

120th
DRAFT.
CONFIDENTIAL.

Minutes.
MINUTES of PROCEEDINGS

of the

120TH. MEETING of the IMPERIAL WAR GRAVES COMMISSION

held at

H.M. OFFICE OF WORKS

on

Wednesday 8th. May, 1929.

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PRESENT :

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

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

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

R. WEBSTER, Esq.,
Representing the High Commissioner for South Africa.

W. HUTCHINGS, Esq.,
Representing the High Commissioner for Newfoundland.

RUDYARD KIPLING, Esq.,

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.,

Colonel LORD ARTHUR BROWNE, K.B.E.,

Principal Assistant Secretary.

THERE WERE ALSO PRESENT :-

Lieut. Colonel C.P. OSWALD, O.B.E.,

Lieut. Colonel H.F. ROBINSON,

Major H.F. CHENTLE, O.B.E.,

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The Minutes of the last Meeting were considered and agreed.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN said that he had received an official acknowledgment through the Foreign Office from Lord Crewe of the resolution of appreciation passed by the Commission in respect of his services with the Anglo-French Mixed Committee.

The Ceremonies during the past month included the unveiling of a Cross of Sacrifice erected by the Commission at Darwen, Lancashire. This had been unveiled on the 20th. April by the Mayor. The Commission were represented and there was a large attendance of the public.

On the 22nd. April a Mrs. Macaul, of the United States, accompanied by General Hurst, representing the British Legion, had placed a wreath on the Canadian Plot in Brookwood Military Cemetery on behalf of American mothers of sons who had joined the Canadian Forces during the War.

On the 21st. April, Colonel Higginson had attended, as representative of the Commission, a ceremony at Haussy to inaugurate the Memorial to the inhabitants of the town killed during the War. A plaque dedicated to the English was attached to the memorial, and, in the speeches which followed, reference was made to the debt owed by the French people to the Armies of the British Empire.

On the occasion of the laying of the foundation stone of the Australian National Memorial in Australia at Canberra, which took place on Anzac Day, he had sent through the High Commissioner for Australia the following cablegram: "On occasion ceremony National Memorial Canberra and Anzac Day Imperial War Graves Commission ask me assure Australian Government and people that graves their kinsmen wherever situate throughout the world are lovingly and reverently tended by ex-service comrades. Ware". The following reply had been received from the Prime Minister:

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"The Commonwealth Government and people of Australia are grateful Anzac Day message of Imperial War Graves Commission and are deeply touched by assurance graves their kinsmen throughout world will continue receive loving and reverent care their ex-service comrades. The unveiling of Commemorative Stone on National Memorial Site at Australia's capital was one of most deeply impressive ceremonies ever associated with commemoration Anzac Day".

The Commission would notice that the British Legion had published the agreed statement in regard to the placing of wreaths, and more particularly their poppy wreaths, in the War Cemeteries abroad.

He (the Vice-Chairman) had arranged for the exhibition of a notice in the cemeteries asking relatives and others placing wreaths in the cemetery between the 1st. March and 31st. October every year to lay them at the foot of the Cross of Sacrifice, or on the steps of the Stone of Remembrance.

The next step taken had been to publish a statement in the United Kingdom Press regarding the compilation of a list of firms authorised to place wreaths on the graves. This had been issued on the 27th. April.

Only four firms had so far applied for permission, The British Legion, the successor to the St. Barnabas Hostels, the Y.M.C.A., and Captain Chanter. The British Legion and Captain Chanter were the only ones who stocked wreaths. The others supplied them as demanded. The organisation who did more business than any other had not applied for authority, and it was therefore proposed in about a month's time to publish a further statement in the Press giving the names of the firms who had applied and been accorded permission and definitely warning the public that if they employ other firms, they would do so at their own responsibility. By this means he intended

to increase the Commission's control.

MR. KNOWLES raised a point that if wreaths of varying prices were supplied by the British Legion would the extra cost of the higher priced wreaths mean that a larger profit would be available which could be used by the Legion for purposes not necessarily approved by the Commission.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN said that they could not insist on firms supplying only one kind of wreath though they had impressed and would continue to impress on them the desirability of so doing. The Commission would only recognize one standard wreath. He understood the Legion made the same proportion of profits in each class of wreath they supplied, and that such profits as they made, after paying expenses, would only be to raise money for their general fund for finding employment for disabled men. The policy he thought the Commission should follow was not to exert direct compulsion on firms but if the firms did not meet their wishes to withdraw the recognition and valuable help they were in a position to give them.

Mr. Rudyard Kipling had recently been to Egypt and Palestine and had visited most of the Commission's Cemeteries. The Commission would be very interested to hear of his tour.

