

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

at the

204th MEETING .

of the

IMPERIAL WAR GRAVES COMMISSION

held at

32 GROSVENOR GARDENS, LONDON S.W.1.

on

WEDNESDAY, 14th APRIL 1937

at

3 p.m.

PRESENT:

Major-General Sir FABIAN WARE, K.C.V.O., K.B.E., C.B., C.M.G., LL.D.,  
Vice-Chairman (in the Chair),

Lieut.-Colonel A.F. RAWSON LUMBY, C.I.E., O.B.E.,  
Representing the Secretary of State for India,

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

V.C. DUFFY, Esq., M.V.O.,  
Representing the High Commissioner for Australia,

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

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.,

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

There were also present:-

Colonel Sir GEORGE W. BADGEROW, C.M.G., C.V.O., M.D., F.R.C.S. (Canada),

Lieut.-Colonel C.P. OSWALD, C.M.G., 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),

F. TYRRELL, Esq., M.B.E.,

B.S. CONYNGHAM GREENE, Esq.

SIR FABIAN WARE took the Chair and asked if the Minutes of the previous Meeting should be approved and signed.

This was agreed and the Minutes were signed.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN said that the first matter with which he would like to deal was the Report of the 261st Meeting of the Finance Committee. Item 7A of this Report dealt with the appointment of Colonel Oswald and he was anxious to mention this before Colonel Oswald joined the Meeting. It would be seen from the resolution what the reasons were for making these recommendations and he would like to emphasise the great increase of responsibility which had fallen upon Colonel Oswald during the last few years. This was occasioned very largely by the increase in the number of Mixed Committees which had been formed and by the necessity for his (the Vice-Chairman's) absence abroad to attend Meetings of these Committees. On these occasions Colonel Oswald was in charge. Older members of the Commission would remember that there was at one time a Controller and Financial Adviser to the Commission, a position held for many years by Sir Herbert Ellissen. When Sir Herbert Ellissen retired it was thought that the work could be carried on by an Assistant Secretary, Finance. It had been found, however, that as has been stated the responsibilities of this appointment had gradually increased, and consequently it was proposed that Colonel Oswald should be given the additional appointment of Controller and an increased additional personal allowance on a pensionable basis of £100 per annum. In this connection he should perhaps recall that Colonel Oswald was a member of the United Kingdom Civil Service and did not participate in the Commission's Superannuation Scheme. The Treasury were therefore particularly interested in the appointment. He had hoped that arrangements could be made for Colonel Oswald to assume the position of a Principal Assistant

Secretary but the United Kingdom Treasury had been unable to agree to this proposal and had given, if he might say so, a satisfactory explanation of their reasons.

MR. KNOWLES asked why the additional remuneration was referred to as a personal allowance rather than an additional salary.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN explained that this was done at the wish of the Treasury, and it was intended to emphasise the fact that the increase of salary was a personal increase and not one which could be regarded as always attaching to the appointment.

The proposal was approved. Colonel Oswald then entered the room and the Vice-Chairman said that the Commission had been considering the proposal referred to in the Report of the Finance Committee. It was the wish of the Commission, and also his personal wish that he should express their gratitude to him for all that he had done so efficiently in the past, and for the care and devotion which he had given to the Commission's interests. He personally would like to say that his constant thought for others had endeared him to all members of the staff.

COLONEL VANIER said that he wished to associate himself very warmly with the tribute which had been paid to Colonel Oswald, whose work had always filled him with admiration. He considered that it was not only the work which Colonel Oswald had performed, but the cheerful and thoughtful way in which he had performed it which had impressed his colleagues on the Commission and all those with whom he came into contact.

SIR GEORGE MACDONOGH said that he also could endorse what the Vice-Chairman had said. He had had experience of Colonel Oswald's work for a period extending over 17 years and he had been brought closely in contact with him during the absence of the Vice-Chairman in India, Australia and

elsewhere. He could not speak too highly of his work and of the fact that he always had in mind the interests of other members of the staff. His only regret was that a better position and an improved salary could not be secured for him.

