

## THE IMPERIAL WAR GRAVES COMMISSION

> GAVIN STAMP

GAVIN STAMP is the author of *The Memorial to the Missing of the Somme* as well as other books on the architecture of Edwin Lutyens. In 1977 he organised the *Silent Cities* exhibition at the Heinz Gallery of the Royal Institute of British Architects about the war cemetery and memorial architecture of the Great War. He has also written about the work of Alexander "Greek" Thomson, George Gilbert Scott junior and Sir Giles Gilbert Scott.

The melancholy task of the Imperial War Graves Commission, as its name implies, was to encompass all the former British Dominions which engaged in the Great War of 1914-1918. In the event, the various Dominion governments—Canada, Australia, New Zealand (fig. 1), South Africa, India—all chose to erect their own memorials in France, Belgium and other places where their dead lay. In addition, Canada chose to erect a memorial very different both in style and in the use of sculpture to those erected by the Commission. All this went counter to the original intentions of the founders of the War Graves Commission. Nevertheless, the context in which the Canadian Battlefields Memorial Commission erected the monument on Vimy Ridge cannot be fully understood without reference to the work of the Commission and to the principles which it forged for commemorating the million dead and missing sustained by the whole British Empire.

The work of the Imperial War Graves Commission between the world wars constitutes both the largest and the most inspired programme of public design ever completed by a British government agency, despite difficult and worsening economic conditions—and this was carried out overseas. Rudyard Kipling called it "The biggest single bit of work since any of the Pharaohs—and they only worked in their own country".<sup>1</sup> Perhaps it is surprising that works of such high quality should have been commissioned by the government of a nation notorious for its indifference towards works of art combined with great reluctance to pay for them. For once, official architecture was great architecture, and a state that had shown shocking indifference to the scale

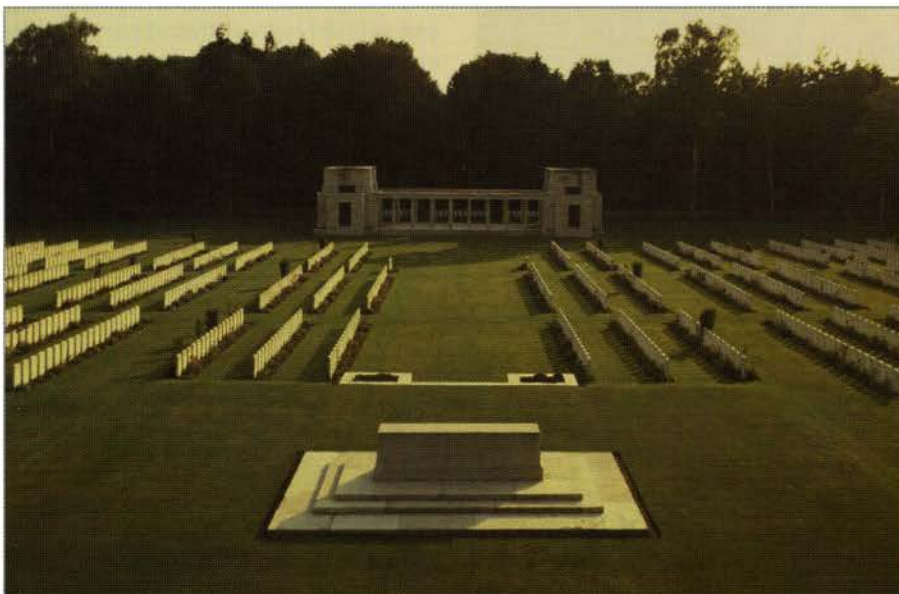


FIG. 1. NEW ZEALAND MEMORIAL, BUTTES NEW BRITISH CEMETERY, BELGIUM: CHARLES HOLDEN. | GAVIN STAMP 1987.



FIG. 2. THE CENOTAPH, WHITEHALL, LONDON: EDWIN LUTYENS. | GAVIN STAMP 1984.

of casualties during the war made some recompense by constructing cemeteries and memorials of remarkable beauty and artistic quality. Some are among the greatest architectural achievements of the century.

