

Extracts

DRAFT.

CONFIDENTIAL.

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
at the 166th
MEETING OF THE IMPERIAL WAR GRAVES COMMISSION

held at

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

on

WEDNESDAY, 18TH OCTOBER, 1933.

P R E S E N T :-

Lieut. General Sir GEORGE MACDONOGH, G.B.E., K.C.B., K.C.M.G.
(in the Chair.)

Colonel G.L. PEPYS, C.B., D.S.O.
(representing the Secretary of State for
India).

Lieut. Colonel G.P. VANIER, D.S.O., M.C.
(representing the High Commissioner for
Canada).

V. G. HOUSDEN, Esq.,
(representing the High Commissioner for
New Zealand.)

W. PIGOTT, Esq.,
(representing the High Commissioner for
Newfoundland).

Admiral Sir MORGAN SINGER, K.C.B., K.C.V.O.

Captain Lord Stanley, M.C., M.P.

W. P. SPENS, Esq., O.B.E., K.C., M.P.

General Sir CECIL ROMER, K.C.E., K.B.E., C.M.G.

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, O.B.E. (Assistant Secretary, Finance).

Lieut. Colonel H.F. ROBINSON, C.M.G. (Director of Works),

Major H.F. CHETTLER, C.M.G., O.B.E. (Director of Records),

Captain E.J. KING, M.C.

Mr. F.C. SILLAR,

Mr. F. TYRRELL,

Mr. B.S. CONYNGHAM GREENE.

LORD STANLEY: Gentlemen, I understand that the Vice-Chairman is unable to be here this afternoon. I would like to propose Sir George Macdonogh to take the Chair, and in doing so, I am sure I am voicing the opinion of everybody when I say how delighted we are to see him back with us and how we sympathised with him in his long illness.

ADMIRAL SIR MORGAN SINGER: I beg to second that.

Sir George Macdonogh then took the Chair.

THE CHAIRMAN said that he would like to thank the Meeting very much for their kind vote of sympathy.

He was sorry to have to report that Sir Fabian Ware was laid up with a bad cold.

THE CHAIRMAN asked if the Minutes of the previous meeting, which had been circulated, could be signed as correct. This was agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN said there were one or two matters to which he would like to refer before coming to the Agenda. He was glad to be able to report that Mr. Lawson was progressing well and hoped soon to have recovered.

Since the last meeting of the Commission it had been announced that Mr. Bruce had accepted the appointment of High Commissioner for Australia.

Princess Marie Louise had recently paid a visit to the Gallipoli Peninsula and had been conducted round the Cemeteries by Mr. Millington to whom she had expressed her satisfaction at everything she had seen.

Among other recent visitors to the Peninsula was Sir Percival Marling who had written a most appreciative letter.

In connexion with the unveiling of the R.101 Memorial by the Prime Minister, the Vice-Chairman had arranged for Colonel Higginson to lay two wreaths, one on the Commission's tablet in Beauvais Cathedral and the other at the local French War Memorial.

Reports of numerous ceremonies which took place in France during August and September had now reached the Commission. Many of these ceremonies were in connexion with parties of pilgrims visiting the various cemeteries and memorials in different parts of the line.

The number of visitors signing the Visitors' Books in France and Belgium during the month of September was 8,008 at the Memorials and 6,913 at the Cemeteries, or 14,921 in all.

It had recently been brought to the Commission's notice that the National Committee for the care of war graves in Berlin were writing direct to the superintendents of various cemeteries in England enquiring about the condition of the German war graves in those cemeteries. The Commission was responsible on behalf of the United Kingdom Government for the maintenance of these German graves and it had now been arranged, through the German Embassy in London, that enquiries of this nature should pass through the ordinary official channels.

In connexion with the tablet which had recently been erected at Curlu, a letter expressing the gratitude of the local Municipal Council had now been forwarded to the Commission by M. Fromageot who is the Maire of Curlu and a member of the Anglo-French Mixed Committee.

A very grateful and sympathetic letter had been received from the President of the French Old Comrades Association, "Au Feu", in connexion with the tablet which the Commission had erected to the memory of the workman who was killed while repairing the Vis-en-Artois Memorial. It was clear that the erection of this tablet had given great satisfaction, and an appreciative account of the Commission's action had been published in the Bulletin of "Au Feu."

The British Legion had expressed a wish that a party of gardeners should take part in this year's Albert Hall ceremony on the 11th November in a similar manner to last year. This

could be arranged without any expense falling on the Commission's funds.

The Dean of Westminster had agreed that a wreath made of flowers from the Cemeteries in France should be laid at the tablet in Westminster Abbey on Armistice Day.

Report of the 225th Meeting of
the Finance Committee.

THE CHAIRMAN said that there were one or two matters to which he would like to invite attention, the first of which was contained in Item No.6. This was a recommendation by the Commission's Director of Works that certain necessary work should be undertaken in the Commission's Cemeteries in Germany. The Finance Committee recommended the expenditure of a sum not exceeding £500.