MR. DUFFY said that he would like to associate himself with the remarks which had been made by the previous speakers and he also shared Sir George Macdonogh's regret that a better position could not have been secured for Colonel Oswald.

MR. KNOWLES said that he could not pretend to have such a deep knowledge of Colonel Oswald's work as some of the previous speakers, but he had been associated with the Commission from its inception and he had frequently come in contact with Colonel Oswald. This enabled him to associate himself wholeheartedly with what the previous speakers had said, and he would like to emphasise the courtesy and kindness which he had always experienced in his personal dealings with him.

COLONEL OSWALD said he was sure that the Meeting would appreciate his difficulty in replying to a matter of such personal interest, particularly as he did not know that these tributes were going to be offered to him. He was exceedingly grateful for all the kind remarks that had been made, and he wished to express his most sincere thanks.

THE VICE CHAIRMAN said that they would now turn to other items in the Report of the Finance Committee. One of the items of interest was that recommending expenditure for the installation of a lift in the Commission's Office. This would be a very great convenience. It had not been possible to install it before, owing to certain restrictions

With regard to item 7B it would be seen that increases of salary were recommended to certain members of the staff, particularly on the Works side. In this connection he would like to mention that it had been decided to hold an Enquiry into the question of the upkeep of the fabric of the cemeteries and memorials in France and Belgium. The Works Department of the Commission had always maintained that satisfactory upkeep of the fabric was impossible with the existing number of Inspectors, but the Finance Committee had not agreed with this view nor had it been supported by Sir William Garstin whose experience was probably greater than that of any man living at that time.

Colonel Robinson, to whom the Commission were greatly indebted for the efficient system of maintenance now in force, was strongly of opinion that he could not assure the continuance of efficient maintenance without an increase in his staff. It had been decided, therefore, to request the Treasury to nominate some independent person to hold an Enquiry, and in addition Sir George Macdonogh had kindly undertaken to go out himself and to make a preliminary, or possibly a simultaneous investigation. Briefly the questions to be decided were: (a) whether the present staff and the present methods of maintenance were satisfactory, (b) if the method required recasting whether the existing staff was sufficient, and (c) if further staff was required, in order to guarantee satisfactory and efficient maintenance, what further income would be necessary in order to meet the increased cost.

SIR GEORGE MACDONOGH stated that if the result of the Enquiry showed that it would in future be necessary to have more Inspectors of Fabric than two it would then be desirable

thoroughly to investigate any possible economies so as to see whether the cost of the additional Inspector of Fabric could not be met by economies in other directions. In this connection he would like, with the agreement of the Commission, to go into various figures with Colonel Robinson and Colonel Oswald.

Both Colonel Oswald and Colonel Robinson said that they would welcome this investigation and it was agreed that it should take place.

MR. KNOWLES asked how far the Commission's original estimate of income was sufficient to meet the cost of running the Commission at the present time.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN said that this was a very difficult question to answer as it involved the various rates of interest on the Endowment Fund investments.

It would be remembered that the Dominion Governments completed their contribution to the Endowment Fund within 6½ years and the money so contributed was invested at favourable rates of interest at that time. It would also be recalled that the United Kingdom Government spread their contribution over a period of about 13 years and this meant that money now received from the United Kingdom Government could not be invested at a higher rate than 3½ per cent. As the Commission's original estimates were based on a standard rate of interest from five million pounds it would be seen that these varying rates of interest had upset their calculations. If the United Kingdom Government had been able to pay all their contribution in the same way as the Dominion Governments, within 6½ years, the Commission would now be living within their income. As it was, the delay on the part of the United Kingdom Government in making their contributions had caused a good deal of dislocation.

COLONEL OSWALD then explained in detail the proposals with regard to those members of the staff whose names appeared on the paper before the Meeting. He said that the idea was to bring the rates of pay to approximately the same scale as those for work of a similar type in the regular Civil Service. Another matter of interest in connection with the names was that those marked with an asterisk were being transferred to the Permanent Maintenance Staff.

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

- (2) "That the Report of the 261st Meeting of the Finance Committee be approved".

