

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

at the 372ND MEETING of the
IMPERIAL WAR GRAVES COMMISSION

held at

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

on THURSDAY, 15th JULY, 1954.

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23.9.54

Present:

MEMBERS

Air Chief Marshal Sir ARTHUR LONGMORE, G.C.B., D.S.O., Vice-Chairman, in
the Chair.

FREDERIC HUDD, Esq., C.B.E.,
Representing the High Commissioner for Canada.

E. McCARTHY, Esq., C.B.E.,
Representing the High Commissioner for Australia.

W. WYNNE MASON, Esq., M.C.,
Representing the High Commissioner for New Zealand.

D.V. SERRURIER, Esq.,
Representing the High Commissioner for South Africa.

Captain M. JAN,
Representing the High Commissioner for Pakistan.

D.K. MALONE, Esq., M.B.E.,
Representing the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

General Sir ROBERT GORDON-FINLAYSON, K.C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., D.L.

Admiral Sir MARTIN DUNBAR-NASMITH, V.C., K.C.B., D.L.

Sir PATRICK SPENS, K.B.E., Q.C., M.P.

GEORGE SYLVESTER, Esq., M.P.

Captain Sir HAROLD CAMPBELL, G.C.V.O., D.S.O.

ADVISERS

Sir WILLIAM HALCROW, M.Inst.C.E. (Consulting Engineer).

Sir EDWARD MAUFE, R.A., F.R.I.B.A. (Chief Architect and Artistic Adviser).

SECRETARY

F. HIGGINSON, Esq., C.B., C.M.G.

There were also present:

W.H. BUNNING, Esq., M.C.

W.J. CHALMERS, Esq., C.B.E. (Assistant Secretary).

Major-General J.F.D. STEEDMAN, C.B.E., M.C. (Director of Works).

H.L. SIMMONS, Esq., LL.B., (Legal Adviser).

O.D. HOLT, Esq., (Principal, Secretarial Branch).

W.K.K. KINNEAR, Esq., M.B.E., (Chief Administrative Officer, United
Kingdom District).

In reply to the CHAIRMAN, the SECRETARY read the apologies for absence.

The CHAIRMAN said that Members would be very glad to welcome Captain Sir Harold Campbell who was attending a meeting of the Commission for the first time, following his appointment as an unofficial Member.

The CHAIRMAN said that the Minutes of the previous meeting had been circulated and, if they were approved, he would sign them.

1. The Minutes of the 371st Meeting of the Commission were approved and signed.

There were no points arising from the Minutes.

REPORT OF THE 416TH MEETING OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

The CHAIRMAN said that the Meeting had been held the previous day and there had therefore not been time to circulate the Report. Copies were laid on the table. He said that there had been some discussion on Item 1 which requested authorisation of the expenditure, during the recess period, of sums up to a much higher limit than usual - namely, £200,000. He would ask Mr. Chalmers to explain the reason for this.

Mr. CHALMERS, in reply, said that the reason was that the Vice-Chairman and the Treasury representative on the Finance Committee may wish to authorise the construction of the Taukkyan Cemetery and Memorial near Rangoon, which was estimated to cost about £15,000. In addition to that over £85,000 was represented by the usual miscellaneous requirements for construction and other purposes.

The CHAIRMAN said that the subject of Item 2 was the appointment of Mr. Wynne Mason, who had for some time represented the High Commissioner for New Zealand at the Commission Meetings, to the Permanent Maintenance Staff of the Commission as Chief Administrative Officer of the Middle Eastern District. Members would note the new title of the District previously known as the Eastern District. Mr. Wynne Mason would replace Colonel Griffin, an Australian, who would become Chief Administrative Officer for the United Kingdom District in place of Major Kinnear, who would be retiring next January. The Commission's thanks were due to the New Zealand Government for releasing Mr. Wynne Mason. They were very glad to have obtained his services.