It is often assumed, with some justice, that the death toll and trauma of the Great War, by discrediting the attitudes, traditions and

systems which allowed it to be pursued for so long, and so ruthlessly, ensured the subsequent rise to dominance of modernism in the arts. Yet, in fact, that war generated in the subsequent memorials a late but vital flowering of the European classical tradition in architecture, if for a terrible purpose. And it was this tradition that the architects employed by the Imperial War

Graves Commission interpreted and developed with remarkable sympathy and sophistication. Above all, perhaps, there was the work of Edwin Lutyens, whose Memorial to the Missing of the Somme at Thiepval is a supremely powerful and original creation in which, as Roderick Gradidge has claimed, he adopted “an entirely new three-dimensional approach to classical architecture”.<sup>2</sup> But the monument erected by Canada at Vimy Ridge is conspicuous for standing outside that dominant tradition; in the work commissioned by or associated with the Imperial War Graves Commission, it is the great exception.

What was also remarkable about the work of the Commission was its secular and egalitarian character. This was not achieved without considerable debate and struggle. The arguments were particularly passionate in particular over the use of Christian symbolism to commemorate the dead in a war in which men of many other religions, or none, had been fed into the slaughter. This debate also took place when it was proposed to rebuild the temporary Cenotaph as the national war memorial in the centre of Whitehall in London (fig. 2). That abstracted classical pylon, modelled and refined with extraordinary sophistication to give it remarkable emotional power, was also one of the supreme creations of Lutyens, the architect who would have more influence on the work of the War Graves Commission than any other. In 1917, along with his former friend Herbert Baker (with whom he had fallen out over the design of New Delhi), he was asked to visit the battlefields to see the problems of creating war graves at first hand. It was on this occasion that Lutyens wrote the letter, so often quoted, which reveals his response and his vision.

What humanity can endure and suffer is beyond belief. The battlefields – the obliteration of all human endeavour and





FIG. 3. BEDFORD HOUSE CEMETERY, ZILLEBEKE, BELGIUM: W.C. VON BERG. | GAVIN STAMP 2007.



FIG. 4. THE CROSS OF SACRIFICE AT BRAY MILITARY CEMETERY, FRANCE: REGINALD BLOMFIELD, ASSISTANT ARCHITECT A.J.S. HUTTON. | GAVIN STAMP 1990.

achievement and the human achievement of destruction is bettered by the poppies and wild flowers that are as friendly to an unexploded shell as they are to the leg of a garden seat in Surrey... One thinks for the moment no other monument is needed... But the only monument can be one where the endeavour is sincere to make such monument permanent – a solid ball of bronze!<sup>3</sup>

The Imperial War Graves Commission was essentially the creation of one remarkable man, Fabian Ware (1869-1949). An exact contemporary of Lutyens, Ware had been a teacher, an educational reformer and, as assistant director of education for the Transvaal, a member of Alfred Milner's "kindergarten" of administrators in South Africa as well as editor of the London *Morning Post*. Ware certainly belonged to that generation of cultivated bullies who ran the Edwardian Empire with supreme confidence, but he was not typical; he was a man with a strong social conscience and wide sympathies as well as being possessed of remarkable energy. On the outbreak of war, Ware offered his services to the Red Cross and soon found himself organising a "flying unit" of private cars and drivers assisting the French army. In the course of assisting the wounded during the confused campaigns of 1914, Ware became more and

more concerned with locating and recording the graves of the dead – something of little concern to the military authorities at first. He pointed out that no one had the responsibility of recording and maintaining the growing number of war graves. With the support of General Sir Nevil Macready, Adjutant-General to the British Expeditionary Force, who was mindful of the distress caused by the neglect of graves during the South African War, the War Office officially recognised Ware's Graves Registration Commission in March 1915.

