

CONFIDENTIAL.

DRAFT.

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

at the

184TH MEETING

of the

IMPERIAL WAR GRAVES COMMISSION

held at

THE WAR OFFICE, LONDON, S. W. 1.

on

THURSDAY, 18TH JULY, 1935.

PRESENT:

The Rt. Hon. Viscount HALIFAX, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.,
Secretary of State for War, in the Chair.

Major-General Sir FABIAN WARE, K.C.V.O., K.B.E., C.B., C.M.G.,
Vice-Chairman,

Lieut.-General Sir JOHN COLERIDGE, K.C.B., C.M.G., 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,

The Rt. Hon. S. M. BRUCE, C.H., M.C.,
High Commissioner for Australia,

The Hon. Sir JAMES PARR, G.C.M.G.,
High Commissioner for New Zealand,

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

RUDYARD KIPLING, Esq.,

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.,

J. J. LAWSON, Esq., M.P.

THERE WERE ALSO PRESENT:-

Colonel G. L. Pepys, C.B., D.S.O. (India),
Colonel Sir George W. Badgerow, CMG, CVO, MD, FRCS, (Canada),
V. C. Duffy, Esq. (Australia),
Lieut.-Colonel Sir Frederic Kenyon, GBE, KCB.,
Lieut.-Colonel C. P. Oswald, CMG, OBE, (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),
F. C. Sillar, Esq.,
B. S. Conyngham Greene, Esq.,
F. Tyrrell, Esq.,
O. Holt, Esq.

The Commission would hear with great regret that Mr. E. J. Church, one of the gardeners and caretakers in France, had been killed in a level crossing accident. The Commission's sympathy had been extended to the widow and it was of interest to note that on the occasion of the funeral the sympathy of the French people was manifested by the large crowds who were present.

Since the last meeting of the Commission, Mr. Lyons, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia, had made a tour of the battlefields. He (the Vice-Chairman) had always in the past accompanied Prime Ministers on tours of this nature, but as he was unavoidably prevented from going on this occasion he had asked Colonel Robinson to represent him. Captain Murphy, representing Australia, and Colonel Higginson had also travelled with the party. In the course of the tour Mr. Lyons had laid a wreath on the Town War Memorial at Ypres and he had been received by the Burgomaster and other officials there. Many cemeteries and memorials were visited, particularly those associated with the Australian Forces, and in addition a visit was paid to La Targette French National Cemetery, where Mr. Lyons was received by the Préfet of the Pas-de-Calais and laid a wreath. At Arras a visit was paid to the Préfet and to Faubourg d'Amiens Cemetery. From Arras the party proceeded to Albert and then to Villers-Bretonneux, where they were met at the entrance to the village by the Mayor and where the site of the Australian Memorial was inspected. In the course of his tour, which concluded at Amiens, the Prime Minister was able to meet the Australian gardeners and caretakers. A letter had been received from Mr. Lyons, written in New York, stating how greatly he was impressed by all that he had seen and a copy of this letter would be circulated to all Commissioners.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN went on to say that he hoped Mr. Kipling would allow him to mention a matter which had been reported in the papers that morning. The announcement was to the effect that Mr. Kipling had now arranged for the endowment of the cost of sounding the "Last Post" at the Loos Memorial in perpetuity.

The Commission would be interested to know that the work in the Irish Free State was now practically completed with the exception of the two districts - in Sligo and Co. Clare - where difficulties had arisen.

With regard to the British War Cemetery at Jerusalem, reports received from Colonel Hughes showed that the immediate surroundings were threatened by the erection of unsuitable buildings. A town planning scheme had been prepared and Colonel Hughes was keeping in touch with the situation and had reported in detail to the Commission. He (the Vice-Chairman) was taking steps to arouse public interest in Palestine in the hopes that it might be possible to preserve a small area of ground immediately surrounding the cemetery.