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN said that he would like to refer to one or two matters of general interest. The recent Meeting of the Anglo-Belgian Mixed Committee in London had been an unqualified success and letters expressing appreciation for all that was done for them had been received from several of the members including Monsieur Hymans. As the Commission knew the members of the Committee were received by His Majesty the King who took a close interest in their work.

Older members of the Commission would learn with regret of the death of Monsieur Sobry, who was Maire of Ypres at the time of the unveiling of the Menin Gate Memorial in 1927.

A letter had been received from the Orpington Branch of the Women's Section of the British Legion expressing their intention to place flowers on the Canadian graves at Orpington on Empire Day each year.

A letter from Mr. Marilliers, who paid an annual visit to Vevey, stated that he had again visited the war cemetery this year and found it in admirable condition and

bright with flowers.

The next Meeting of the Commission would normally be held on the 12th May, which was the day of the Coronation. The following Wednesday came directly after the Whitsuntide holidays which would make it difficult for members to attend. Having regard to this it was suggested that a Meeting should not be held in May unless some urgent matter arose. The suggestion was that the next Meeting should be held on the second Wednesday in June - namely June 9th. This was agreed.

The number of visitors signing the Visitors' Books at the cemeteries and memorials during the month of February was 849, and during the month of March 4,257. The corresponding figures for February and March 1936 were 694 and 1,136 respectively.

A Meeting of the Anglo-German-French Committee would be held in Berlin on the 29th April. Sir George Macdonogh and Mr. Lawson were going with him to Berlin for the Meeting and General Vincensini would also be present.

The Vice-Chairman went on to say that some doubt had been expressed from time to time in the past as to the correct means of communication between the Offices of the High Commissioners for the Dominions and the Foreign Office in matters connected with the Commission's work. It had been felt that understandings which had been reached at the last Imperial Conference might make it necessary for such communications to pass through the Dominions Office and in order to clarify the position he had, with Mr. Baldwin's approval, approached Mr. Malcolm MacDonald, Secretary of State for the Dominions. He was glad to be able to report that he had received a letter from Mr. MacDonald, which read as follows:-

9th April 1937.

"Dear Sir Fabian,

In reply to your enquiry, although the general understanding is that the normal channel for the transmission of documents from the Dominion Governments to the Foreign Office is through the Dominions Office, in the case of the recent War Graves agreement with Iraq the Full Powers for signing on behalf of Dominion Governments were transmitted by them to the Imperial War Graves Commission and by the latter to the Foreign Office with whom it is recognised that the Commission have their own arrangements for direct communication. The same procedure was adopted in the case of the Governments of Canada, the Commonwealth of Australia, New Zealand and India with regard to the recent War Graves agreement with the German and French Governments signed at Berlin. In the case of South Africa the Full Powers were on that occasion communicated direct to the South African Minister in Berlin.

The Dominions Office for its part has no objection to the continuance of this procedure.

Yours ever,

(Sd.) Malcolm MacDonald".

A copy of this letter had already been sent to the respective High Commissioners.

The Vice-Chairman said that there was one other matter to which he would like to refer and that was in connection with the land surrounding the British War Cemetery at Jerusalem. Members of the Commission would recall that the High Commissioner in Palestine was anxious to issue an appeal for funds to purchase certain land surrounding the cemetery in order that it might be preserved as an open space.

Owing to the recent growth of Jerusalem this land now commanded a very high price and the Commission had no power under their Charter to contribute to the cost of acquiring it. The High Commissioner in Palestine considered that the Palestine Government was equally unable to contribute to the cost and it therefore seemed that the only way to raise the necessary sum was by means of a public appeal. Those who had promised to sign this appeal were the former High Commissioners for Palestine Sir Herbert Samuel and Sir John Chancellor, Lord Trenchard, General Sir Henry Chauvel, Major-General Sir Andrew Hamilton Russell, Major-General Sir Frederick Maurice and Sir Arthur Wauchope himself.