Ware pointed out that although his Commission's work had no military importance, it had "an extraordinary moral value to the troops in the field as well as to the relatives and friends of the dead at home"<sup>4</sup> and that when hostilities were eventually terminated, the government would have to do something about the thousands and thousands of graves, many scattered over the battlefields, some dug in French churchyards. The poet Edmund Blunden, who had fought on the Somme and who would succeed Rudyard Kipling as the Commission's unofficial literary adviser, later recalled that,

not many soldiers retained the confidence that the dead – themselves, it might be, to-morrow

or the next instant – would at length obtain some lasting and distant memorial... The assemblies of wooden crosses in the wrecked villages near the line, with here and there an additional sign of remembrance suggested by the feeling and opportunity of fellow-soldiers, seemed to have a poor chance of remaining recognisable or visible after one more outburst of attack or counterblast, when high explosive or torrential steel would tear up the soil over deliberately chosen spaces of the land.<sup>5</sup>

Ware badgered the authorities to ensure that graves were recorded and, if possible, maintained; he also commenced negotiations with the French to establish the status of the war cemeteries in the future. Ware realised that the task of creating proper graves and ceremonies would be immense, and that it would concern all the constituent parts of the British Empire. He also was concerned that proper policies be established for war graves, and that rich families should not be able to erect more elaborate memorials or take bodies back to Britain for burial. Ware knew that, "in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred" officers "will tell you that if they are killed [they] would wish to be among their men" and he made sure that exhumations were forbidden.<sup>6</sup> As Philip Longworth, historian of the War Graves Commission, has written,





FIG. 5. LOUVERVAL MILITARY CEMETERY AND MEMORIAL TO THE MISSING, FRANCE: H.C. BRADSHAW. | GAVIN STAMP 1990.



FIG. 6. STANDARD IWGC HEADSTONES AT TYNE COT CEMETERY. | GAVIN STAMP.

Ware “sensed the new and democratic mood which was taking hold of the Army. Traditional though he was in many ways, he had read Bergson, Rousseau, Marx and the Syndicalists and had been influenced by some of their ideas”.<sup>7</sup> Ware was a complex figure, although a “social imperialist” and the former editor of a right-wing newspaper, he was sympathetic towards the Labour movement and anxious for social reform. The Imperial War Graves Commission, as it was established by Royal Charter in April 1917, would achieve equality for all the dead – whether rich or poor, officers or private soldiers, titled or commoner.

This task was something quite new. No such concern for the treatment of the dead had been demonstrated by the authorities in earlier conflicts. After the Battle of Waterloo, for instance – the bloodiest battle for the British before 1914 in which the casualties were some 5,100 dead out of a total of 50,000 dead and wounded on both sides – while the bodies of officers were mostly taken home for burial those of private soldiers were dumped in mass graves. Only in 1889, by order of Queen Victoria, were the dead of Waterloo belatedly honoured at the Evere Cemetery in Brussels when the bodies of officers, non-commissioned officers and men were

reinterred there (this was probably the first British national memorial to the dead, as opposed to a monument to a victory). The British government cared little more after the war with Russia in 1854-56, although a proper military cemetery was established, by necessity, at Scutari with graves for 8,000 who died of wounds and disease next to the hospital run by Florence Nightingale (later enhanced by a granite obelisk with angels carved by Baron Marochetti). As Ware stressed in his memorandum proposing an “Imperial Commission for the Care of Soldiers’ Graves” in 1917, the Empire must be “spared the reflections which weighed on the conscience of the British nation when, nearly twenty years after the conclusion of the Crimean War, it became known that the last resting place of those who had fallen in that war had, except in individual instances, remained uncared for and neglected”.<sup>8</sup>

It was after the American Civil War that an act promoted by President Lincoln in 1862 allowed for the creation of 14 national cemeteries for all the Union dead. A similar concern was manifested by both sides after the Franco-Prussian War. As wars became larger in scale, fought by conscripted soldiers rather than by professional armies (on which the British still relied until 1916),

so the popular concern for the fate and last resting place of the individual soldier increased. In the Great War of 1914-1918, parliamentary governments as well as autocracies committed their populations to the struggle with a ruthless subservience to the national cause inconceivable in earlier centuries (“Are we to continue until we have killed ALL our young men?” Lord Lansdowne, the former Foreign Secretary, asked the Cabinet at the end of the Battle of the Somme).<sup>9</sup> The patriotic and nationalistic character of the war demanded that every individual sacrifice be commemorated, although the chaos and social breakdown that resulted in some of the fighting powers, Russia and Turkey above all, rendered this impossible.

