

DRAFT

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

at the 487TH (50TH ANNIVERSARY) MEETING of the

COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES COMMISSION

held at

ST. JAMES'S PALACE, LONDON, S.W. 1

on

THURSDAY, 18TH MAY, 1967

Present:

MEMBERS

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE DUKE OF GLOUCESTER, K.G., P.C., K.T., K.P.,  
G.C.B., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O. (President of the Commission),  
in the Chair

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE DENIS HEALEY, M.B.E., M.P. (Chairman of the  
Commission)

ADMIRAL SIR GUY GRANTHAM, G.C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O. (Vice-Chairman of  
the Commission)

MR. J.W.T. PRITCHARD  
Representing the Minister of Public Building and Works

HIS EXCELLENCY MR. CHARLES RITCHIE, M.A., D.C.L., High Commissioner  
for Canada

HIS EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE SIR ALEXANDER DOWNER, K.B.E.,  
High Commissioner for Australia

HIS EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE SIR THOMAS MACDONALD, K.C.M.G.,  
High Commissioner for New Zealand

HIS EXCELLENCY DR. H.G. LUTTIG, Ambassador of the Republic of South  
Africa

MAJOR-GENERAL I.C. KATOCH  
Representing the Acting High Commissioner for India

COLONEL S.A. HASAN, T.Q.A.  
Representing the High Commissioner for Pakistan

SIR ARTHUR RUCKER, K.C.M.G., C.B., C.B.E.

AIR MARSHAL SIR CHARLES GUEST, K.B.E., C.B.

MR. DAVID GRIFFITHS, M.P.

GENERAL SIR JOHN ANDERSON, K.C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O., A.D.C.

SIR ROBERT BLACK, G.C.M.G., O.B.E.

COLONEL SIR RICHARD GLYN, BART., O.B.E., T.D., D.L., M.P.

MISS JOAN WOODGATE, C.B.E., R.R.C.

/Continued

SECRETARY

MR. W.J. CHALMERS, C.B.E., Director-General

HONORARY ADVISERS

SIR EDWARD MAUFE, R.A., F.R.I.B.A., M.A., Chief Architect and  
Artistic Adviser

MR. H.D. MORGAN, M.Sc.(Eng.), M.Inst.C.E., Consulting Engineer

There were also present:

MAJOR MICHAEL HAWKINS, C.V.O., M.B.E., Equerry to H.R.H. The Duke  
of Gloucester

MR. J.C. NOISEUX, Canadian High Commission

MR. A.L. MOORE, Australian High Commission

MR. R.M. MILLER, New Zealand High Commission

MR. D.S. PRELLER, South African Embassy

MAJOR B.N. MURTI, Indian High Commission

MAJOR AHMAD SHAMIM KHAN, Pakistan High Commission

and the following officials of the Commission:

MR. W. WYNNE MASON, M.C., Assistant Secretary, Director of  
External Relations and Records

MR. A.K. PALLOT, C.M.G., Assistant Secretary, Director of Finance  
and Establishments

BRIGADIER K.F. DANIELL, C.B.E., B.A., Director of Works

MR. H.L. SIMMONS, LL.B., Legal Adviser and Solicitor

MR. W.F.W. HARDING, O.B.E., B.Sc.(Hort.), Chief Horticultural  
Officer

MR. L.J.H. GIBSON, Chief Accountant

MR. A.S. LAING, M.V.O., Deputy Establishment Officer

MR. P.N. DOLAN, Chief External Relations and Records Officer

MR. PHILIP LONGWORTH, Research Assistant

MR. A.E.V. SHEPHARD, Private Secretary to Director-General

MR. D.H. LLOYD, A.R.I.C.S., Director, United Kingdom Region

MR. C.D. JACK, A.R.I.B.A., Director, Northern Region

COLONEL E.A. GRIFFIN, C.M.G., O.B.E., E.D., Director, Southern  
Region

MR. J.E. FORSTER, C.D., B.Sc., Director, Eastern Region

MR. C.B. FULLER, Secretary-General, Canadian Agency

BRIGADIER A.E. BROWN, C.M.G., O.B.E., Secretary-General, Anzac  
Agency, and Director, Pacific Region

MAJOR D.S. CILLIERS, Secretary, South African Agency

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE PRESIDENT, opening the Meeting, said how very glad he was to be present to preside at this important Meeting in the Commission's history. He had pleasure in welcoming the Regional Directors and Secretaries of Agencies, who were in attendance and who had come from their headquarters in France, Italy, India, Canada, Australia and South Africa, as well as the United Kingdom.