The SECRETARY, replying to a question from the CHAIRMAN about Item 5, said that arrangements for the maintenance by the Commission of Netherlands War Graves in the United Kingdom, and in Commission cemeteries overseas, as against the maintenance by the Netherlands Government of Commonwealth War Graves in Netherlands territory, had been under negotiation some time. It was a purely reciprocal undertaking, by which no money would pass between the two countries.

Sir Patrick SPENS referred to the discussion on this subject at the recent meeting at The Hague and enquired whether arrears of payments had been settled.

The SECRETARY replied that a settlement on this point had not been reached. Negotiations would now proceed with the Netherlands Government for the refunding of any monies due.

The CHAIRMAN said that Item 18 referred to the replacement by gates of the existing bollards at Cambes-en-Plaine War Cemetery to prevent animals from getting into the cemetery. Bollards and chains had been found to provide inadequate protection.

The charge-hand labourers, referred to in Item 26, were engaged in renovating stone work in the United Kingdom.

Mr. SYLVESTER, replying to a question from the CHAIRMAN about Item 29, said that the table it contained set out very clearly the rates of Temporary Currency and Local Allowances for staff in the French and North-West European Districts. These rates had been agreed at a recent meeting at which he had presided. He would like to express his thanks to Mr. Chalmers for his help in these matters.

The CHAIRMAN, referring to Item 30, said that the expenditure recommended was for vehicles for the Headquarters of the new Middle Eastern District in Cyprus. It was proposed to sell two cars with a left-hand drive and purchase two with a right-hand drive.

It was proposed by Mr. SYLVESTER, seconded by Sir Patrick SPENS and carried unanimously:

2. That the Report of the 416th Meeting of the Finance Committee be adopted.

MEMBERSHIP OF COMMONWEALTH-FOREIGN JOINT COMMITTEES

The CHAIRMAN, said that this was a formal paper dealing with changes in the membership of the Joint Netherlands and Belgian Committees occasioned by his having succeeded Admiral Dunbar-Nasmith as Vice-Chairman.

It was proposed by General Sir Robert GORDON-FINLAYSON, seconded by Captain Sir Harold CAMPBELL and carried unanimously:

3. The Commission, having considered a paper dated 2nd July 1954, No. CM/13/14:

RESOLVE:

That the following changes in the membership of Joint Committees be and hereby are approved:

Commonwealth-Netherlands Joint Committee

Retirement of Commonwealth Official Member:

Admiral Sir Martin Dunbar-Nasmith, V.C., K.C.B., D.L.

Appointment of Commonwealth Official Member:

Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Longmore, G.C.B., D.S.O.

Commonwealth-Belgian Joint Committee

Retirement of Commonwealth Official Member:

Admiral Sir Martin Dunbar-Nasmith, V.C., K.C.B., D.L.

Appointment of Commonwealth Official Member:

Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Longmore, G.C.B., D.S.O.

PROCEDURE FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF NETHERLANDS MEMBERS TO
THE COMMONWEALTH-NETHERLANDS JOINT COMMITTEE

The CHAIRMAN said that the Commonwealth-Netherlands War Graves Agreement laid down that nominations of Netherlands Members to the Joint Committee should be transmitted through the diplomatic channel. At the last meeting of the Committee at The Hague the Australian, Canadian and South African representatives had agreed that for the sake of convenience the diplomatic channel should be understood to be the United Kingdom Embassy at The Hague. The present paper sought to obtain the approval of all the governments to this course.

Mr. WYNNE MASON said that he could see no objection to it and the Commission could take it that the New Zealand Government would agree.

Captain JAN said that he felt that the course suggested would be quite justified, but he would like to refer it to the High Commissioner and he would let the Secretary have the answer by telephone.

The CHAIRMAN said that the representative of India was not present and steps would be taken to ascertain India's view. The Commission agreed to the proposal set out in the Paper, subject to the approval of the Governments of India and Pakistan being obtained.

WAR GRAVES AGREEMENTS.

The CHAIRMAN said that the Paper contained a comprehensive report on the present position of all the various War Graves Agreements which the Commission had concluded, or were negotiating, with foreign governments on the subject of War Graves.