REPORT OF THE 243RD MEETING OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN stated that this report had been circulated, and that he would ask Colonel Oswald to say if there were any matters to which attention should be drawn.

COLONEL OSWALD drew attention to items 7 and 9 on Page 3.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN referred to item 7 and said that it was of special interest to Australia since it dealt with the recent decision of the Australian Government about the erection of a memorial at Villers-Bretonneux. The Commonwealth Government had now asked the Commission to submit a design for a suitable memorial, and the Commission had asked their Architect -

namely, Sir Edwin Lutyens - to prepare a design, and this had now been done. This design would be sent out to Australia by the High Commissioner. All that was necessary at this stage was to obtain formal authority for the Commission to enter into a contract with Sir Edwin Lutyens for the preparation of the design and this was the item in the report of the Finance Committee.

The other item of interest was that dealing with the situation occasioned by the regrettable death of Captain Sheppard of New Zealand. It would be seen that it had been decided that Captain Murphy, the Australian representative on the Commission's Staff, should be transferred to Captain Sheppard's place, and that Captain Murphy's appointment should be given to Mr. Housden. He would like to take this opportunity of thanking Sir James Parr for having released Mr. Housden from service in the New Zealand High Commissioner's Office.

THE CHAIRMAN asked if it was the wish of the Meeting that the Report of the 243rd Meeting of the Finance Committee should be adopted.

(2) This was agreed and the Report was adopted unanimously.

PROPOSED ANGLO-FRANCO-GERMAN COMMITTEE.

THE CHAIRMAN said that as there was no paper before the Meeting, he would ask the Vice-Chairman to explain the proposals.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN said that before the Meeting he had consulted the Governments of the Dominions and also the Foreign Office on the present proposals and he would now like to explain them in detail. Since the end of the War, the Commission had been endeavouring to settle two unsatisfactory features with regard to the marking of German War Graves in British Cemeteries in France and in the United Kingdom. In the

United Kingdom the Commission had agreed to mark the German graves with headstones designed by the Germans and manufactured in Germany, but paid for by the Commission. Unfortunately these headstones had worn badly and had been the subject of adverse criticism. It had been suggested to the German Government that they should replace them with a better type of stone, but the German Government felt that they were unable to take any action in the matter.

The marking of the German War Graves in British Cemeteries in Belgium had not presented any difficulties since the Belgian Government had entered into an agreement with the German Government by which the German Government seemed to have relieved the Belgian Government of some of their obligations under the Treaty of Versailles. The result of this agreement was that the German Government had constructed a number of German Cemeteries in Belgium and had also supplied a suitable type of headstone for the German graves in the British Cemeteries in Belgium.

The position in France was different. The French Government had scrupulously observed the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles and had marked all the German graves in France with wooden Crosses. There were some 5,500 German graves in British Cemeteries in France and these, in common with other German graves in France, were marked by wooden crosses. The wooden crosses were not in keeping with the standard type of headstone marking the British graves, and it had been suggested to the Germans that they should replace the crosses by headstones. An agreement had not been reached on this matter, for the Germans had suggested a type of headstone of a quality and appearance distinctly inferior to the Commission's stone, and one which had not met with the Commission's approval.

He had suggested two months ago to the French authorities that he might find it easier to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion if he himself visited Berlin. The French had welcomed the idea and had written to the German authorities accordingly. Further, during a recent visit to Paris he (the Vice-Chairman) had been invited by l'Intendant Militaire Vincensini, the Head of the French War Graves Service, to meet Dr. Horning, the Head of the German War Graves Service, who was in Paris at that time. This meeting took place on June 26th, when it was agreed, on the suggestion of Dr. Horning, that he (the Vice-Chairman), Intendant Vincensini, and Dr. Horning should meet later on in Berlin, and discuss proposals for forming an Anglo-Franco-German Committee to deal with outstanding questions and other matters. The Committee would be, in many ways, similar to the other joint committees such as the Anglo-French and Anglo-Belgian, and only such powers could be delegated to it as the Commission might, from time to time, decide. In other words, the authority of the Commission, that was to say of all the Governments represented on the Commission, would be required before any powers could be delegated. The value of French membership on this Committee would be readily appreciated when it was realized that some of the major questions requiring settlement affected the British Cemeteries in France.