The task faced by the newly established Imperial War Graves Commission, of giving decent burial and permanent commemoration to hundreds of thousands of casualties, was horribly exacerbated by the nature of the war. Blunden described how, on the Somme, “men perished in great multitudes and in places where their bodies could not be recovered, so intense was the new artillery and machine-gun fire, so hopeless the mud which went on for miles. The battalions who came up to the relief of those in the craters and vestiges of





FIG. 7. LIJSSENTHOEK MILITARY CEMETERY, POPERINGHE, BELGIUM:  
REGINALD BLOMFIELD. | GAVIN STAMP 1977.



FIG. 8. LIJSSENTHOEK MILITARY CEMETERY, POPERINGHE, BELGIUM:  
REGINALD BLOMFIELD. | GAVIN STAMP 2007.

trenches would find themselves, in the fire-splashed night, stumbling over corpse after corpse. In deep dug-outs, twenty or thirty feet down, friends or foes were done to death by one means or another with the ultimate result that there was no entering those burnt-out, dreadful caverns". After the even greater horror of Passchendaele, when "a deeper, fouler slime drowned all but the luckiest life in man and nature...", the soldier felt that his death would be his complete and final disappearance. The Book of Life was for others... At that period, the idea that these battlefields would themselves ever again become pasture-lands, and châteaux with grounds and little lakes and garden-walls, would have appeared sheer fantasy" (fig. 3).<sup>10</sup>

As work on the cemeteries could not proceed until after the end of hostilities, Ware first established principles to govern the Commission's approach and sought expert advice – hence the visit by Lutyens and Baker to France in July 1917. To a remarkable extent, the recommendations made by Lutyens in a *Memorandum* written the following month were adopted as official policy. In particular, there was his suggestion of an identical abstract monumental form in all the proposed cemeteries:

I most earnestly advise that there shall be one kind of monument throughout, whether in Europe, Asia or Africa, and that it shall take the form of one great fair stone of fine proportions, twelve feet in length, lying raised upon three steps, of which the first and third shall be twice the width of the second; and that each stone shall bear in indelible lettering, some fine thought or words of sacred dedication. They should be known in all places and for all time, as the Great War Stones, and should stand, though in three Continents, as equal monuments of devotion, suggesting the thought of memorial Chapels in one vast Cathedral.

(J.M. Barrie had suggested to Ware calling it a *stone* rather than an *altar*, as, knowing the Presbyterian prejudices of his countrymen, "The Scotch ... wouldn't like the word".)

Such was the transformation of Lutyens's aspiration for "a solid ball of bronze" into the concept of what became known as the Stone of Remembrance although, in fact, he had already described the stone idea to Ware in a letter written in May 1917 – before he went to see the battlefields. In this, he recommended that the

great stone of fine proportion 12 feet long set fair or finely wrought – without undue ornament and tricky and elaborate carvings and inscribe

thereon one thought in clear letters so that all men for all time may read and know the reasons why these stones are so placed throughout France – facing the West and facing the men who lie looking ever eastward towards the enemy – after this you can plant to desire and erect cloisters – chapels – crosses buildings of as many varieties as to suit the always varying sites.

In the event, these monoliths on their shallow steps – bearing the inscription from the *Book of Ecclesiasticus* – THEIR NAME LIVETH FOR EVERMORE – chosen by Kipling and carefully modelled and enlivened with *entasis*: curves that were part of a hypothetical sphere exactly 1,801 feet 8 inches in diameter – were placed in all the Commission's cemeteries apart from the very smallest (fig. 1).

Jane Ridley points out that the spherical surface on stone and steps was a symbol of hope and that, "For Lutyens the symbol of happiness had always been a circle".<sup>11</sup> The very idea of the Great War Stone was a faintly pagan concept and thus provoked opposition from those who wanted conventional Christian symbolism in the cemeteries and, later, on the Cenotaph. The other two who had visited France with Lutyens, Baker and Charles Aitken (director





FIG. 9. FRICOURT NEW MILITARY CEMETERY, FRANCE: A.J.S. HUTTON. | GAVIN STAMP 1990.



FIG. 10. CORBIE COMMUNAL CEMETERY EXTENSION, FRANCE: CHARLES HOLDEN. | GAVIN STAMP 1990.



