

CWGC 582.1

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
at the 581st MEETING of the
COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES COMMISSION

held at

2 MARLOW ROAD MAIDENHEAD

on

WEDNESDAY 20 JUNE 1990

Present:

GENERAL SIR ROBERT FORD GCB CBE

(Vice-Chairman of the Commission) - in the Chair

HIS EXCELLENCY MR RAE KILLEN

Ambassador of the Republic of South Africa

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR JOHN GINGELL GBE KCB

CAPTAIN SIR MILES WINGATE KCVO

MAJOR GENERAL DESMOND SMITH CBE DSO CD

THE RT HON J D CONCANNON

DAME JANET FOOKES DBE MP

SIR DEREK DAY KCMG

ADMIRAL SIR NICHOLAS HUNT GCB LVO

MR R L L FACER

Representing the Secretary of State for Defence in the United Kingdom

MR M FITZPATRICK

Representing the Australian High Commissioner

MR R G S JOHNSTON

Representing the Secretary of State for the Environment in the United Kingdom

BRIGADIER-GENERAL C M CURLEIGH

Representing the High Commissioner for Canada

BRIGADIER H M KHANNA

Representing the High Commissioner for India

COMMODORE J G LEONARD RNZN

Representing the High Commissioner for New Zealand

ADVISER

PROFESSOR SIR PETER SHEPHEARD CBE BArch PPRIBA MRTPI PPILA

SECRETARY

MR J SAYNOR JP, Director-General

Also in attendance:

MR D KENNEDY, Assistant Secretary, Deputy Director-General
(Administration)

MR N B OSBORN OBE FRICS, Assistant Secretary, Deputy Director-General
(Operations)

MR G C REDDIE, Legal Adviser and Solicitor

MR T F PENFOLD, Director of Personnel

MR A COOMBE, Director of Works

MR P J NOAKES BSc MIHort, Director of Horticulture

MR R D WILSON ACMA, Director of Finance

MR J P D GEE, Director of Information and Secretariat

MR H WESTLAND, Director of France Area

MR R J DALLEY, Director of Northern Europe Area

MR M S JOHNSON, Director of Outer Area

MR D R PARKER, Director of United Kingdom Area

MR P W CRAVEN, Director of North Africa Area

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL S M NEWELL, Secretary-General, Canadian Agency

LIEUTENANT-GENERAL P A G REITZ, Secretary, South African Agency

MR G CAMPBELL-DYKES, Higher Executive Officer (Secretariat)

MR S T BELL, Secretariat

MISS E KENNEDY, Secretariat

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were reported from Sir Nigel Mobbs and Professor Prance.

WELCOME

The CHAIRMAN welcomed Mr Martin Fitzpatrick, who was representing the Australian High Commissioner at a meeting of the Commission for the first time. He also welcomed the senior officers from Areas and Agencies, who were not normally present; Mr Grian Campbell-Dykes, recently appointed to the Secretariat to replace Mr David Stacey; and Miss Elspeth Kennedy who would be succeeding Mr Stephen Bell in the Secretariat in September.

HONOURS AND AWARDS

The CHAIRMAN reported that the Chairman's normal representative was now Sir Kenneth Macdonald following his appointment as a Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath in the Queen's Birthday Honours list; Mr John Jones, Deputy Director of Personnel, had been appointed an Officer of the Order of the British Empire; Mr Thomas Smallcombe, Senior Head Gardener in France Area, had been awarded the British Empire Medal; and Mr Robert Gomme, who until recently had represented the Secretary of State for the Environment at meetings of the Commission, had been appointed a Commander of the Order of the Bath. He also reported that Mr J D Kalra, Group Supervisor Delhi, had been appointed an Honorary Member of the Order of the British Empire.

581.1 MINUTES OF THE 580TH MEETING OF THE COMMISSION

581.1.1 The minutes, which had been circulated, were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

581.2 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE 580TH MEETING

A. Commonwealth-Tunisia War Graves Agreement

581.2.1 The SECRETARY reported that the Agreement had been signed on 2 May in the presence of the Commission's President. On behalf of the Commission he expressed appreciation of the efforts of its member governments in acting swiftly to ensure that the Agreement could be signed during the President's visit. At the signing, both the President and the Tunisian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs stressed the value of co-operation between the Commission and the Tunisian Government.