Item No. 8 dealt with a report from the Director of Works with reference to the Somme Memorial and recommended an expenditure not exceeding 30,000 francs for ground work in the immediate vicinity of the Memorial. This would consist principally in the planting of trees.

Item No. 9 dealt with the question of the continuation of exchange relief and recommended that this should be extended. The resolution read as follows:- "(1) That exchange relief be extended in the case of wages personal on the Permanent Maintenance Staff in Belgium for a further period ending 28th October, 1933, at the approved rates and thereafter for a further period to the 11th November at the rates approved at the 224th Meeting of the Finance Committee. (2) That exchange relief in respect of salaries and wages except as in (1) above be extended at the approved rates for a further period ending 11th November, 1933".

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

3. "That the Report of the 225th Meeting of the Finance Committee be adopted".

Report of the 20th Meeting of the Staff Committee.

THE CHAIRMAN said that an item in this report to which he would like to draw attention was that under the heading of "Emoluments of the Staff in Belgium". He wished particularly to invite attention to the passage which read: "The matter was fully discussed and the feeling of the majority of the Committee was that the decision to adjust the emoluments of the staff, as arrived at, should be upheld, but that representatives of the men should be given an opportunity, before the expiration of the three months, of meeting the Staff Committee, and of placing before them any fresh facts, bearing on the adjustment; and that the men concerned should be informed accordingly in a letter which should again remind them of the reasons for the Commission's decision". It would be remembered that representatives of the men had sent a letter to the Commission in which they stated that they wished to discuss not only the question of emoluments but the whole question of their conditions of service. The Staff Committee felt that they could not allow a general discussion on a matter of this sort but that if the men had any definite complaint on a particular matter they would be pleased to consider it.

The heading in the Report under "Draft Regulations" meant that the Committee had agreed the draft regulations regarding discipline but that with regard to the draft regulations dealing with the question of leave, further information should be obtained from Colonel Higginson.

The last item in the Report referred to the case of one of the Commission's gardeners, Mr. Holcomb, who had been seriously ill for some time past. The Staff Committee recommended that he should continue to receive half-pay for the next six months. The consideration of Mr. Holcomb's case had led the Staff Committee to believe that some addition to the rules of the Superannuation Scheme, to be applied to those who became permanently disabled, was desirable. In the present case, if Mr. Holcomb was discharged he would cease to have any income at all and it was exceedingly probable that he would take the surrender value of his insurance policies. These would, of course, be very much less than the full value of his policies which would be paid to his widow in the event of his death. Colonel Oswald had undertaken to look into the question and to make some suggestion that would meet cases of this sort.

LORD STANLEY asked if any answer had been received from the gardeners in Belgium with regard to the proposal to reduce their exchange relief.

THE CHAIRMAN said that there was nothing fresh beyond the request by the gardeners for a further discussion of the matter with the Staff Committee, and at the same time a request to discuss the whole question of their conditions of service. They had further stated definitely that they were not prepared to accept the Commission's decision with regard to the exchange relief.

It was proposed by Lord Stanley, seconded by Sir Cecil Romer and agreed:-

4 "That the Report of the 20th Meeting of the Staff Committee be adopted".

Employment of Gardeners' Sons in France.

THE CHAIRMAN said that arising out of the discussion of this matter at the last meeting, Colonel Oswald had had an interview with Dr. Hill, the Director of Kew Gardens.

COLONEL OSWALD said that at the Vice-Chairman's request he had seen Dr. Hill and discussed with him the case as laid before the last meeting. The proposals resulting from the discussion were outlined in the paper before the meeting and Dr. Hill considered that if adopted they would lead to the ultimate employment of a number of the sons of the Commission's gardeners.

THE CHAIRMAN said that Sir Fabian Ware particularly wished to know whether the Commission would authorise him to make enquiries regarding these proposals as he hoped shortly to be going to France when he would like to discuss them with some of the gardeners.

It was agreed that the Vice -Chairman should proceed on these lines.

Anglo-Belgian Mixed Committee

THE CHAIRMAN said that Lord Granville had recently retired from the position of British Ambassador in Brussels and had been succeeded by Sir George Clerk. A resolution expressing thanks to Lord Granville for his valuable services on the Anglo-Belgian Mixed Committee was before the meeting.

It was proposed by Colonel Vanier, seconded by Mr. Housden and agreed:-

- 5 "That on the retirement of the Right Hon. Earl Granville, G. C. M. G., G. C. V. O., etc. from his duties as His Majesty's Ambassador in Brussels and an Honorary Member of the Anglo-Belgian Mixed Committee the Commission desire to place on record their deep appreciation of his constant interest in their work and the help that on many occasions they have received from him".

THE CHAIRMAN said that there was a vacancy among the official British members of the Anglo-Belgian Mixed Committee caused by the retirement of Mr. Webster. It had been suggested that Mr. G.W. Klerck should be appointed in his place.

It was proposed by Mr. Pigott, seconded by Mr. Spens and agreed:-

6 "That Mr. G.W. Klerck be and is hereby appointed an Official Member of the Anglo-Belgian Mixed Committee to fill the vacancy caused by the retirement of Mr. R. Webster".

This concluded the business.