At the request of the PRESIDENT the SECRETARY read the apologies for absence.

MINUTES OF THE 486TH MEETING OF THE COMMISSION

The PRESIDENT said he understood that the Minutes had been circulated and that no amendments had been suggested. Was it agreed that he should sign them? (Members indicated their agreement.)

1. The Minutes of the 486th Meeting were approved and signed.

The PRESIDENT said that unless there was any urgent matter a Member wished to raise, matters arising out of the Minutes would be dealt with at the next Meeting of the Commission to be held on 14th June.

MESSAGE FROM HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN

The PRESIDENT said that he had the honour to present to the Commission the following message from Her Majesty The Queen:-

" On the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the foundation of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission by Royal Charter, I send a message of appreciation to all members of the Commission on the work that it has done so faithfully to commemorate the war dead of the Commonwealth and Empire.

I have seen many of the war cemeteries and memorials in the Commonwealth and in foreign countries and I have always been deeply impressed by their dignity and beauty. A visit to them is a moving experience. They are a poignant reminder of the great sacrifices of two world wars but at the same time their peaceful atmosphere can do much to comfort and sustain the bereaved.

The universally high standard with which the cemeteries and memorials are maintained has only been achieved by great effort and unceasing devotion.

I congratulate all concerned and send them my warmest support and good wishes for the continuance of their work in the future.

ELIZABETH R.

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He understood that a Resolution in reply to Her Majesty had been drafted and he would ask the Secretary to read it.

The SECRETARY read the following suggested Resolution:-

2. That the Commission, having received a message from Her Majesty The Queen, presented by the President,

RESOLVE:

That the President be, and he is hereby, requested to convey the following message to Her Majesty The Queen:

" The Commonwealth War Graves Commission thank Your Majesty for the kind and generous message you have sent them on the occasion of their 50th Anniversary.

They are grateful for the interest and support they have always had from Your Majesty and from other members of the Royal Family. They will endeavour to fulfil your trust and confidence in them in the future.

In humble duty they send to Your Majesty their loyal greetings."

At the invitation of the PRESIDENT, the Resolution was proposed by the HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR CANADA, seconded by the HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR AUSTRALIA and carried unanimously.

MESSAGES FROM THE PARTICIPATING GOVERNMENTS

The PRESIDENT said that he understood that the representatives of the participating governments wished to present messages from their respective governments.

Replying on behalf of the UNITED KINGDOM, The Right Honourable DENIS HEALEY, Secretary of State for Defence, said that the message from the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom was as follows:-

" On behalf of Her Majesty's Government and people in the United Kingdom and Colonial Territories, I express to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission our warmest congratulations on the attainment of its fiftieth anniversary. We reaffirm our confidence in the work of the Commission, which has brought comfort to so many bereaved families and has earned the admiration of countless visitors to the war cemeteries and memorials, and we pledge our support for the continuance of its work in the future."

Replying on behalf of CANADA, His Excellency Mr. CHARLES RITCHIE said that the following message had been received from the Prime Minister of Canada:-

" The Government and people of Canada send their congratulations to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission on the attainment of its semi-centenary. They wish to convey their heartfelt appreciation of its labours over fifty years. They reaffirm their confidence in the Commission's work of commemorating the dead of the two World Wars and pledge their continuing support for its efforts in the future."