MR. RUDYARD KIPLING gave an account of his tour as follows :-

During my tour I think I saw all the big cemeteries in Egypt and Palestine from the single and solitary grave of one man at Assouan, to the big cemetery at Haifa in Palestine. With very few exceptions, which I will deal with later, it is not too much to say that each cemetery is a separate and individual beauty spot of its own, and is reverently and carefully tended and in the best possible state of order. I am speaking well within what I know. The only exceptions are cemeteries on the edge of the desert, such as Port Said Cemetery which lies between a salt lake and a salt sea. Everything planted in it has to

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contend with wind, sand, sun-glare, sand drifted by the wind, and salts drawn up from the ground. The trees there are cut down and deformed as soon as they put their heads above the wall. The only remedy for this is water and more water. The crux for the desert cemeteries is always water. Time, and time alone, will enable us to feed and coax our trees, provided they have plenty of water, to stand up, and presently to develop their tops.

The ground of the semi-desert cemeteries will not grow grass as we understand grass. But there is plenty of negil, an Egyptian grass which is practically couch. This has to be brought by hand with mud out of the canal and laid down on the sand of the cemetery, then watered and kept alive. It unfortunately turns white in the winter, but in the spring and through the summer you have got a carefully tended green spot which in those climates shows like turf, and is a thing that one rejoices in.

Then you have your purely desert cemetery, like Kantara, which is literally cut in the howling desert. When the wind blows, carrying the sand in front of it, they have to sweep out as much as two feet of sand in the angles of the walls. There is no other protection of any kind. Even there the employees of the Commission are fighting as hard as they can to peg down the sand, almost grain by grain with bougainvillea and creeping mesembryanthemum. Also they have to put down a cubic metre of mud on the sand, in order to plant each cypress tree, which has to be coaxed to live against the burning winds.

The most enthusiastic and the most devoted of the horticulturists of the Commission was Mr. Robert Kett, who, as you know, unfortunately died the other day, after being knocked down by a motor car in Cairo. He was a man of very singular devotion and enthusiasm. He said to me, as we were inspecting Kantara Cemetery together :- "I know this looks

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like an ashpit, but give us five years and we will have it green so that all the world can see it as they pass". Remember that Kantara lies in plain sight of all the traffic that passes along the Suez Canal. It was the jumping off place of Lord Allenby's forces; it is the first and most important thing to many Australians; it represents the pivot of our movements in Palestine and incidentally in Egypt, and on all accounts it is a cemetery where it seems to me we must fight, as I say, grain by grain with the sand. That is the hardest to deal with of the whole lot. If it were possible to get water laid on from the sweet water canal, we could get Kantara at least to look green, and the trees would be established in three or four years.

Another trouble with Kantara, Ismailia and Port Said, and to a certain extent, Tel-el-Kebir, is the salt drawing up from the ground and pitting and eroding the gravestones. As you know, when a gravestone gets beyond a certain stage of pitting, it is marked as being in bad condition. Later on it is marked as hopeless and an indent is sent for a fresh gravestone, which comes out. I think the contractors should be told that some of the headstones are sent out badly packed. At Kantara I saw two headstones unpacked, and the lower one had been smashed in halves. At Tel-el-Kebir I saw the way in which a native gardener, with an adze, tries to unpack a gravestone when it comes. You can imagine one of the fellaheen working at a screwed down packing case, it looks like luck whether he smashes the whole thing to pieces or not. It might be possible to have boxes for gravestones that are a little bit safer, and a little bit easier to unpack.

At Tel-el-Kebir Cemetery there is the old cemetery of the Egyptian war against Arabi next door to it, and, as is the custom with our Commission, it is looked after unofficially

by our men. We have about 30 or 40 graves at Tel-el-Kebir abutting on this old cemetery, which latter is now under tall palms and a heavy growth of trees, showing what in 30 or 40 years our Cemetery there will be like. The old grave-stones of 1863 in that climate are just as good and clean as ever. Our own cemetery is planted, but the trees are not up yet, but it is utterly and perfectly clean and kept.

Cairo Cemetery abuts against the civil cemetery, and is well made and laid out. One of the troubles there is the kites, which defile everything. They sit on the trees and on the Cross of Sacrifice, and as they are protected by law you can imagine the feelings of the caretaker, who can do nothing but shout at them. Then they go away a few yards and come back again. They are a permanent and serious detriment. The caretaker's hut in this cemetery is hardly fit for human accommodation, but I understand that it is going to be rebuilt.

The most beautiful of all cemeteries in the Egyptian area is at El Minya. There you have a cemetery all along the tramlines, and right in the heart of a crowded town, with unlimited water. It is a little jewel of a place, with bouganvilleas on the walls and all the flowers that you can think of; and it shows what with water a cemetery can become.