FIG. 11. NOYELLES-SUR-MER CHINESE CEMETERY, FRANCE: REGINALD TRUELOVE, ASSISTANT ARCHITECT; EDWIN LUTYENS, PRINCIPAL ARCHITECT. | GAVIN STAMP 1990.



FIG. 12. ZANTVOORDE BRITISH CEMETERY, BELGIUM: CHARLES HOLDEN. | GAVIN STAMP 1977.

of the Tate Gallery), both recommended a cross for each cemetery; Baker, indeed, with his love of literal symbolism, even suggested a cross with five points, one for each colony. Lutyens wrote to his wife about this last idea and that, "India, Ware pointed out, was forgotten, but what does a five pointed cross mean? Ware bids me courage." And Lady Emily responded that, "Baker must be dotty! A five pointed cross for each of the colonies. Too silly. And India left out which will cause bitter hurt and what about the Jews and agnostics who hate crosses"?'<sup>12</sup>

For all his racial prejudice engendered by both convention and by his Theosophist wife's obsession with Krishnamurti as the new World Teacher, Lutyens was at one with his wife in his pantheistic and non-sectarian conception of religion and culture. Fortunately Fabian Ware, who Lutyens immediately admired and got on very well with, agreed. ("Mon General," Lutyens's letters to him often began, and he sometimes signed himself "Votre Toujours Subaltern"; Ware, like others who worked for the Commission, took military rank, but not Lutyens. He wrote to Ware in August 1917 about the war stone:

Labour members, Jews, R. Catholics, Non-conformists, ladies of fashion especially those that suffer a loss, all seem to like it and agree in the banality of the t., I have not had the courage to tackle a Bishop, but do you think it wise if I asked Cantuar [the Archbishop of Canterbury to see me, he would I think, but if I catch sight of the apron it is apt, at a critical moment, to give me the giggles, especially when they get pompous and hold their hands across their knees – why?

Lutyens seemed not to have cared much for the established church and was certainly concerned not to cause offence to other religions. There is no evidence to suggest, however, that he disliked the way that the



Christian churches had identified God's will so closely with the national cause (in every nation). He might well have done; as one serving officer recorded, "the Christian Churches are the finest blood-lust creators which we have and of them we made free use."<sup>13</sup>

In the event, Lutyens did show his war stone proposal to Randall Davidson, the Archbishop of Canterbury, who at first indicated approval but later wrote to Ware to condemn it and to demand a cross. Lutyens recorded that Ware "was 'shocked, grieved' at the Archbishop's letter – expected a neutral attitude not a narrow antagonistic view. He says the clergy in France are most tiresome – always trying to upset any and every kind of appellation. But he thinks the 'stone' will win yet ...".<sup>14</sup> It did, although in view of the strength of the demand for Christian imagery in the war cemeteries, a compromise was eventually established. In addition to the Stone of Remembrance, every cemetery would also contain a free-standing cross (fig. 4). And how pleased Lutyens must have been when he was able to write to the Archbishop in 1923 that, "I was so glad to see in today's paper that the Great War Stone in a cemetery was used as an Altar for the administration of Holy Communion".<sup>15</sup>

The Cross of Sacrifice, found in many places in Britain as well as in every war cemetery, was designed by Reginald Blomfield and consisted of an octagonal stepped base supporting a tall stone cross on which is fixed a bronze sword (fig. 5). This, although handsome, gives the cemeteries a touch of precisely that 'Onward, Christian Soldiers!' tone that Ware and Lutyens strove to avoid (Lutyens also designed a cross, faceted and compact, and with no sword, that can sometimes be found in churchyards in England). The problems sometimes created by this Christian symbolism is suggested by Lutyens's comments on the official report approving the design for Choques Military

Cemetery in 1920 in which he apologised to the Assistant Architect as "I did not realise the cross came so close to the Jewish plot [of land] & it would be good manners to move it to a central position south". (In defence both of the churches and of the French, it is worth noting that Ware paid tribute to Mgr Julien, Bishop of Arras, who never ceased to remind his compatriots that "in the sight of God the dead of Germany were the equals of the dead of France".)<sup>16</sup>

Equally controversial was the question of the design of the permanent gravestones and whether they should be uniform. The crucial principle of no distinction between the graves of officers and men, and the policy of non exhumation or reburial back home (a policy that was unique to Britain), were fully endorsed by Lutyens who, in his *Memorandum*, recommended that

every grave will be marked with a headstone bearing the soldier's name and rank, and possibly the sculptured badge of his regiment, also some symbol denoting his religious faith... All that is done of structure should be for endurance for all time and for equality of honour, for besides Christians of all denominations, there will be Jews, Mussulmens, Hindus and men of other creeds; their glorious names and their mortal bodies all equally deserving enduring record and seemly sepulture.