SIR GEORGE MACDONOGH asked if Sir Philip Chetwode should not be invited to sign the appeal.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN said that Sir Philip Chetwode had been invited but that he had found himself unable to sign the appeal as he was closely associated with another appeal in memory of Lord Allenby. When Sir Philip Chetwode refused he (the Vice-Chairman) had, at the request of Sir Arthur Wauchope, invited Sir Frederick Maurice to sign. It should be clearly understood that the Commission were not directly responsible for the appeal in any way but they were of course sympathetic to it. It was hoped that considerable publicity would be given to the appeal in the Press and any steps which could be taken to see that the matter was prominently referred to in the Australian and New Zealand Press would be very valuable.

MR. DUFFY asked when the appeal was to be launched.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN said that it was still necessary to complete some preliminary work but they hoped to launch the appeal shortly.

MR. KNOWLES promised that he would mention the matter to Mr. Jordan.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN then read the appeal but explained that this should not be regarded as the final draft as some amendments might still be necessary. The appeal read as follows:-

THE BRITISH WAR CEMETERY AT JERUSALEM.

AN APPEAL.

"The British War Cemetery in Jerusalem stands on the Mount of Olives. The site was the free gift in perpetuity of the Municipality of Jerusalem through the Government of Palestine: it celebrates the memory of nearly six thousand soldiers of the Empire who in the Great War came from four continents to serve in Egypt and Palestine under the British Flag: its beauty and dignity are recognised by all - of whatever nationality, of whatever creed - as being in perfect harmony with the sanctity and history of its surroundings.

To the south it commands the Holy City and when it was laid out the land around it was agricultural and the prospect of building encroachment remote. But to-day the cemetery is threatened by extensive building developments which are projected in this area. And such is the demand for land on so perfect a site, that unless this threat is averted, the cemetery may soon be engulfed - a jewel hidden in a modern suburb. We are satisfied that this danger can only be overcome by the purchase of adjacent land of an area of about five acres and that the purchase money must be obtained from private sources.

Our Appeal is to private generosity and we

ask for £20,000 to purchase and beautify enough land around the cemetery so that its unique position may be safeguarded, the view between it and the City may be preserved, and this British Cemetery in Jerusalem may remain a place of peace and beauty which it is to-day and which we trust, thanks to your generosity, it will remain for all time.

With the full approval of the High Commissioner for Palestine, His Excellency General Sir Arthur G. Wauchope, G.C.M.G., K.C.B., C.I.E., D.S.O., a Committee has been appointed to deal with this matter.

Any information desired may be obtained from the Hon. Secretary,

B. Kendall, Esq.,  
Town Planning Adviser to the Government  
of Palestine,  
Jerusalem,  
Palestine

and contributions may be sent to him or to:

A.P.S. Clark, Esq., O.B.E.,  
Barclays Bank (D.C. & O.),  
Jerusalem".

The Vice-Chairman went on to say that he was preparing a report on the work of the Commission from its inception for presentation to the Imperial Conference. It was exactly twenty years since the Imperial Conference had given the Commission their first Charter and this seemed an appropriate time to make a report on the work which had been accomplished during that period. It was proposed to follow the analogy of the Imperial Conference in 1917, when the Prince of Wales presented to the Imperial Conference a proposal that the Commission should be established. In the present instance it was suggested

that the Duke of Gloucester as President of the Commission should write to the Chairman of the Conference telling him that he had now assumed the Presidency of the Commission and announcing his intention of presenting the report on the Commission's work. These proposals were agreed and the Vice-Chairman said he would approach the Chairman on the matter.

REPORT OF THE 8TH MEETING OF THE ANGLO-BELGIAN MIXED COMMITTEE.

MAJOR CHETTLE, in reply to a question by the Vice-Chairman, said that the recent Meeting of this Committee had been in every way satisfactory. One of the items on the report to which he would like to invite attention was item 3 which showed that all the technical work connected with the transfer of both cemetery and memorial sites to the Belgian State had now been carried out. Another item of interest was that which indicated that the whole of the German graves in Belgium, with a few exceptions already taken in hand, had now been permanently marked at the cost of the German Government.