So much for the Egyptian cemeteries. Ismailia with plenty of water, Port Said with half allowance of water, Kantara with practically none, El Minya regularly watered and one single grave in Assouan, in a cemetery which has not one green thing in it. The Dam authorities at Assouan might possibly turn water into the Assouan cemetery, and if we could have water we could keep it more or less green.

In Palestine there was a cemetery something like Port Said at Beersheba on the edge of the desert, always wanting more water and never getting quite enough of it. There is no

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water in Beersheba that you can count upon to draw steadily. The trees are coming up, and if by any means we could get, not a free allowance of water, but if we could get double our present allowance of water, we could make something beautiful. There you are fighting on the edge of the desert, sand is always threatening; water is always wanting; and the trees are always burnt on one side. But everything that touches the upkeep of the cemetery - and this applies to every cemetery in Palestine - the lay-out of the paths, the weeding, the care of the walls and the architecture of the cemetery, is as good as it can possibly be made.

The most beautiful and dignified cemetery I have ever seen is the big cemetery, practically on the Mount of Olives at Jerusalem. To show you how carefully the gardeners there are doing their work, the gardener of the Jerusalem Cemetery - (I think he is a Georgian Prince) - found some common bee-orchids of Sussex in the country. He took them up, and in the little shelter or nursery, which exists at the back of every big cemetery, he naturalized and extended these orchids, and he is now going to put them on the graves of all the Sussex dead.

The next cemetery for impressive beauty is Gaza, among its hills. There you have water and a sea climate and moisture. Another cemetery that has been treated, and perfectly rightly treated, in a different way, is at Deir-el-Belah, 18 miles out of Gaza. You come to this cemetery in the midst of a rolling naked plain. There is no sense in adding a wall to the general desolation, and during the last fifteen years they have kept putting in trees round the cemetery, so that the place stands surrounded by thickets and big trees, utterly peaceful, utterly quiet, and fit to be inspected any minute.

The same thing applies to Haifa, which is not so beautiful, as it lies near a town. The same thing applies also

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to the little memorials in the fields. The memorials to the Mohammedan and Hindu soldiers at Port Said and Ismailia are kept just as perfectly as the big cemeteries of the English, or the single isolated memorials to the Egyptian Labour Corps at Iatroen.

I cannot end without telling you how much I think we owe to the man on the spot - to Colonel Hughes. His area runs from Gallipoli to Mesopotamia, and his work brings him into contact with every sort of problem and person, good and bad, between those two points. He has to be ambassador, student, architect, diplomat, and many other things. And everything depends, as it must in an Oriental country, on working well with the people that you have dealings with, and in giving no friction. I spent about a fortnight with Colonel Hughes discussing cemeteries and looking at cemeteries from every angle, and what struck me most was his immense preparedness, enthusiasm and knowledge. I think to him we owe overwhelmingly a very great amount of our success. The same thing applied in his special line to Robert Kett, for he was bound up in his horticultural work for the honour and glory of the cemeteries.

There is nothing to worry about other than the ordinary worries of administrative life, as far as beauty, preparation, attendance, and loving care go. All I have seen of these in the cemeteries in Egypt and Palestine is absolutely on the same footing as in our cemeteries in France; and that, too, in the face of far greater difficulties.

SIR GEORGE MACDONOGH enquired as to the success of the measures taken to counteract the effects of salt.

MR. KIPLING said this appeared to depend a great deal on the stones. In some places stones were pitting badly, in others not at all. As regards Kantara this was the most important Cemetery from the symbolical point of view and steps were being taken to see

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if certain huts could be cleared away to give a good view of the Cemetery from the Railway. The toolshed and other debris formerly in Haifa Cemetery had been cleared away.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN said that in connection with the difficulties which had arisen with the Turks Colonel Hughes had suggested that he (the Vice-Chairman) should go out to Angora as Chief Executive Officer of the Commission in order to discuss the whole question with local officials and he thought this would be possible later on in the year.

REPORT OF THE 176TH. MEETING
OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE.

The following resolution was moved by Sir Morgan Singer, seconded by Mr. Duffy, and agreed :-

- (2) "That the Report of the 176th. Meeting of the Finance Committee be adopted".

HULL CEMETERIES.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN said that at their 88th. Meeting the Commission had authorised the signing and sealing of an Agreement with the Hull Corporation relating to three local Cemeteries.

In these Cemeteries there were a number of burials in common graves which could not be marked with headstones under the Cemetery Regulations, and the Agreement contemplated the erection of Screen Walls on which the names of all those buried in the Cemetery would be engraved, the Cemetery Authorities having refused to consent to the commemoration of some by headstones while others could only be commemorated by Screen Walls. After some negotiations arrangements had been made to override the Cemetery regulations subject to the confirmation of the Council.

This confirmation had subsequently been obtained so that the Cemetery Authorities were now prepared to allow headstones on the common graves.

