

DRAFT.

CONFIDENTIAL.

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

at the

277TH MEETING

of the

IMPERIAL WAR GRAVES COMMISSION

held at

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

on

THURSDAY, 17TH JANUARY 1946

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PRESENT:

Major-General Sir FABIAN WARE, K.C.V.O., K.B.E., C.B., C.M.G., LL.D.,
Vice-Chairman, in the Chair.

Colonel E.H. JONES, D.C.M., E.D.
Representing the High Commissioner for Canada.

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

I.T. MEYER, Esq.
Representing the High Commissioner for South Africa.

Sir SAMUEL RUNGANADHAN,
High Commissioner for India.

Major-General Sir JOHN KENNEDY, G.B.E., C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O.

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

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

Colonel Sir JOHN SHUTE, C.M.G., D.S.O., J.P.

Air Chief Marshal Sir ARTHUR LONGMORE, G.C.B., D.S.O., D.L.

Colonel the Lord WIGRAM, G.C.B., G.C.V.O., C.S.I.

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There were also present:-

Sir WILLIAM HALCROW, M.Inst. C.E. (Honorary Consulting Engineer)
Lieut.-Colonel Sir HERBERT ELLISSEN, C.B.E. (Adviser on Post-War
Organisation and Reconstruction).

Brigadier J.K. McNAIR, C.B.E. (Director of Graves Registration
and Enquiries, War Office).

Brigadier F. HIGGINSON, C.M.G. (Controller)

Lieut.-Colonel H.F. CHETTLE, C.M.G., O.B.E. (Assistant Secretary,
Records).

F.G. SILLAR, Esq. (Assistant Secretary, Finance).

Lieut.-Colonel R.W. BATEMAN (Director of Works).

Lieut.-Colonel R.W. MURPHY, M.B.E.

Major F. TYRRELL, M.B.E.

Captain O.D. HOLT.

The VICE-CHAIRMAN said that the Minutes of the 276th Meeting had been circulated and if they were approved he would sign them.

The Minutes were agreed and signed.

The VICE-CHAIRMAN said he had received apologies from the Secretary of State for War, the Adjutant-General, Mr. Davies, who was still ill, and Sir Frederic Kenyon.

The VICE-CHAIRMAN said that members would have heard with deep regret the news of the death on January 9th of General Sir Nevil Macready. General Macready was not only one of the founder members of the Commission but was one of those personally responsible for its existence. As Adjutant-General to the B.E.F. in the years 1914 to 1916, it was he who had advised the Commander-in-Chief to obtain War Office approval for the creation of a Graves Registration Service as an integral part of the Armies in the Field; and soon after his appointment in 1916 as Adjutant-General to the Forces at the War Office, the Director-General of the newly formed Directorate of Graves Registration and Enquiries, which on General Macready's advice the Army Council had created, was made immediately responsible to him for the Directorate's work in all theatres of war. After leaving the War Office, he had remained a member of the Commission until 1921, and minutes of Commission meetings had been sent to him regularly until his death. In 1923 he was appointed a member of the Anglo-French Committee, and he had taken part in the last meeting of the Committee, held in Paris in November 1938. He unveiled the Loos Memorial in 1931, and the tablets erected in Boulogne and St. Omer Cathedrals in 1927 and 1929 respectively.

It was proposed from the Chair, seconded by Colonel JONES, and carried unanimously:

2. That the Commission record with profound regret the death of General the Right Hon. Sir Nevil Macready, one of their founder members and a member of their Anglo-French Committee since 1923. They recall that as Adjutant-General to the British Expeditionary Force in the years 1914-1916, it was largely due to his vision and deep understanding of human sentiment that a Graves Registration Service was made an integral part of the Armies in the Field, and they recognise that it was his sympathy and encouragement which led to the creation of the Directorate of Graves Registration and Enquiries, and later to the establishment of the Imperial War Graves Commission. They desire to pay grateful thanks to the pre-eminent part which he took in the initiation and early development of the Commission's organisation, and to express to his son and daughters their deep sympathy in their loss.

(The members of the Commission then rose in silent tribute).