581.2.2 **The Commission took note.**B. Pakistan's membership of the Commission

581.2.3 The SECRETARY reported that there had been no further progress since the exchange of correspondence between the High Commissioner and the Commission, copies of which were before members. Dame Janet FOOKES added that she had recently met the High Commissioner, and had discussed his government's re-joining the Commission.

581.2.4 **The Commission took note.**

C Air Conditioning - Head Office

581.2.5 Mr KENNEDY reminded the meeting that approval had been given in December for the repair of the existing air conditioning system in Head Office at an estimated cost of £90,000 but that, in the light of the subsequent consultants' report, discussion at the meeting in March had strongly favoured its complete replacement during 1990-91. He anticipated that installation would take place between April and October 1991. Before then much preliminary work would be necessary. Consideration was being given to the most efficient and economical way of making access available to the contractor, whilst minimising inconvenience to the staff and general public. He foresaw the evacuation and relocation elsewhere of different departments at different times as the most practical course to follow. He anticipated being in a position to report in fuller detail before the end of the year, when precise costings became available and the Commission could be approached for funding.

581.2.6 Replying to Dame Janet FOOKES, who considered that alternative accommodation was probably the most effective method of alleviating inconvenience to staff while the work was in progress, Mr KENNEDY said that whilst some departments, particularly those whose work did not depend upon close access to computers or to bulky information data, could be more easily relocated than others, the problems of total relocation would be formidable. The CHAIRMAN gave assurance that the working conditions for staff would be of prime concern options were being considered.

581.2.7 **The Commission took note.**

581.3 THE REHABILITATION OF THE RUNNYMEDE MEMORIAL GROUNDS

581.3.1 Introducing the paper, Mr NOAKES said that the destruction by storm in January of half of the Silver Birch trees comprising the double avenue leading to the entrance of the memorial provided an opportunity to replace the ageing, permanent planting. He had visited the site in the company of Professor Sir Peter Shephard and they had agreed on a replanting proposal which retained elements of the architect's original concept of the landscape surrounding the memorial, while at the same time providing for a more natural setting. This included a wildflower meadow and informal beds of shrubs. The tree selected for the avenue, Sweet Chestnut, was a long lived and hardy species, expected to last for 200 years. He drew the meeting's attention to a sketch by Professor Shephard, on display, which depicted the likely appearance of the memorial in its proposed setting in 60 years' time. Because the Runnymede memorial was a prestigious and much visited site it was now proposed to introduce trees 5-6 metres in height, in order to create a mature landscape effect as soon as possible. Sir Peter SHEPHEARD added that the Sweet Chestnut tree was drought resistant. Planting them further apart than the Silver Birches of the original avenue would allow an almost uninterrupted view of the front elevation of the memorial from the entrance gates.

581.3.2 Sir John GINGELL expressed support for the proposals. He further commended the Commission's staff for its speedy rehabilitation of the site following the storm damage in January. All traces of damage had been eradicated by the time of the annual Commonwealth Air Forces Remembrance Ceremony.

581.3.3 Replying to Sir John GINGELL, Mr NOAKES confirmed that, although the Sweet Chestnut was a drought resistant species, some special irrigation would be necessary for two years following the planting.

581.3.4 Mr KILLEN asked whether it was Commission policy to introduce into sites flora indigenous to the countries of those commemorated at that site. Mr NOAKES said this was done wherever possible.

581.3.5 In a reply to Dame Janet FOOKES, Mr NOAKES confirmed that the trees would be acquired, at a cost of £300-£400 each, from a specialist nursery which also offered a guarantee and insurance cover. The guarantee would extend for one year and would be conditional upon the supplier planting and maintaining the trees for the duration of the guarantee.

581.3.6 Replying to Mr FACER, Mr NOAKES said that the Beech species had been ruled out because of its more extensive spread which would have allowed room for no more than three on either side of the avenue and confirmed that the newly installed trees would be anchored until their roots were firmly established. He also confirmed that the growth of wild rhododendrons on the site would be controlled without eradicating them completely.

581.3.7 Concluding the discussion, the CHAIRMAN thanked Sir Peter SHEPHEARD for the invaluable expertise that he had brought to bear on this matter, and for his sketch of the memorial and its grounds, which had been very helpful.

581.3.8 The Commission approved the proposals for the rehabilitation of the Runnymede memorial grounds as outlined in paper CWGC 581.3.