Replying on behalf of AUSTRALIA, His Excellency The Honourable Sir ALEXANDER DOWNER said that the Prime Minister of Australia had made a statement to the Australian Parliament, the text of which had not yet been received in London, and had sent the following message:-

" On behalf of the Parliament and people of Australia I would like to express to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission our sincere appreciation for the manner in which it is carrying out the task of commemorating and honouring the dead of the two World Wars and to assure you of our continuing support and confidence in the future. On this Fiftieth Anniversary, the Commission can look back with a true sense of pride at its achievements over the years."

Replying on behalf of NEW ZEALAND, His Excellency The Honourable Sir THOMAS MACDONALD said that the message from the Prime Minister of New Zealand read as follows:-

" On the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission I offer, on behalf of the people of New Zealand, our deep gratitude and very best wishes to all those who have been and are associated with its work.

The work of the Commission, begun in the turmoil of the First World War and added to so tragically in the Second World War, has brought to all those throughout the Commonwealth who lost relatives and friends the greatest possible comfort.

May I assure the Commission that the Government and people of New Zealand fully appreciate the work that it is doing to honour the memory of those who died in the cause of freedom and peace and that we will continue to give every support."

Replying on behalf of SOUTH AFRICA, His Excellency Dr. H.G. LUTTIG said the message from the Prime Minister of South Africa was as follows:-

" South Africa is deeply and gratefully aware of the fact that the Imperial War Graves Commission, later designated "The Commonwealth War Graves Commission", has ever since its inception on May 21st 1917, when World War I was still in progress, faithfully fulfilled its admirable aim to pay fitting tribute, both jointly and severally, to those Servicemen of member-countries who made the supreme sacrifice whilst serving with the Armed Forces of their country in land, sea and air battles all over the world.

Even now after 50 years of dedicated service the Commission continues to care for the graves of approximately 1,750,000 ex-Servicemen in about 23,000 cemeteries. Of these graves about 21,000 are those of South Africans who lie buried at various places in Europe, Asia and Africa.

The neat and impressive cemeteries, Delville Wood, El Alamein and Castiglione amongst others, where South African soldiers lie buried and the constant devoted care for their graves under the Commission's direction bring satisfaction and consolation to those families who suffered bereavement in the wars in which South Africa participated.

On behalf of my Government and its peoples of all races, it is my privilege to convey to the Commission on this, its 50th birthday, my sincere and heartfelt thanks for the admirable work it has accomplished since 1917.

God grant that it may continue its good work unimpeded by further strife and bloodshed."

Replying on behalf of INDIA, Major-General I.C. KATOCH said the following message had been received from the Minister of Defence of India:-

" It gives me great pleasure to send good wishes on behalf of myself and the Armed Forces and people of India to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission on the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of its foundation.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission since its inception in 1917, has rendered a great social service for the last 50 years in commemorating every soldier, sailor and airman of the Commonwealth who fell in the last two World Wars by ensuring that their remains rest with full dignity and honour. The Commission has thus earned the gratitude not only of the near and dear ones of the deceased but also of the millions who have paid their silent or expressed tribute to their sacrifice. The Commission has thus contributed to the keeping alive

of the ideals for which they died and in strengthening the bonds formed in an emergency between people of different nations, classes and races. The Commission has also accomplished a great deal in its task of constructing cemeteries and memorials in many lands and in the desolation of the battlefields and making them places of quiet beauty, which receive meticulous and incessant care. All of us are deeply grateful for the devoted care the Commission has given to the commemoration of India's dead of the two World Wars and wish to assure the Commission of our continuing sympathy and support for its work in the years to come.

I am sure that the Commission will continue to maintain its traditions in future also and be worthy of the trust and confidence placed in it."

Replying on behalf of PAKISTAN, Colonel S.A. HASAN said the following message had been received from the Minister of Defence of Pakistan:-

" On the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, I have much pleasure in placing on record our sincere appreciation of the devoted and selfless service of the Commission for the care and upkeep of the graves, the cemeteries and memorials of the brave men who laid down their lives during the two World Wars. Over fifteen thousand of these courageous men hailed from what is now Pakistan. Their families feel a sense of gratitude and comfort that the graves of their parents or relatives are being maintained by the Commission with so much love and interest. The Commission can count on Pakistan's support and continued confidence."