The VICE-CHAIRMAN said that the Commission would have read with great regret and would have been deeply shocked to hear of the murder in Cairo of Sir Amin Osman Pasha. Sir Amin had been made a K.B.E. in appreciation of his service as Secretary-General to the Egyptian delegation which signed the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936. As permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Finance, his active sympathy and support had contributed largely to the successful conclusion of the Anglo-Egyptian War Graves Agreement in the following June. He became an Official Member of the reconstituted Anglo-Egyptian War Cemeteries Committee, on which

he served until 1939. He rejoined the Committee in 1942 and remained a member until February 1945. He was a man with strong patriotic feelings, and a deep and sincere friend of England. He (the Vice-Chairman) would like to write on the Commission's behalf to Sir Amin's widow expressing their great regret at his death and their gratitude for the work that he had done for them.

Members notified their agreement.

The VICE-CHAIRMAN said that the Commission had noticed with great pleasure that in the New Year's Honours Mr. Jordon, High Commissioner for New Zealand, and Mr. J.A. Beasley, who would be arriving shortly in this country to act as Australian Resident Minister in London, had been made Privy Councillors; that General Sir Ronald Adam had received the G.C.B., and Major-General Sir John Kennedy the G.B.E; and that Professor E.J. Salisbury, the Commission's Horticultural Adviser, had received a Knighthood.

REVIEW OF RECENT EVENTS

The VICE-CHAIRMAN said that arrangements had been made for Mr. Duffy to visit the Australian Memorial at Villers-Bretonneux and inspect the damage caused in 1940. Mr. Duffy was actually in France at that moment.

Members would have read the announcement in The Times of the previous day that the Commission's first lists of Civilian War Dead had been placed in the Shrine in the Chapel of St. George in Westminster Abbey; and they would have seen the photograph which had been published in The Times that morning. The Advisory Committee on Civilian War Dead would be meeting shortly to discuss the questions whether the final lists for the Abbey should be engrossed or printed, and whether they should follow the lines of the Cemetery Registers of the 1914-1918 war.

The 47th Meeting of the District Inspectors was held at Wooburn House on January 10th. Sir Arthur Longmore, who was present, had recently made further visits to burial-places in this country where there were R.A.F. graves.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur LONGMORE said that plans for the permanent layout of the R.A.F. Regional Cemeteries were being prepared and the work of planting trees and shrubs was proceeding satisfactorily. He hoped to visit cemeteries in other parts of the country during the Spring.

The VICE-CHAIRMAN said that Corporal J.E. Harris, Intelligence Corps, formerly a pupil gardener in the Commission's service and a son of a member of the permanent staff in France, was reported to have died on release from internment in Siam on the 26th August 1945. Corporal Harris left a widow and child of 5 years of age in France. His father had been interned in Germany and his sister had lost her life in an air raid in 1940.

A Netherlands War Graves Committee had been appointed whose functions, broadly, would be to supplement the Commission's responsibilities towards the cemeteries and graves of the 1939-1945 war in Holland by laying cut flowers on the graves on special days; by arranging for visits on favourable terms from Canada to Canadian graves in the Netherlands (and probably later from the United Kingdom to British graves); and by stimulating, as a result, friendships and correspondence between Canadian and Dutch mothers. The Committee had the approval of

the Netherlands Ministry of War and was supported by a number of representative organisations in Holland. Arrangements were being made for private individuals to take photographs of the graves.

The 42 present war graves in Nakuru European Cemetery, Kenya, had been taken over by the Commission.

Handing-over documents had been received for the following cemeteries in the Sudan: Wadi Halfa British Cemetery, Juba Christian Cemetery, Port Sudan Christian Cemetery, Atbara Christian Cemetery and Gebeit Military Cemetery. Records of burials, about 322 in number, in Madagascar had been handed over in Nairobi in the previous November.

Reports had been received of a large number of ceremonies held on November 1st and 11th in France and Belgium, both at war cemeteries and at town and village memorials. In many cases the Mayor and members of the Municipal Council, detachments of ex-Service Associations, ex-Prisoners of War and the Resistance Movement had attended. Groups of children were often present and laid wreaths. The British Consul at Rouen attended a service at St. Sever Cemetery, and another notable ceremony took place in Mazargues Cemetery Extension, Marseilles, at which the British Pro-Consul and the Mayor of Marseilles were present. At Ypres, after a service in the Cathedral, ceremonies were held at the Town Memorial and the Menin Gate, at which the Bishop of Bruges and the Burgomaster of Ypres were present.

