estimates of the probable expenditure involved must necessarily be hypothetical, as the expense would be gradual and spread out over a long period of time. In any case the Commission should remember that many of these graves had hitherto cost them nothing since they had been marked and maintained by the relatives, and he thought that this should be borne in mind when considering any further expenditure on them. He did not think that the Commission were in the least bound to look for graves which might not be properly maintained but that they should only take action when the unsatisfactory condition of a grave was definitely brought to their notice. Similarly he did not consider - and this was made quite clear in the report - that the Commission were bound to maintain a private memorial erected by other people. The Commission could either keep the memorial in repair, substitute their own headstone for it, or substitute some other form of memorial, such as the engraving of the name on a Screen Wall.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN referring further to the report said that Mr Housden had pressed strongly for an improvement in the horticultural standard of war graves in the United Kingdom as compared to those in war cemeteries abroad. The Committee had given this matter very careful consideration and it would be seen that a reference to the subject was made at the end of Sir Morgan Singer's letter. He (the Vice-Chairman) still had great belief in the work which could be done in this connection by various unofficial bodies such as the Women's Institutes. These Institutes it would be remembered, had already undertaken to interest themselves in Dominion graves in this country.

MR KNOWLES said that he fully realised the difficulty about planting flowers on the graves, but the fact that there were

no flowers frequently led to adverse criticism. In his opinion the recommendations in the report would be difficult to apply.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN said that if the Report was adopted he would certainly not feel justified in incurring at present any additional expenditure involved in these recommendations and he thought the Finance Committee would support him in this. This was agreed.

After some further discussion, it was moved by Lord Stanley, seconded by Mr Knowles and agreed:

5. "That the Report of the Committee on War Graves in the United Kingdom be adopted."

In adopting this report it was also agreed that the Commission's thanks should be conveyed to the Committee and to those members of the Staff concerned for all the work that they had put into it.

GERMAN CIVILIAN GRAVES IN THE UNITED KINGDOM.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN said that the Commission had received a request on behalf of the United Kingdom Government to mark permanently the 487 graves of German Civilian Internees which were situated in the United Kingdom. Two types of drawing were before the Meeting and it was desired to submit one or other of these drawings to the German Government and to ask if it met with their approval.

COLONEL ROBINSON explained the designs and that one of them was an upright pattern and the other a pedestal pattern.

It was proposed by Sir Morgan Singer, seconded by Colonel Pepys and agreed:

6. "That the Commission having considered a statement 6/G34/14/V approve the upright design

submitted for the permanent marking of German civilian internees' graves in the United Kingdom on repayment by the Government of the United Kingdom."

It was agreed that if the German authorities expressed a strong preference for the pedestal type of headstone this should be agreed without further reference to the Commission.

#### GERMAN GRAVES IN EGYPT.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN explained that an application had been received from the German Consul at Port Said for permission to erect on the German graves in Kantara headstones similar in design to those which were being erected on German graves in France and Belgium. Further the Consul-General asked for permission to erect in Kantara Cemetery memorial stones to some Germans who were buried elsewhere.

It was proposed by Sir George Macdonogh, seconded by Colonel Vanier, and agreed:

7. "That the Commission, having considered a statement numbered 28/F34/5/V., agree to the erection of headstones over the German War Graves in the Commission's Cemeteries in Egypt, and to the erection in Kantara War Memorial Cemetery of special memorials to certain German soldiers, provided
  - (a) that the design of the headstones is approved by the Commission's Director of Works as reasonably conformable to the design approved by the Commission for German graves in Belgium, and that he is satisfied that the stone used is suitable and the headstones are suitably protected;

- (b) that the costs of manufacture and erection of the headstones and of any necessary repairs or replacements are met from German funds; and
- (c) that the wording of the special memorials is approved by the Commission's Director of Records."

STAFF OF THE COMMISSION

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN said that there was one promotion and one resignation to report. The promotion being that of Mr Conyngham Greene, and the resignation that of Captain King. COLONEL VANIER said that he would like to take this opportunity of expressing his appreciation of Captain King's services.

It was proposed by Mr Klerck, seconded by Mr McLaren, and agreed:

PROMOTION.

- 8. "THAT the Commission hereby approve the promotion of the under-mentioned Officer 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.

NAME	APPOINTMENT	SALARY	DATE
GREENE, B. S. C.	From Private Secretary to Chief Assistant Secretary's Branch	@ £600 p.a. @ £500 p.a.	1.5.34.

RESIGNATION.

THAT the Commission hereby approve the resignation of the undermentioned Officer as from the date set out against his name.

NAME	APPOINTMENT	SALARY	DATE
KING, E. J.	Personal Assistant to Vice-Chairman	@ £750 p.a.	28.2.34.

BEDFORD HOUSE CEMETERY, ZILLEBEKE.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN said that a design for the enlargement of the Bedford House Cemetery, Zillebeke, necessitated by the discovery of bodies on the old battlefields, was before the Meeting, and he would ask that it be approved.

SIR FREDERIC KENYON said that the design had been prepared by Colonel Higginson and reviewed by Sir Edwin Lutyens.

COLONEL ROBINSON explained the design in detail, and it was moved by Sir George Macdonogh, seconded by Colonel Vanier and agreed:

9. "That the design of Bedford House Cemetery, Zillebeke, be approved."

This concluded the business.

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