The Vice-Chairman went on to say that before the meeting in Berlin he hoped to be able to see someone in Ministerial authority in Germany to whom he could explain the proposals and who could give the necessary instructions to facilitate the preparatory work.

SIR JAMES PARR asked what the position was with regard to British and Dominion graves in Germany.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN said that there were four main cemeteries in Germany to which British graves had been concentrated. These graves were marked by headstones erected and paid for by the Commission and they were maintained by British ex-service men.

MR. LAWSON said that he had listened with great interest to the Vice-Chairman's speech and he felt that he should refer to the fact that the position of things in Germany was at the present time unsatisfactory. He had no doubt that the Vice-Chairman had carefully considered the fact that there were many British people who felt very strongly about some of the things which were being done in Germany today, and that there was consequently a danger of political capital being made out of the Vice-Chairman's visit. The German propaganda department was known to be very active, and there was a danger in his opinion, of unnecessary publicity being given to the visit and of motives being attached to it which might make any attempt to form a Committee impossible.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN thanked Mr. Lawson for his remarks and said that he was fully alive to the dangers to which he referred. He thought, however, that the fact that during his visit he would be accompanied by a French representative, and that it was proposed that a French representative should serve on the Committee, would discount to a large extent any possible misunderstanding.

COLONEL VANIER said that on learning from the Vice-Chairman that this matter was coming up he had thought it advisable to communicate with the Canadian Government. He was happy to say that the Government agreed in principle with a suggestion to form a Mixed Committee.

MR. BRUCE said that the idea of forming an Anglo-German Committee

was not a new one, and that it had been discussed by the Commission about two years before when the conclusion was reached that the time was not then ripe to proceed with the matter. At that time the only questions which were seriously considered were those affecting the four British War Cemeteries in Germany. It seemed that now additional matters required attention, such as German graves in the United Kingdom and in the British Cemeteries in France. Having regard to these additional matters, he thought that it would be desirable to establish the Committee and he was in complete agreement with the proposal that the French should be asked to co-operate.

Mr. Bruce said that, with regard to the political aspect of the matter, he did not consider that there was any occasion for the Commission to be concerned. There was, of course, a danger of undue publicity being given to the proposal, and he suggested that in the event of the Vice-Chairman going to Germany every effort should be made to prevent the matter being given undue notice in the Press. Mr. Bruce added that he felt confident that his Government would be entirely in favour of the proposal.

SIR JAMES PARR said that he considered, so far as the Dominion of New Zealand was concerned, that the proposal would be very heartily appreciated, and he did not see how the outstanding matters could be settled without the formation of a committee such as that suggested.

MR. KLERCK said that his Government approved of the suggestion and that they did not anticipate any difficulties.

THE CHAIRMAN said that it might therefore be assumed that the proposal had the general support of all members of the Commission, and that the Vice-Chairman was authorised to proceed on the lines which he had suggested.

At this point Lord Halifax was compelled to leave the meeting in order to attend a meeting of the Cabinet, and the Chair was taken by the Vice-Chairman (Sir Fabian Ware).

FILLING VACANCIES IN THE GARDENING STAFF
IN FRANCE AND BELGIUM.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN said that a matter which had been occasioning some concern was the question of the source from which future members of the gardening staff would be recruited. It would be remembered that this matter had been discussed before, but no definite decision reached. The supply of ex-service men of the Great War under the age of 45 was rapidly becoming exhausted, and there seemed to be two sources from which fresh applicants could be selected when the supply of ex-service men of the Great War was definitely finished. It would be possible either to recruit the sons of the present gardening staff, or to send out ex-service men of the regular Forces as and when vacancies occurred.