Mr. H.W. Winkler and three other members of the Canadian House of Commons, Mr. S.H. Knowles, Mr. W. Bryce and Mr. G.Graydon, had recently made a tour of the cemeteries of both wars in France and Belgium. They had also visited the Menin Gate and Vimy Memorials. Mr. Winkler, on behalf of the party, expressed his admiration of the Commission's work and his satisfaction with the efforts which were being made to restore the cemeteries to their former standard of maintenance. He had added that the work of the gardening staff was beyond praise.

The VICE-CHAIRMAN said that Colonel Obbard, whom the Commission had appointed as their Inspector for India and Burma had extended his present tour to Siam and Malaya and had submitted some very useful reports. He had made contact with Sir Patrick Spens, a former member of the Commission, who was now Chief Justice of India. Sir Patrick had strongly recommended the appointment of a representative Advisory or Consultative Committee from whom Colonel Obbard could obtain advice before putting forward proposals for future organisation.

Sir Samuel RENGANADHAN said that he welcomed the idea of a Consultative Committee, but he thought that owing to the present political situation in India it might be well to appoint the Committee a little later on. He would keep in touch with the War Department of the Government of India and let the Commission know when there were any further developments.

REPORT OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE
HELD ON THE 20TH DECEMBER 1945.

The VICE-CHAIRMAN said that this meeting had been called to discuss the tenders received from Egypt for the construction of Sollum Cemetery. The Committee had examined the matter very carefully and had accepted the tender recommended by the military authorities. He would like to say that the Committee had been agreeably surprised at the amount, which was less than

had been anticipated.

It was proposed by Sir Arthur LONGMORE, seconded by Mr. KNOWLES, and carried unanimously:

3. That the Report of the Special Meeting of the Finance Committee held on December 20th 1945 be adopted.

REPORT OF THE 320TH MEETING OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE:
ANNUAL ESTIMATES FOR 1946/47.

The VICE-CHAIRMAN said that the papers submitted presented the programme of work for the coming year. He would like to say that the members of the Finance Committee had again expressed their strong approval of the way in which the Estimates had been presented by Mr. Sillar and his department.

The members had in front of them two documents. The first dealt with the graves of the 1914-1918 war and the second with the graves of the 1939-1945 war. On the left hand side of the first page they would see a revised Estimate of expenditure which showed that less would be spent on work connected with the 1914-1918 war than had been estimated. Similarly on the next page it would be seen that the Commission had considerably underspent in connection with the work on the graves of the 1939-1945 war. The main reason for this lower expenditure was one which the Commission shared with other Departments, namely the difficulty of obtaining adequate staff. Further, as the Commissioners would remember, the Government had not been prepared to allow them a first priority which would have helped them to obtain such recruits as were available. One outstanding difficulty had been that of obtaining a suitable Chief Accountant for France. A Treasury official, who had applied for the post and whose services they had hoped to secure, could not be released from that department. But the situation was gradually improving, and he (the Vice-Chairman) thought that they would shortly be able to fill this and other appointments with suitably qualified men.

The Estimates submitted showed what it was thought the Commission could spend and no more. But there might come an opportunity for going ahead more rapidly, and the Committee therefore put two proposals for his advice to the Treasury Representative: whether an overall 10% addition should be made to the Estimate, or whether the United Kingdom and other Governments would regard favourably an application for a supplementary Estimate, provided that the Commission could make out a good case for the additional expenditure. The reply was in favour of the second course.

Among other points which had been discussed was the percentage of contributions from the participating Governments. As members were aware, the Governments contributed to the Commission's funds in proportion to the number of their graves. It had been agreed in 1940 that, for the present, the Commission should continue on the basis of the old percentages, but that as soon as possible after the war was over the figures for each contributing Government should be reviewed and if necessary the percentages would be adjusted. He did not think that it was even yet possible to raise this question officially, and the Governments would be asked to agree to continuing for the time being on the basis of the old percentages.