Mr. CHALMERS, replying to the CHAIRMAN, said that there were three main reasons why these agreements were required. The first was to secure the tenure of the land on which the cemeteries stand; the second was to ensure that the Commission was recognised as the sole authority representing the participating governments for all matters concerned with Commonwealth war graves; and the third was to obtain whatever customs and taxation exemptions might be proper in each particular country.

General Sir Robert GORDON-FINLAYSON asked what position the negotiations had reached with the Government of Japan. Mr. SIMMONS in reply to the CHAIRMAN said that the negotiations with the Japanese Government had been protracted as there had been some points of difficulty on the Japanese side. The Japanese had however agreed to an extension of the interim arrangements for the use of the land and the Australian Ambassador in Tokyo had forwarded a full report on the points outstanding on the Agreement. This Report was at this moment being examined with a view to bringing the form of the Agreement into line with the United Nations Status of Forces Agreement recently signed in Tokyo, as it was advised that this would assist an early settlement. It was understood that formalities for the acquisition of the land by the Japanese Government were well advanced.

Mr. SYLVESTER asked whether any progress had been made in negotiations for regaining access to the cemetery at Jerusalem.

The CHAIRMAN said that the difficulty was that the situation of the cemetery made it inexpedient to approach either the Israeli or Jordan Governments direct. An approach had been made to the United Nations in the matter and further developments were awaited.

EXAMINATION OF SKETCH DESIGN FOR CEMETERY AND MEMORIAL CONSTRUCTION: DUNKERQUE TOWN CEMETERY AND THE DUNKIRK MEMORIAL.

Major-General STEEDMAN, replying to the CHAIRMAN, said that the layout had been submitted previously to the Commission, so that they might give it their provisional approval and thus enable the Chief Administrative Officer to approach the authorities with a view to the removal of the French civilian graves which occupied the site of the proposed entrance. Agreement to the removal of these graves had now been obtained.

He then described the design, pointing out the position of the seat in the 1914/18 section which the District proposed should be moved in order to give easier access to the Cross and to provide for greater ease of maintenance.

Sir Edward MAUFE, replying to a question from the CHAIRMAN, said that the Principal Architect had gone a long way to meeting his objections to the entrance as shown in the design and he was on the whole satisfied with the present proposal. There was, however, one point on which he felt considerable doubt and that was the spacing of the trees along the avenue leading to the memorial. He felt that a narrower avenue should be planted, which in twenty or thirty years' time could be removed. Without this the existence of an avenue of trees at all would hardly be noticeable for, say, a period of forty years.

The SECRETARY said that this point would be taken up. He was sure that a planting scheme could be evolved which would define the avenue more clearly in the early stages of the development of the cemetery.

It was proposed by Mr. HUDD, seconded by Sir Patrick SPENS and carried unanimously:

4. The Commission, having considered a Paper No. W/97/356 dated 9th July 1954,

RESOLVE:

That the Commission having taken note of the sketch design for Dunkerque Town Cemetery and the Dunkirk Memorial, France, (Mr. P.D. Hepworth, F.R.I.B.A.) resolve that the Finance Committee be and hereby is authorised to consider and accept tenders for the construction of the said Cemetery and Memorial without further reference to the Commission.

EXAMINATION OF SKETCH DESIGN FOR CEMETERY CONSTRUCTION:
GRANDCOURT WAR CEMETERY, SEINE INFERIEURE, FRENCH
DISTRICT.

The CHAIRMAN said that this was a cemetery containing only 58 graves, and the Assistant Secretary had very rightly questioned the desirability of permanently constructing so small a cemetery and had suggested that consideration should be given to the removal of the graves to a larger one. Thirty-eight of the graves, however, had already been concentrated, some of them more than once, and as it was not unusual for the Commission to have a cemetery of this size he felt that it ought to remain where it was.

Sir Patrick SPENS said that he felt that if the relatives had been informed that the graves had been concentrated to this site, no further removal should be contemplated.