It was proposed by Mr. Duffy, seconded by Mr. Lawson and agreed:-

- (3) "That the Report of the 8th Meeting of the Anglo-Belgian Mixed Committee be adopted".

IRAQ COMMITTEE, APPOINTMENT OF SECRETARY.

MAJOR CHETTLE, in response to a request by the Vice-Chairman, said that this appointment was a perfectly straightforward one. The previous Secretary of the Committee had been Colonel Hughes, and Sir Herbert Hart during a recent visit to Iraq had discussed with the Committee the question of the appointment of a new Secretary. It had been generally agreed that Captain Peek, who had been the Commission's representative

in Iraq for many years, and who had rendered invaluable service, should be appointed Secretary.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN asked Colonel Robinson if he had any observations to make on this appointment.

COLONEL ROBINSON said that he was entirely satisfied with Captain Peek's work and that he was, in his opinion, a most able and valuable officer.

It was proposed by Mr. Knowles, seconded by Sir George Macdonogh and agreed:-

(4) "(i) That Resolution No. 7 of the 186th Meeting of the Commission be rescinded:

(ii) That Captain G.H. Peek, O.B.E., be appointed Secretary of the Iraq Committee of the Imperial War Graves Commission in succession to Colonel C.E. Hughes, C.B.E."

GIFT TO ST. SEVER CHAPEL, ROUEN.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN referred to the paper before the Meeting and said that a request to present a flag to the Chapel in the Commission's Cemetery at Rouen followed the lines of previous offers. He proposed, if the Commission agreed, to accept the gift subject to the usual condition.

This was agreed.

DISCOVERY AND REBURIAL OF BODIES IN FRANCE AND BELGIUM.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN said that the paper before the Meeting showed an increase in the number of bodies discovered compared with 1935 and a slight decrease compared with 1936.

ANGLO-GERMAN-FRENCH COMMITTEE.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN said that information had been received that the German Government had nominated Vice-Admiral von Trotha to succeed the late General von Seeckt as an Honorary Member of the Anglo-German-French Committee. If the Commission

approved this nomination it was necessary for the appointment to be formally confirmed.

It was proposed by Sir Morgan Singer, seconded by Colonel Rawson Lumby and agreed:-

- (5) "That the Commission having considered a statement No. W.G.1884 resolve that Vice-Admiral von Trotha be appointed, and he is hereby appointed, an Honorary Member of the Anglo-German-French Mixed Committee of the Commission".

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN in conclusion referred to the position with regard to the pay and conditions of work of the staff in France. He said that the staff were still very unsettled owing to constant changes in the cost of living and uncertainty about the rate of exchange. As he had already reported to the Commission the staff had formed a Committee to deal with their difficulties and he had welcomed this action in principle. In this matter Mr. Lawson's help and advice had been of great value, and now steps were being taken to obtain an independent report upon the whole question of the conditions of service of the staff in France. A suitable type of man to conduct this investigation would be one who had the confidence of the men, of the Commission, and of the Ministry of Labour. Such a man would need to be one who was in a position to speak authoritatively to the men in France and one whose opinion of conditions generally would be carefully listened to.

MR. LAWSON said that he was glad that the question of the difficulties of the staff was being brought to the Commission's notice. He thought that one of the difficulties was caused by the lack of experience among the staff in matters of organisation and in the

presentation of their case. He warmly supported the proposal to hold an investigation by some person whose opinion would be valued by all the parties concerned. It seemed that at present there might be some difference of opinion among the men as to the procedure which they should take, since the Secretary of their organisation had informed him some time ago that he would place a suggestion before the Commission but no word had been heard from him since. He was not quite happy about the position and he hoped that the suggestions which were now under consideration would lead to a satisfactory result.

MR. KNOWLES asked how many men were affected in this connection and if they were spread all over the old battle areas in France and Belgium.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN said that their staff numbered about 550 and that they were widely scattered. He added that personally he would welcome having some definite organisation to deal with in matters of this kind as at present it was very difficult to conduct negotiations with an unorganised body of men.

That concluded the business.

*Jabian Wane*