Another point was that of the great amount of additional work thrown on the Finance Department by the separation of the

accounts for the two wars. Again he did not wish to press the point for the moment, because it raised the whole question of an endowment fund for the graves of the 1939-1945 war. He thought it was of the utmost importance that the Fund of £6,000,000, which had been built up to ensure the permanent upkeep of the 1914-1918 war graves, should not be used for any other purpose unless, which was unlikely, it was quite certain that the claims of the graves of that war were fully covered. The matter was further complicated by negotiations which were proceeding at that moment for the establishment of an Australian and New Zealand (Anzac) Agency in the Pacific, which would result in a revision of the administrative arrangements for work in that area.

The figures which the Commission were asked to approve were £386,000 for 1914-1918 war graves, and £615,000 for 1939-1945 war graves.

General Sir Robert GORDON-FINLAYSON said that he, too, wished to emphasise the Committee's satisfaction with the way in which the Estimates had been prepared. Part of the underspending was explained by the fact that cemeteries had not been handed over for construction as quickly as had been anticipated.

The only other point he would like to stress was that the Treasury Representative had agreed that if it was necessary later on for the Commission to ask for more money to carry out constructional work no objections would be raised. This plan would be preferable to asking now for more than they thought they could spend.

Sir Arthur LONGMORE asked whether provision had been made in the Estimates for any Memorials to the Missing.

The VICE-CHAIRMAN said that no such provision had been made, since the question of policy in this matter had not yet been tackled. The Commission had not decided whether the commemoration of the missing should follow the precedent of the 1914-1918 war or whether some alternative scheme should be adopted.

Admiral Sir Martin DUNBAR-NASMITH said that the Admiralty had set up two Committees, over both of which he had been asked to preside. One Committee would decide how the missing should be commemorated and the other what form other Naval memorials should take.

Mr. SILLAR, in reply to the VICE-CHAIRMAN, said that the only figure allotted under this head was for maintenance of the Memorials to the Missing of the 1914-1918 war.

Mr. KNOWLES said that he presumed that the sum of £10,000 allotted for expenditure by the Australian and New Zealand Agency was merely a token figure.

The VICE-CHAIRMAN said that the figure first proposed was £2,000, but the Australian representative on the Finance Committee considered that this was not enough; though he was not prepared to say that his Government was committed to the establishment of this Agency, he thought that the figure ought to be raised to £10,000 to meet contingencies which might in all probability arise.

Brigadier McNAIR said that he thought the figure for the item called Other Areas would be found to be insufficient, since according to the most recent information he had received from the Far East all the cemeteries in that area would be ready

for handing over to the Commission before the end of next October.

The VICE-CHAIRMAN said that it was therefore a question whether the Commission should revise the present figures or rely on a supplementary Estimate to cover expenditure in those areas.

Mr. SILLAR, in reply to the VICE-CHAIRMAN, said that a very substantial sum had been allowed for India and Burma which was intended to cover work that might have to be done in countries further east.

Colonel Sir John SHUTE said that if it was found that the sums provided for in the Estimate were being overspent the work would not cease on that account. It would proceed as rapidly as possible, and a supplementary Estimate would be asked for to cover the expenditure involved.

The VICE-CHAIRMAN said that it had been difficult to suggest a satisfactory figure for the Far East because the participating Governments had not yet all expressed their views on the policy to be followed in regard to the graves in Japan or Japanese territory. The reply of the Australian Government was still awaited.

Brigadier McNAIR said that he would like to stress the urgency of a decision on this point, since until a common policy had been reached it was impossible for the Graves Registration Units on the spot to carry out their work.

The VICE-CHAIRMAN said that he would do everything he could to obtain a decision from the Australian and New Zealand Governments. Meanwhile he would take it that members agreed that the present figure for the item "Other Areas" should stand, on the understanding that if necessary a supplementary Estimate could be asked for later in the year.