At the request of the PRESIDENT, the SECRETARY read the following suggested Resolution, which had been laid on the table:-

3. That the Commission, having received messages from the seven Participating Governments, presented by their respective representatives,

RESOLVE:

That the representatives of the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, India and Pakistan be, and they are hereby, requested to convey to their respective Governments and Peoples the Commission's appreciation of their generous messages on the occasion of its 50th Anniversary and an assurance that the Commission, encouraged by the reaffirmation of their confidence and support, will continue with renewed determination to discharge the task with which it has been entrusted.

At the invitation of the PRESIDENT, the Resolution was proposed by General Sir JOHN ANDERSON, seconded by Air Marshal Sir CHARLES GUEST and carried unanimously.

MESSAGES FROM HEADS OF CHURCHES

The PRESIDENT said that the messages received from the Heads of Churches were set out in a Paper which had been circulated in advance of the Meeting and he would ask the Secretary to read the suggested Resolution, which had been laid on the table.

The SECRETARY read the following suggested Resolution:-

4. That the Commission, having taken note of messages received from Heads of Churches, as set out in a Paper before the Meeting,

RESOLVE:

That the Secretary be, and he is hereby, instructed to reply to the messages received from Heads of Churches on the occasion of the Commission's 50th Anniversary and to express the Commission's appreciation of their inspiring terms.

At the invitation of the PRESIDENT, the Resolution was proposed by Sir ROBERT BLACK, seconded by Mr. PRITCHARD and carried unanimously.

MESSAGES FROM EX-SERVICE ORGANISATIONS

The PRESIDENT said that messages which had been received from ex-Service organisations in the participating and other countries were set out in a Paper which had been circulated in advance of the Meeting and he would ask the Secretary to read the suggested Resolution, which had been laid on the table.

The SECRETARY said that further messages, received within the last few days, were set out in an additional Paper, which had been laid on the table with the suggested Resolution, which read as follows:-

5. That the Commission, having taken note of messages received from Ex-Service Organisations, as set out in a Paper before the Meeting,

RESOLVE:

That the Secretary be, and he is hereby, instructed to arrange for a suitable message of thanks to be sent to each of the Ex-Service Organisations from which messages have been received on the occasion of the Commission's 50th Anniversary.



At the invitation of the PRESIDENT, the Resolution was proposed by Colonel S.A. HASAN, seconded by Miss JOAN WOODGATE and carried unanimously.

MESSAGES FROM FOREIGN WAR GRAVES ORGANISATIONS AND FOREIGN MEMBERS OF JOINT COMMITTEES

The PRESIDENT said that a number of messages had been received from foreign war graves organisations and from the foreign members of Joint Committees and these were set out in a Paper which had been circulated in advance of the Meeting. He would ask the Secretary to read the suggested Resolution, which had been laid on the table.

The SECRETARY said that further messages, received within the last few days, were set out in an additional Paper which had been laid on the table along with the suggested Resolution, which read as follows:-

6. That the Commission, having taken note of messages received from Foreign War Graves Organisations and Foreign Members of Joint Committees, as set out in a Paper before the Meeting,

RESOLVE:

That the Secretary be, and he is hereby, instructed to arrange for suitable expressions of the Commission's appreciation to be conveyed to the Foreign War Graves Organisations and Foreign Members of Joint Committees from whom messages have been received on the occasion of its 50th Anniversary.

At the invitation of the PRESIDENT, the Resolution was proposed by Major-General I.C. KATOCH, seconded by Colonel Sir RICHARD GLYN and carried unanimously.

REPORT ON ARRANGEMENTS MADE TO MARK THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE COMMISSION

The PRESIDENT said that Item 7 on the Agenda was a report on arrangements made to mark the 50th Anniversary of the Commission and he would ask the Vice-Chairman to introduce the Paper, which had been circulated in advance of the Meeting.