581.4 FORECAST OF OUTTURN 1989-90

581.4.1 Mr KENNEDY said that the accounts for 1989-90 were in the process of being audited and the net expenditure shown at Annex A of the paper before the meeting could vary slightly from that to be presented to the Commission for approval in September. It was anticipated that the carry-forward from 1989-90 would be some £100,000 less than when the estimates had been approved in December mainly because the residence for the Director of Northern Europe Area had been purchased from within the allocation for 1989-90. Mr WILSON added that information available since the preparation of the paper suggested a net expenditure for 1989-90 of some £30,000 less than indicated. With regard to the current year, Mr KENNEDY said that the compilation of estimates and forecasts had been complicated to some extent by the Commission's decision in December not to purchase its five major foreign currency requirements in advance. The paper's outturn forecast was therefore unavoidably somewhat speculative, and susceptible to day to day movements in the value of sterling. He was, however, pleased to note that the pound had gained in strength recently. Concluding, he said that it was too early in the year to predict, with any degree of confidence, patterns of expenditure and in particular whether shadow cuts could be achieved. The position would become clearer throughout the year.

581.4.2 In reply to Major-General SMITH, who was concerned at the 20% increases in administrative and horticultural costs for 1989-90, Mr KENNEDY said that the former of these was accounted for by the purchase of the residential property referred to previously and the construction of base sites for horticultural groups, while the latter arose largely out of the purchase of machinery either carried or brought forward from adjacent financial years. More detailed information would be given during the presentation of the accounts for 1989-90 at the next meeting.

581.4.3 **The Commission took note.**

581.5 SOUTH AFRICAN AGENCY : APPOINTMENT OF FIFTH MEMBER

581.5.1 The SECRETARY said that members of the South African Agency believed that it would be strengthened by the addition of a representative of the Chief of the Military Veterans Administration. Such an appointment enjoyed the support of others in South Africa concerned with the work of the Commission. An amendment to the Instrument of Agency was necessary.

581.5.2 **The Commission approved the appointment of a fifth member of the South African Agency, to be nominated by the Chief of the Military Veterans' Administration and the amendment of the Instrument of Agency as indicated by the paper CWGC 581.5.**

581.6 COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES COMMISSION SUPERANNUATION SCHEME (1952): RULES - COMPOUND INTEREST

581.6.1 Mr PENFOLD said that this paper proposed a change in the method of calculation of compound interest from a fixed rate to a new variable rate, based on that of the Building Society Ordinary Share Account. This was in line with a recent change in the Rules of the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme, and would particularly affect the calculation of refunds for members with less than two years' service and refunds of family member contributions for those members who were unmarried at retirement. The Trustees of the Superannuation Scheme had considered the matter at their meeting in May and recommended approval by the Commission.

581.6.2 **The Commission approved the proposal outlined in paper CWGC 581.6.**

581.7 NINTH MEETING OF THE COMMONWEALTH-BELGIAN JOINT COMMITTEE MAY 1990

581.7.1 The CHAIRMAN said that the Field Day on 15 May had been well attended. A business meeting had taken place in Maidenhead on 24 May. Both occasions were conducted in a spirit of friendly co-operation between the Commonwealth and the Belgian sides. He had been particularly pleased by the participation of the Belgian Minister of the Interior and especially grateful to Her Majesty's Government and the Belgian Ambassador in London for hosting two enjoyable dinners. Sir Nicholas HUNT agreed that it had been a most friendly and productive occasion.

581.7.2 **The Commission took note.**

581.8 THE MENIN GATE MEMORIAL, IEPER, BELGIUM

581.8.1 The SECRETARY said that, as yet, little was known of the details of the Ieper authorities' response to the need to restrict the level of traffic in and around the town. The authorities had courteously informed the Commission that among proposals under consideration was the closure of the Menin Gate Memorial to motor traffic. He personally did not consider the Commission to be in a position to stand in the way of the town's needs. The movement of traffic through the Memorial did not appear to have adversely affected the structure since its opening over sixty years ago, although maintenance would be easier if access were to be restricted to pedestrians. Whilst many might attach symbolism to the stopping of motor traffic for the daily Last Post ceremony, he himself did not consider this an adequate reason for keeping open the road through the Memorial. Among other benefits in closing the road to traffic would be a more tranquil atmosphere for visitors.