It was proposed by Sir Arthur LONGMORE, seconded by Sir Samuel RENGANADHAN, and carried unanimously:

4. That Items 1, and 3 to 8 of the Report of the 320th Meeting of the Finance Committee be adopted.

It was proposed by Lord WIGRAM, seconded by Mr. KNOWLES, and carried unanimously:

5. That the Estimate of expenditure for 1946/47 be approved at £386,000 for 1914/18 war graves, and £615,000 for 1939/45 war graves.

It was proposed by Major-General Sir John KENNEDY, seconded by Mr. MEYER, and carried unanimously:

6. That the Report of the 320th Meeting of the Finance Committee be adopted.

MAINTENANCE OF WAR GRAVES IN THE UNITED KINGDOM -
13TH QUARTERLY REPORT

The VICE-CHAIRMAN said that he hoped members had read this account of the excellent work which was being done in the United Kingdom by Colonel Murphy and his District Inspectors.

General Sir Robert GORDON-FINLAYSON asked why it was that objections were raised in Belfast to the use of wooden crosses.

Colonel MURPHY said that in the normal course a number of cemetery authorities prohibited wooden memorials owing to an old-established rule against the use of this form of marking. The Commission had found some difficulty in the early years of the war in obtaining permission for the use of their standard crosses. In Belfast permission had not been given, and the metal type of cross had been adopted instead.

DEFINITION OF A WAR GRAVE - AUXILIARY ORGANISATIONS

Colonel CHETTLÉ, in reply to the VICE-CHAIRMAN, said that the organisations named in the paper were serving overseas and were doing the same sort of work as the societies represented on the Council of Voluntary War Work. They were civilian organisations attached to and recognised by the Armed Forces, and the Commission had been asked by the Directorate of Graves Registration and Enquiries to make them eligible for limited war graves treatment.

Admiral Sir Martin DUNBAR-NASMITH asked whether other societies, such as the Council of British Societies for Relief Abroad, should not also be included.

General Sir Robert GORDON-FINLAYSON asked whether it would not be possible to obtain from the War Office a complete list of all societies whose members might be entitled to war graves so that the whole question could be dealt with at one time instead of piecemeal.

Brigadier McNAIR said that new societies with reasonable claims were constantly cropping up.

Colonel CHETTLÉ said that the Commission insisted on a recommendation from the War Office, through the Directorate of Graves Registration and Enquiries, before entertaining the admission of any further societies to the list.

General Sir John KENNEDY said that he was glad Admiral Dunbar-Nasmith had raised this point because there were a number of other societies which he thought should be eligible. He would talk the matter over with Colonel Chettle and submit the names.

Brigadier HIGGINSON, in reply to the VICE-CHAIRMAN, said that as far as numbers were concerned the problem of dealing with the graves of members of all these auxiliary organisations was quite small.

It was proposed by General Sir Robert GORDON-FINLAYSON, seconded by Sir Samuel RUNGANADHAN, and carried unanimously:

7. The Commission, having considered a statement No. A/33, dated 8th January 1946:

Resolve:

That personnel of the undermentioned organisations sent overseas from the United Kingdom and dying overseas or from wounds inflicted overseas be accepted for war graves recognition on the same footing as personnel of the civilian organisations represented on the Council of Voluntary War Work:

- (1) The Incorporated Soldiers' Sailors' and Airmen's Help Society.

(2) The Soldiers' Sailors' and Airmen's Families Association.

(3) Christian Science Committee (Overseas Welfare Workers).

RESIDENTIAL HOSTEL AND OFFICE CANTEEN EXTENSION

The VICE-CHAIRMAN said that at the last meeting of the Finance Committee a special Advisory Committee (Sir John Shute, Colonel Jones and Sir Herbert Ellissen) had been appointed to consider the urgent question of acquiring a property close to the Commission's office at Wooburn Green for use as a residential hostel and an extension to the present canteen. The report of the Advisory Committee had been laid on the table, and he would ask Sir John Shute to say a few words about it.

Colonel Sir John SHUTE said that the Committee had been asked to make a special visit to Wooburn to view the property and to consider the general question. They were satisfied that an extension of the present canteen service at Wooburn House was immediately necessary; they were also of the opinion that the provision of hostel accommodation for the staff was desirable, and although the accommodation in the premises in question was limited it would go some way towards meeting the present demand and do something to ease the staffing problem. The premises were suitable for the purpose, and were conveniently situated within 150 yards of the entrance to Wooburn House. The building, which had been run as a hostel during the war by a commercial firm, contained adequate equipment of good quality. There was a resident housekeeper who had been in charge of the previous hostel, and she was willing to be employed by the Commission in a similar capacity; she seemed to the members of the Committee to be an extremely capable woman upon whom the Commission could rely to run the hostel successfully.