The SECRETARY, replying to a question from General Sir Robert GORDON-FINLAYSON, said that the design had been submitted for two reasons; first, because the question of removing the cemetery had been raised; secondly, because the estimated cost was about £400 above the permissible figure.

It was proposed by Admiral Sir Martin DUNBAR-NASMITH, seconded by Mr. McCARTHY, and carried unanimously:

5. The Commission having considered a Paper No. W/97/481, dated 6th July 1954,

RESOLVE:

That the Commission having taken note of the sketch design for Grandcourt War Cemetery, Seine Inferieure, France, (Mr. P.E. Cornu, A.R.I.B.A.), resolve that the Finance Committee be and hereby is authorised to consider and accept tenders for the construction of the said cemetery without further reference to the Commission.

EXAMINATION OF SKETCH DESIGN FOR CEMETERY CONSTRUCTION:
DURNBACH WAR CEMETERY, GERMANY, NORTH WEST EUROPEAN DISTRICT.

The CHAIRMAN said that it would be noted that some mural paintings, which were a local speciality, were proposed for the vaults of the shelters.

Sir Edward MAUFE said that the paintings were to be in the two extensions only.

Admiral Sir Martin DUNBAR-NASMITH said he felt the Commission should know what form the paintings would take.

Major-General STEEDMAN, in reply, said that the designs had not yet been settled but would be submitted to the Chief Architect and Artistic Adviser.

General Sir Robert GORDON-FINLAYSON said that he would like to support the Artistic Adviser's recommendation that the pergolas flanking the two shelters should be omitted.

General STEEDMAN, replying to the CHAIRMAN, said that it would also be noted that the Artistic Adviser had recommended that the pylon designed to contain the Register Box, should be reduced to table height, so that the view from the entrance was not obstructed.

It was proposed by Captain JAN, seconded by Mr. WYNNE MASON and carried unanimously:-

6. The Commission having considered a Paper No. W/97/274 dated 9th July 1954,

RESOLVE:

That the Commission having taken note of the sketch design for Durnbach War Cemetery, Germany (Mr. P.D. Hepworth, F.R.I.B.A.) resolve that the Finance Committee be and hereby is authorised to consider and accept tenders for the construction of the said cemetery, subject to the omission of the flanking pergolas to the shelters and the reduction to table height of the Register Box housing, without further reference to the Commission.

HORSON CEMETERY, TORPOINT, CORNWALL.

It was proposed by Admiral Sir Martin DUNBAR-NASMITH, seconded by General Sir Robert GORDON-FINLAYSON, and carried unanimously:

7. The Commission having considered a Paper No. CM/220/1/31/LEG dated 1st July, 1954,

RESOLVE:

That the Seal of the Commission be affixed to and the Proper Officer sign the duplicate Deed of Grant from the Torpoint Urban District Council relating to the exclusive rights of burial in the Services Plot and the right to erect and maintain a Cross of Sacrifice in an agreed position within the Plot at Horson Cemetery, Torpoint, Cornwall.

MAINTENANCE OF WAR GRAVES IN THE UNITED KINGDOM:
FORTY-SEVENTH QUARTERLY REPORT (to 30th June, 1954.)

The Commission took note of the paper submitted.

GENERAL NOTES.

The CHAIRMAN said that he was sure Members of the Commission would like to see copies of the Order of Service for the Unveiling of the Cross of Sacrifice in the Service Plot in Manchester Southern Cemetery the previous month. Photographs of the plots were also available. (Photographs and copies of the Order of Service were handed around).

Major KINNEAR, replying to the CHAIRMAN, said that he had not been present at the ceremony, but the Regional Inspector had represented the Commission. The ceremony was typical of a number of similar services arranged by municipal authorities in this country.

Captain Sir Harold CAMPBELL said that during a recent tour in France he had visited a number of war cemeteries. They were all extremely well kept and at each of them he had been pleased to find the gardeners at work.

The CHAIRMAN said that Members would have noted the very interesting report from the British Consul in Oslo on the care of war graves in the Oslo Consulate district of Norway.