581.8.2 Major-General SMITH and Sir John GINGELL favoured the closure of the Memorial to traffic. The atmosphere in which the Last Post ceremony was held could be enhanced by the absence of traffic through the Memorial. Ease of maintenance and less risk of damage to the Memorial in the long term provided further arguments. Mr CONCANNON, while not opposing the closure, foresaw possible opposition from British ex-service organizations and suggested that the Commission await further details before making a formal statement. He was nevertheless grateful to the town authorities for their courtesy in bringing this matter to the Commission's notice at an early stage. Sir Peter SHEPHEARD took the view that the symbolism of the Memorial, as envisaged by its architect, was closely linked to the importance of the Menin Gate in the 1914-18 War as a passage through the ramparts for soldiers on foot on their way to the front line; restriction of access to pedestrians would be particularly appropriate.

581.8.3 The Commission instructed the Secretary to convey to the Ieper town authorities its appreciation of their courtesy in seeking its views; to inform the authorities that it would not, in principle, oppose a decision to close the road to motor traffic; and to bring to their notice the possible benefits of such closure.

581.9 COMMONWEALTH-FOREIGN JOINT COMMITTEES: APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS

581.9.1 The CHAIRMAN drew the meeting's attention to a supplementary paper seeking approval for an appointment to the Commonwealth-Japanese Joint Committee.

581.9.2 Replying to Sir Derek DAY, Mr GEE said that diplomatic representation of member governments serving on the smaller ad hoc Joint Committees, such as the Commonwealth-Japanese Joint Committee, were traditionally of less senior rank than ambassadors, unlike those serving on the five major Joint Committees.

581.9.3 The Commission approved the appointment set out in Section A and the appointment set out in Section C, and took note of the four appointments set out in Section B, of the paper CWGC 581.9.

581.10 EXECUTION OF DOCUMENTS

581.10.1 In response to an enquiry as to why such a paper was a regular feature at Commission meetings, Mr REDDIE explained that it stemmed from the Commission's unusual legal nature which, strictly construed, required documents to be executed in the presence of Commissioners. To avoid this inconvenience, the current system had been established, which enabled items to be dealt with by the permanent staff, with major or public documents, particularly those involving land or property transactions or giving rise to extensive third party rights, being reported to Commissioners in order that their validity should not be challenged.

581.10.2 The Commission took note of the execution on its behalf of the documents serial numbers 286-292 referred to in the Schedule laid before the meeting and signed for identification by the Commission's Legal Adviser and Solicitor.

581.11 BURIALS AND COMMEMORATIONS

A. Graves not within the Commission's control in the United Kingdom

581.11.1 The Commission approved the classification as "not within the Commission's control" of the ten graves in the United Kingdom enumerated in the Supplementary List No 39 attached to the paper CWGC 581.11.

B. Unmaintainable graves in the United Kingdom and Egypt - alternative commemoration

581.11.2 The Commission approved the alternative commemoration of twelve war burials in accordance with the proposals summarized in paper CWGC 581.11.

581.12 NAMING OF A NEW ROSE VARIETY

581.12.1 Mr NOAKES said that Harkness and Co Ltd, one of the principal suppliers of roses to the Commission, had offered it the opportunity to name a new variety. Subject to the Commission's agreement, he proposed to select a suitable rose from those being propagated and made commercially available by the firm. Any such name must not have been used previously and would need to be commercially acceptable to the growers.

581.12.2 The CHAIRMAN, replying to Dame Janet FOOKES, said that although the propagation of such a rose was a commercial venture no portion of the profits would accrue to the Commission. Mr FACER said, and Mr JOHNSTON agreed, that the launching of the rose could present an opportunity for favourable publicity. Replying to Mr KILLEN, Mr NOAKES said that the Commission would not be obliged to purchase the rose in question but clearly it would be to its advantage to select a variety suitable for its sites.

581.12.3 In response to the CHAIRMAN's call for ideas for names, Major-General SMITH proposed "Fabian Ware", a name which Sir Derek DAY felt would convey little to the general public. Mr FACER proposed "Unknown Soldier". Sir Derek DAY proposed "Remembrance", a name which Mr CONCANNON suspected might have been previously chosen by the Royal British Legion, and he himself preferred a name, whether belonging to a concept or an individual, with associations of the 1939-45 War as well as the 1914-18 War. In addition, Mr PENFOLD proposed "Sacrifice".