The price asked for the property, including the equipment, was £5,500, and the owners had asked for a decision from the Commission by January 23rd; it was for this reason that the proposal had not been submitted in the first place to the Commission. The building stood on freehold land on which rates were chargeable to the amount of about £50 or £60. An independent firm of estate agents had valued the house at £5,450, which was within £50 of the price which the owners were asking.

It seemed to him and to the other members of the Committee that it was imperative, if the work of the Commission was to be carried on, that extra staff at Wooburn should be recruited. By providing living accommodation near the office the Commission would be able to engage staff whose homes were not in the neighbourhood. Further, it was no longer possible to feed extra staff in the existing canteen. The Committee had considered estimates of outgoings and receipts in connection with running the premises as a canteen and hostel. They had not been able to examine them in detail, but it would appear reasonable to expect that the cost to the Commission would not exceed some £300 to £400 per annum if no rent or interest on capital were charged by the Commission for the use of the premises and equipment. It was quite possible that (at any rate during the first year) there might be a loss of anything up to £300 or £350; even so - and while every effort should obviously be made to run the hostel without loss - the Committee thought that it was in the interests of the Commission that the proposal should be proceeded with.

Colonel JONES said that he fully supported what Sir John Shute had said. For his own part he would merely emphasize the necessity of obtaining in the neighbourhood of Wooburn House some such accommodation as the premises in question would provide. The building and the equipment it contained appeared to him to be suitable in every way.

Colonel Sir Herbert ELLISSEN said that the building itself was attractive and the Commission would be taking over something which he would describe as a going concern. No painting or decorating was necessary; plates, crockery and linen were all in the cupboards, and there was even a substantial amount of food in the store-room.

Sir Arthur LONGMORE said that he thought that in the light of current prices £5,500 for the freehold and contents was remarkably low.

Mr. KNOWLES enquired whether the Commission were sure that they were going to be able to recruit the necessary additional staff, having regard to the situation of their Headquarters at Wooburn. The problem would be different if the office were in London. He doubted whether the hostel would be large enough to accommodate people in sufficient numbers if staff living at a reasonable distance could not be secured.

Brigadier HIGGINSON, in reply to the VICE-CHAIRMAN, said that it was hoped that within the next few weeks the Commission would re-occupy the whole of 32 Grosvenor Gardens, where a forward headquarters would be established. The staff at Wooburn at present numbered about 180, and a building of the size of 32 Grosvenor Gardens would not comfortably accommodate more than about 40 people. Even if, therefore, there were a question of a complete move back to London, it would be necessary to obtain much larger premises. Consequently it had been decided to leave at Wooburn the very considerable mass of records, files, drawings and other documents and not attempt to move them back to London. He thought that Wooburn, which lay about midway between High Wycombe and Maidenhead, was conveniently placed for people in those places who were seeking employment, and he thought that with the return of peace conditions there ought not to be any serious difficulty in obtaining the staff required.

Colonel Sir John SHUTE said that he would like to add that the Commission would not necessarily have to pay £5,500 for the property; this was merely the figure which the owners were asking.

It was proposed by Admiral Sir Martin DUNBAR-NASMITH, seconded by Sir Samuel RUNGANADHAN, and carried unanimously:

8. That the Commission approve in principle the acquisition of premises, furniture and fittings at Wooburn Green for the purpose of a canteen and hostel accommodation for the staff, and that it be referred to the Finance Committee to consider and approve the necessary financial arrangements without further reference to the Commission.

DESTRUCTION OF GRAVES IN MILITARY OPERATIONS

The VICE-CHAIRMAN said that the subject of this paper was important, and he would like to postpone consideration of it to a later meeting.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the next meeting should be held at 11 o'clock on Thursday, February 21st.

The meeting concluded at 12.30 p.m.