In reply, Admiral Sir GUY GRANTHAM said he had only a few comments to add to what was already set out in the Paper.

On Sunday, or the nearest convenient day, prayers would be said in places of worship of all traditions and faiths throughout the world, for the work of the Commission and of kindred organisations caring for war graves of other countries, for the repose of the dead of the two World Wars, for their bereaved relatives and for peace.

The arrangements for Evensong in Westminster Abbey on Sunday, 21st May, were fully described in the Paper. He did not know of any precedent for a Service in which all Christian traditions took part and at which all other faiths were represented.

The Commission were most grateful to Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom for the Reception they were giving on Tuesday, 23rd May, to mark the Commission's 50th Anniversary.

He would like to refer to the Exhibition of Photographs at the Imperial War Museum and hoped all Commissioners would be able to make a point of seeing it. A number, he knew, had already done so. The number of visitors since the beginning of May had been at an even higher level than the 40,000 who had seen it in April and the catalogue was having to be reprinted. He would like at this point to pay tribute to the staff of the Imperial War Museum, who had made all the photographic enlargements in their own dark room and who had been most co-operative in the mounting of the Exhibition.

He hoped all Members who visited the Chelsea Flower Show during the coming week would be able to see the colour photographs in the Garden Design Section.

The History of the first fifty years of the Commission's work 1917-1967 entitled "The Unending Vigil" had been published on 15th May. A letter from Sir Arthur Bryant had contained highly complimentary remarks which he had repeated in an article in the current week's issue of "The Illustrated London News". He was sure Commissioners would agree that Mr. Philip Longworth and Professor Edmund Blunden deserved the Commission's thanks and congratulations. He was sorry that Professor Blunden was prevented by illness from being present.

It was a little too early to give a complete account of the articles which had appeared and would appear in newspapers and magazines and in the journals of ex-Service and other associations in all the participating countries and in other countries where there were communities likely to be interested. Commissioners would have seen Professor Blunden's article in "The Times" on Saturday, 13th May, which had been syndicated for other newspapers, and the short article in Monday's "Daily Telegraph", recalling that Sir Fabian Ware had been a former editor of "The Morning Post". There had been references to the anniversary in various other journals.

It was equally too early to give any full account of radio and television coverage in the various countries.

Finally, he would like to mention the Reception held on Wednesday last, 10th May, for the Head Office Staff, which had been a very happy and successful occasion, as he was sure those Commissioners who had been present would agree.

The PRESIDENT thanked the Vice-Chairman and asked whether Members wished to make any comment on this item, for which no Resolution was suggested. (There was no response.)

MESSAGE TO THE STAFF

The PRESIDENT said that Item 8 on the Agenda was a message to the Staff and he would again ask the Vice-Chairman to introduce this item and to propose the suggested Resolution, which had been laid on the table.

In reply, Admiral Sir GUY GRANTHAM said that, as Vice-Chairman, he had had to do a good deal more travelling than any of the the other Commissioners and in doing so he had seen more of the staff, not only those of the Commonwealth countries but others who lived and worked in many foreign countries where the Commission had memorials and cemeteries. He could not express too strongly how impressed he had been by their devotion to the duty they performed for the Commission and by the excellent results that they achieved. So noticeable, too, was their readiness to help visitors and to show them round and answer their questions. Almost more remarkable was the fact that some of these men worked in extremely isolated spots not often visited and yet they still got on with the job without supervision in the most wonderful way. He thought the Commission were indeed fortunate to have such a splendid team to work for them.

He wished to propose the following Resolution:-

8. That the Commission, at this 487th (50th Anniversary) Meeting,

RESOLVE:

That the following message be sent to all members of the Commission's Staff:-

" The Commission on its 50th Anniversary sends greetings to all members of the Staff throughout the world. It thanks them for their loyal and devoted service to the commemoration of the Fallen of the two World Wars. It is confident that, encouraged by the generous messages and assurances of support which have been received, they will continue to maintain the high standards of work which have brought comfort to the relatives and former comrades of the War Dead and have earned the praise of countless visitors to the war graves, cemeteries and memorials in their care."