581.12.4 As members felt more time was required to consider suitable names and since further verification of the eligibility of a name as well as further information on the variety itself were necessary, the CHAIRMAN proposed, and it was agreed, that the question be laid before a later meeting, when a colour photograph of the rose selected by Mr Noakes could be made available. The SECRETARY suggested, and it was agreed, that the Commission's staff also be given the opportunity to put forward suggestions for a name.

581.12.5 The Commission accepted the offer of R Harkness and Co Ltd to name a new variety of rose from its nurseries and agreed to discuss the question further at a later meeting.

581.13 TOURS BY COMMISSIONERS AND HEAD OFFICE SENIOR OFFICIALS

581.13.1 Mr JOHNSTON reported that he had visited the Royal Naval Cemetery in Bermuda in March which he had found to be well maintained.

581.13.2 The CHAIRMAN reported that he had recently visited Normandy where the sites he saw had been in excellent order.

581.13.3 The CHAIRMAN also reported on his visit to Gallipoli in April for the 75th anniversary of the Dardanelles Campaign, when he had been accompanied by the Director of Outer Area. The condition of the cemeteries had been highly appreciated by the many thousands who attended the commemorative events. He had been particularly impressed by the large number of the younger generation who had travelled to the peninsula to be present.

581.13.4 Mr OSBORN spoke of his recent visit to France where he had inspected sites in Paris and in the Normandy and Brittany regions. In general, maintenance standards were high. He had been particularly impressed by the large nursery established at Bayeux, producing some 72,000 herbaceous plants a year for distribution all over France.

581.13.5 Mr OSBORN also spoke of his recent visit to Egypt. Maintenance standards, while variable, were high. He was especially pleased with the condition of the cemeteries at Heliopolis, Ismailia and Alexandria. Major structural problems were the decay of grave markers made of reconstituted stone and salt attack. There was also a need to replace the ageing irrigation systems in the cemeteries and to improve their boundaries in order to protect them from encroachment. These requirements would constitute major items of expenditure in forthcoming years.

581.13.6 Mr COOMBE spoke of his recent visit to Italy. In Sicily, he had seen the problems associated with the replacement of the Cross of Sacrifice at Catania War Cemetery, which had been destroyed by lightning. He had noticed that the Chiampo headstones weathered at a slower rate in the north of the country than the south, where some replacements were necessary. He had also been able to visit the suppliers of Botticino stone at Brescia.

581.13.7 Speaking of his recent visit to France, Mr COOMBE said that most of his time had been spent at the Area workshops, studying the latest improvements in technology. Cycle maintenance targets were being attained with few problems.

581.13.8 Mr KENNEDY spoke of his visit to South Africa to recruit a successor to Lieutenant-General Reitz as Secretary to the South African Agency. Brigadier Anderson, the successful candidate, had served in both the British and South African armies and, it was hoped, would be present at the Commission meeting in September. Mr KENNEDY wished to record his thanks to members of the Agency, and in particular Mr Claassen, for all their assistance.

~~581.13.9~~ **The Commission took note.**

581.14 DIARY

581.14.1 Mr CONCANNON spoke of his participation on behalf of the Commission at the well-attended Anzac Day Ceremony at Cannock Chase War Cemetery. The organizers had requested him to pass to the Commission their thanks for the excellent state of maintenance and the help of its staff in organizing the ceremony.

581.14.2 The SECRETARY said that he had already mentioned the Tunisian War Graves Agreement, but wished to add more generally that the President's tour to Tunisia and Sicily had been most successful. It had further developed existing goodwill towards the Commission and had encouraged staff. The President was particularly pleased to have been able to speak with relatives of the war dead, also visiting some of the cemeteries. His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales had been on board The Queen's Flight aircraft for part of the outward journey and had spoken appreciatively of the work of the Commission.

581.14.3 The CHAIRMAN reported that it had recently been learnt that on 4 June the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade had visited sites of Australian interest in the Ieper Salient, and that on 30 June the British Home Secretary would also be visiting the Salient.

581.14.4 **The Commission took note.**

581.15 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

581.15.1 The SECRETARY reported that the Deputy Director of the Commission's Outer Area, Mr John Midgley, would be retiring in August, to be succeeded by Mr Brian Davidson, promoted from the post of North Europe Area Works Officer.

581.15.2 **The Commission took note.**