CONSTRUCTION - HALIFAX MEMORIAL,
CANADA.

The CHAIRMAN said that copies of the paper on this subject had not been circulated, but had been laid on the table.

Major-General STEEDMAN, replying to the CHAIRMAN, said that in 1952 the Commission had approved a design for the 1939-45 Memorial to be built adjacent to the 1914-18 Memorial at Mount Pleasant Park in Halifax. Subsequently, there had been difficulties raised by the local authorities and an alternative site was suggested but later rejected. Finally, at a meeting held in Ottawa the previous month it was decided to recommend a new site in Citadel Park, Halifax, where it was proposed that the memorials of both wars should be erected. The approval of the Canadian Government for this new site was being sought and the Commission were now asked to agree to the designs subject to the work entailed in preparing the site, making the approach steps and transferring the 1914/18 Memorial to the new site being carried out without cost to the Commission.

Mr. HUDD asked whether any decision had been reached as to the responsibility for the additional costs involved.

The SECRETARY replied that official confirmation was awaited. So far the Architect had stated that he understood that the Canadian Government would accept responsibility for the additional costs.

The CHAIRMAN said that he thought that the words "subject to the agreement of the Canadian Government" should be introduced into the resolution.

After some discussion, in which alternative expressions were considered for meeting the contingency that whereas the choice of site was dependent on the approval of the Canadian Government, the responsibility for financing the various additional work mentioned might fall on either the Government or the local authority, the following resolution was proposed by Sir PATRICK SPENS, seconded by Mr. HUDD and carried unanimously:

8. The Commission having considered a Paper No. W/97/429 dated 14th July 1954,

RESOLVE:

That the proposals in the said Paper for the construction of the Halifax Memorial on a new

site in Citadel Hill Park, Halifax, be approved, subject to the agreement of the Canadian Government and subject to the site preparation, approach steps and the transfer of the 1914-18 Memorial being carried out without cost to the Commission.

BROADCAST ABOUT THE COMMISSION'S WORK IN
THE FRENCH SERVICE OF THE B.B.C.

The SECRETARY, replying to the CHAIRMAN, said that the B.B.C. had broadcast in their French service on the 4th and 7th July an account of the Commission's work in France and Belgium. The broadcast included recordings of conversations between the commentator and Brigadier Vale and several members of the Commission's gardening staff in France. In Ypres, recordings were made of the chimes of the town clock; the stopping of the traffic at the Menin Gate, the sounding of the "Last Post" and traffic restarting; and finally a short interview with the Chairman of the Last Post Committee. The programme was entirely in French.

UNVEILING OF THE ALAMEIN MEMORIAL.

The SECRETARY said that it was hoped that the Alamein Memorial would be completed before the end of the present month and the unveiling ceremony was planned for next October. The arrangements had been discussed with the Foreign Office and all authorities concerned, and it had been agreed that it would be impossible to arrange for any large number of relatives to attend the ceremony. The Secretary read out the letter which was proposed to send to the next-of-kin.

Admiral Sir Martin DUNBAR-NASMITH enquired whether it would not be possible for the Commission to present photographs to the relatives instead of selling them, as so few would be able to visit the memorial.

The CHAIRMAN replied that this suggestion would have to be carefully considered, because there were other memorials in even more remote places, many of them commemorating a very large number of men, and the presentation of photographs might therefore become a big commitment.

SALES OF "THEIR NAME LIVETH"

The CHAIRMAN said that he had been doing his best to promote the sales of "Their Name Liveth". He had written to the shipping offices, air lines and clubs in London and to various other people. He hoped that some of them would order copies.

Mr. SYLVESTER enquired whether the National Libraries Association had been approached.

The SECRETARY said this had been done and a number of libraries had purchased copies.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING.

The CHAIRMAN said that there would be no meeting in August. The next Meeting would be held at 11 a.m. on Thursday 16th September.

There being no other business the Meeting concluded at 12.05.