At the invitation of the PRESIDENT, Sir ARTHUR RUCKER said he knew that everyone would wish to support this Resolution and he had the honour to second it. It was carried unanimously.

REPORT FOR PRESS

The PRESIDENT said that Item 9 on the Agenda was a formal item concerning a Report for the Press and he would ask the Secretary to read the suggested Resolution.

The SECRETARY read the following suggested Resolution:-

9. That the Commission, at this 487th (50th Anniversary) Meeting,

RESOLVE:

That the Secretary be, and he is hereby, instructed to arrange for a report of the Meeting to be released to the Press throughout the participating countries.

At the invitation of the PRESIDENT, the Resolution was proposed by the AMBASSADOR OF SOUTH AFRICA, seconded by Mr. DAVID GRIFFITHS and carried unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT said that Item 10 on the Agenda was Other Business. He understood that the High Commissioner for New Zealand had a matter to raise.

His Excellency The Honourable Sir THOMAS MACDONALD said:-

" Sir, there is one aspect of the Commission's affairs which should not be allowed to pass unmentioned today. As Your Royal Highness is aware, half the Members of the Commission from its very earliest days have been non-official Members, all eminent men who have served the Commission in an entirely honorary capacity. The Commission has been fortunate that its purposes have attracted the interest and indeed devotion of such men. It has been equally fortunate in its Honorary Advisers and Consultants in architecture, engineering, horticulture, literature and other fields. It would be invidious to mention individual names but the list of these Members and Advisers over the past fifty years includes some of the most illustrious names of their time and I am very glad, Sir, to take this opportunity of acknowledging, on behalf of my own and the other participating governments, the debt which is owed to them."

(Representatives of other participating governments signified their concurrence.)

The PRESIDENT thanked Sir THOMAS MACDONALD very much for his remarks and asked whether Members had any other business to raise.

The Right Honourable DENIS HEALEY said:-

" Sir, I have been asked to express to Your Royal Highness the very warm thanks of the Members present for your attendance here today and for the able and felicitous manner in which you have presided over this 487th (50th Anniversary) Meeting of the Commission. I would like to recall to Your Royal Highness that the

first Meeting of the Commission over which you presided was the 203rd Meeting held on 9th March, 1937. On that occasion, in response to an address of welcome by Mr. Stanley Baldwin, you said:

'..... On assuming the Presidency of the Imperial War Graves Commission, I regard it as a great privilege to follow my brothers in this position. I know that my eldest brother, as Prince of Wales, was associated with the Commission from its earliest days, and that the keen personal interest which he took in every aspect of its work was shared to the full by His Present Majesty ... I can assure you that, as President, I will keep myself closely informed of its activities and will do my best to promote its welfare.'

Those were the words you used at the first Meeting over which you presided and, in the thirty years which have passed since Your Royal Highness gave that pledge, you have most fully honoured it. You have maintained an unflagging interest in the Commission's work and you have made yourself readily accessible to its officers whenever there has been need to consult you. You have regularly received the Members of the Commission's Foreign Joint Committees on the occasions of their meetings in London. You have made special journeys to visit war graves in France, Belgium, The Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Greece and Turkey and you have visited many Commonwealth war cemeteries and memorials in other countries in the course of your travels. You were present at the unveiling of no less than seven of the great memorials of the Second World War, three of which, at Bayeux, Groesbeek and Athens, you yourself unveiled. I thank you, Sir, on behalf of the Commission and of all the peoples of the participating countries whom they serve."

The PRESIDENT said:-

" I am grateful to you, Mr. Healey, for your very kind words. My duties as President of the Commission have always been of special interest to me as a soldier. I can assure you that I consider it an honour to be connected with the Commission's work, which continues to be an outstanding example of Commonwealth co-operation."

The PRESIDENT said that, as there was no other business, he declared the Meeting closed.