The objection to the first proposal was that in the cases where one of the parents of the children was of French or Belgian nationality, the children would probably be more foreign than British, and if they subsequently married foreigners their children would be, to all intents and purposes, foreigners. This would mean that in years to come the British War Cemeteries would be cared for by French and Belgian, and not by British, gardeners. The other source of recruitment, the ex-service men of the regular Forces, was more promising, and the Adjutant-General had previously expressed the opinion that no difficulty would be experienced in getting soldiers from the Army vocational training centres. A new difficulty, however, now existed owing to the amount of unemployment in France. The French people raised no objection to the existing staff of

British gardeners, realising as they did that they were men who had fought in France and helped to protect the country from invasion. It did not follow, however, that ex-service men of the regular Forces, who had never been in France before, would necessarily be welcomed if they went out as gardeners and caretakers in the Commission's service.

SIR GEORGE MACDONOGH said that he fully agreed with the importance of bringing the staff up to strength, and he was also in agreement with what the Vice-Chairman had just said. He feared that eventually there would be objection on the part of the French to the employment of foreigners.

SIR JAMES PARR said that in some countries, notably Italy, stringent regulations were being made against any employment being given to foreigners, and he knew of a recent case where three young New Zealanders had had to abandon their work in Italy and leave the country. He was inclined to think that the French might eventually adopt somewhat similar measures.

MR. LAWSON said that he considered that there would probably be difficulty, and he agreed that the matter required very careful thought.

After further discussion, it was agreed that the Vice-Chairman should take what steps he could with a view to trying measures of an experimental nature.

15TH DIVISIONAL MEMORIAL, RAMADI.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN said that the question before the meeting was one of moving the Divisional Memorial at Ramadi into Baghdad War Cemetery. The proposal had been made by the British Ambassador and other responsible persons in Iraq, since it was difficult to ensure respect to the Memorial in its present position.

SIR GEORGE MACDONOGH said that he was in favour of this proposal and he was also in favour of the substitution of stone panels for the two bronze panels which had hitherto been on the monument.

It was proposed by Mr. Rudyard Kipling, seconded by Sir John Coleridge and agreed:

- (3) "That the Commission, having considered a statement No.11/G35/301/V, dated the 11th July, 1935, agree to the removal to and the re-erection in Baghdad War Cemetery of the 15th Divisional Memorial, provided that no expense falls on the Commission, and that a sum is provided sufficient to allow for permanent maintenance."

36TH ULSTER DIVISION MEMORIAL, THIEPVAL.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN explained that the resolution before the meeting represented the result of negotiations which had taken place between the Commission and the Government of Northern Ireland with regard to the maintenance of the Ulster Memorial on the Somme Battlefield.

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

- (4) "That the Commission, having considered Resolution No.7 of the 241st Meeting of the Finance Committee confirmed by Resolution No.2 of the 182nd Meeting of the Commission, resolve:
- (1) That the Seal of the Commission be affixed to, and the Proper Officer sign, the agreement between the Ministry of Finance, Northern Ireland, and the Commission, relative to the taking over by the Commission for maintenance of the 36th (Ulster) Division Memorial, Thiepval, the

- terms whereof were approved at the
241st Meeting of the Finance Committee;
- (2) That the Seal of the Commission be affixed
to and the Proper Officer sign, any Stock
Transfer the execution of which may be
necessary to give effect to the transfer
to the Commission, pursuant to the said
agreement, of the £5,305. 0s. 10d. 4½ per cent
Ulster Loans Stock 1945/75 and £600
Guaranteed 4½ per cent Bonds (Northern Ireland
Land Act, 1925) constituting the fund the
income whereof is applicable towards the
costs of such maintenance."

DISCOVERY AND REBURIAL OF BODIES IN

FRANCE AND BELGIUM.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN, in referring to the paper before the meeting,
omphasized the fact that again very few bodies had been
found. The total for the period under review was
only 16.

That concluded the business.

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