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Some consequential alterations in the form of Agreement were necessary and the Cemetery Authorities had asked that a fresh Agreement should be signed and sealed.

The following resolution was moved by Mr. Kipling, seconded by Mr. Knowles, and agreed:-

- (3) "That the Seal of the Commission be affixed to and the Proper Officer sign the Agreement of Grant and Maintenance between the Hull Corporation and the Commission relating to War Graves and Memorial sites therein referred to in the Corporation Cemeteries situate at Hull, and known as the Western Northern and Hadon Road Cemeteries".

NOTRE DAME DE LORETTE.
PRESENTATION OF WINDOWS.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN said that the Windows which the Commission were presenting for erection in the Chapel at Notre Dame de Lorette were ready. They were to be exhibited at the Imperial Institute from about the 11th. of June to the end of the month and there would be a private view on the 10th June. He hoped that members of the Commission would be able to see them on that day.

EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES FOR STAFF ABROAD.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN said that this question had been considered at their last meeting and the Commission had decided to adopt certain of Mr. Murray's recommendations. They had referred the matter to the Finance Committee with power to authorise any expenditure considered urgent. Under this authority the Finance Committee had authorised the expenditure of £350 to provide local transport and cost of rail fares etc.

In addition to this he had informally approached the Victoria League to arrange for correspondence between English children at home and the children of the Commission's

gardeners in France and also for the supply of books.

MEMORIALS TO THE MISSING.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN said that as they would see from the paper before them five of the Memorials to the Missing would be ready for Unveiling during the Autumn and he would be glad to have the Commission's views as to the officers who should be invited to carry out the Unveilings. He had already asked the Adjutant General for suggestions and he hoped that Sir George Macdonogh would also supply the names of officers he considered suitable.

STAFF OF THE COMMISSION.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN said there were the usual resolutions.

The following resolutions were moved by Mr. Webster, seconded by Mr. Hutchings, and agreed :-

(4.A.) TRANSFERS.

THAT the Commission hereby approve the transfer of the under-mentioned Officers and of the payment to them out of the funds of the Commission of the approved salaries as from the dates set out against their names.

May 1929.

NAME.	APPOINTMENT.	SALARY.	DATE.
HARPER E.F.	Workshops Foreman, France	@ £300/15/350.	
	to Transport Foreman, France	@ £300 per annum.	1.5.29.
McPEAK J.	Assistant Foreman Electrician France,	@ £250/15/300.	
	to Fitter, France.	@ £163/10/- per annum.	1.5.29.

(4.B).

TERMINATIONS.

THAT the Commission hereby approve the termination of the Appointments of the under-mentioned Officers as from the dates set out against their names.

May 1929.

NAME.	APPOINTMENT.	SALARY.	DATE
NUNN, R.	Draughtsman, Grade "A" France.	@ £300/15/350.	18. 4.29.
BELL, T.E.	Draughtsman, Grade "A", France.	@ £300/15/350.	19. 4.29.
DAVIS, T.H.C.	Draughtsman, Grade "A", France.	@ £300/15/350.	29. 4.29.
FLINN, F.H.	Clerk of Works, France.	@ £300/15/350.	25. 4.29.
SHAW, F.	Clerk of Works, France.	@ £300/15/350.	23. 4.29.
COLLINS, V.R.	Foreman of Works, France.	@ £250/10/300.	4. 5.29.
DURKIN, J.P.	Foreman of Works, France.	@ £250/10/300.	29. 4.29.
PRICE, A.E.	Foreman of Works, France.	@ £250/10/300.	30. 4.29.

DEATH.

KETT, R.	Area Superintendent, Eastern Theatre.	@ £600 per annum.	23. 4.29.
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MEMORIAL REGISTERS.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN said that since the last Meeting of the Commission twelve parts of the Thiepval Memorial Register had been published containing over 18,000 entries and Registers containing over 100,000 entries were in printers' hands. The Cemetery Registers were practically finished and the Memorial Registers were now in hand.

DEATH OF MR. KETT.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN said that a Commission employee in Palestine, Mr. Kett, had recently met with an accident from the effects of which he had died. Mr. Kett had been a participant in the Commission's Superannuation Scheme and the Australian Mutual Provident Society required the execution of a Form of Discharge for the Commission's policy moneys. It might be necessary for this to be under Seal.

The following resolution was moved by Mr. Knowles, seconded by Sir George Macdonogh, and agreed :-

- (5) "That the Seal of the Commission be affixed to and the Proper Officer sign the Form of Discharge for the policy moneys amounting to £401. 0. 0d. due from the Australian Mutual Provident Society on the policy taken out in the Commission's name in relation to Mr. Robert Kett, deceased, a member of the Permanent Maintenance Staff".

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN said that he was going to Italy very shortly to discuss the question of the Anglo-Italian Mixed Committee with a view to holding a meeting towards the end of the year.