Lutyens revealed more of his feelings about this in a letter to his wife in which he argued

That the most beautiful sites should be selected not where the victories were and all that snobbery, for I hold that there is equality in sacrifice and the men who fell at Quatre Bras are just as worthy of honour as those that fell at Waterloo. I do not want to put worldly value over our dead. They put 'killed in action' or 'died from wounds', 'died'. Died alone means some defalcation and shot for it. I don't

like it. The mother lost her boy and it was in the interests of the country and she had to suffer – her boy. Do you see what I mean? But then I don't fight nor do I fight yet for the seemly sepulture of the Germans when they lie along with our men.

Emily did see what he meant. "I am very keen about your stone", she replied and added:

It appeals to my side of life – as houses don't and I see much true symbolism in it... I am also entirely at one with you about equality of sacrifice and that all those who 'die' no matter from what cause should be honoured. I think it too awful that the wife of a man shot for cowardice gets no pension. After all he is equally lost to her and by government orders. I think it is barbarous.<sup>17</sup>

The Commission decided to adopt a standard secular headstone as Lutyens, and others, recommended. Of Portland stone with a curved top and straight sides, each bears the name of the man beneath in a fine Roman alphabet designed by Macdonald Gill, brother of the sculptor and typographer Eric Gill (fig. 6). A regimental badge and a religious symbol – a cross, or Star of David – could also be carved into the stone, together with a text if the soldier's family so requested. Over those many thousands of graves containing an unidentified body, the same headstone bears the poignant inscription – chosen by Kipling – "A Soldier of the Great War / Known unto God" (fig. 7). As the Commission insisted, "in death, all, from General to Private, of whatever race or creed, should receive equal honour under a memorial which should be the common symbol of their comradeship and of the cause for which they died." The humanity and rightness of this decision is reinforced by comparison with the French war cemeteries, in which it can be painful to see a line of crosses broken by a gravestone



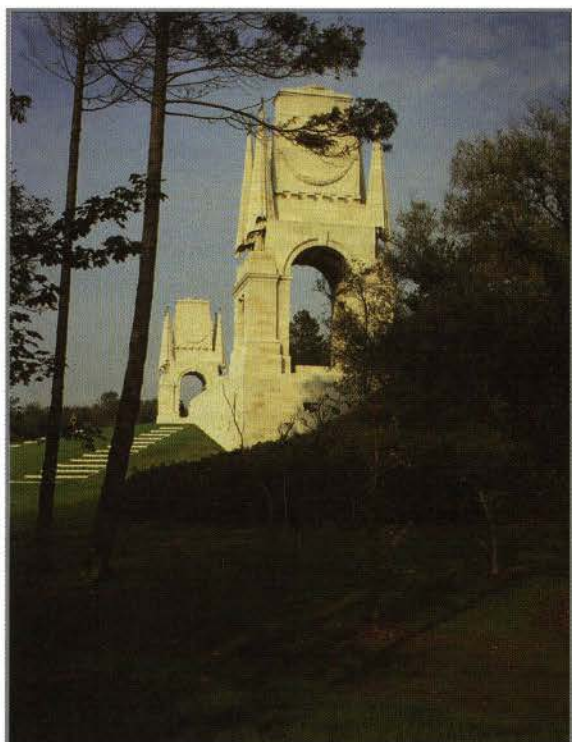


FIG. 13. ÉTAPLES MILITARY CEMETERY, FRANCE: EDWIN LUTYENS. | GAVIN STAMP 1990.



FIG. 15. NÉCROPOLE NATIONALE NOTRE-DAME-DE-LORETTE, FRANCE: LOUIS-MARIE CORDONNIER. | GAVIN STAMP 2006.

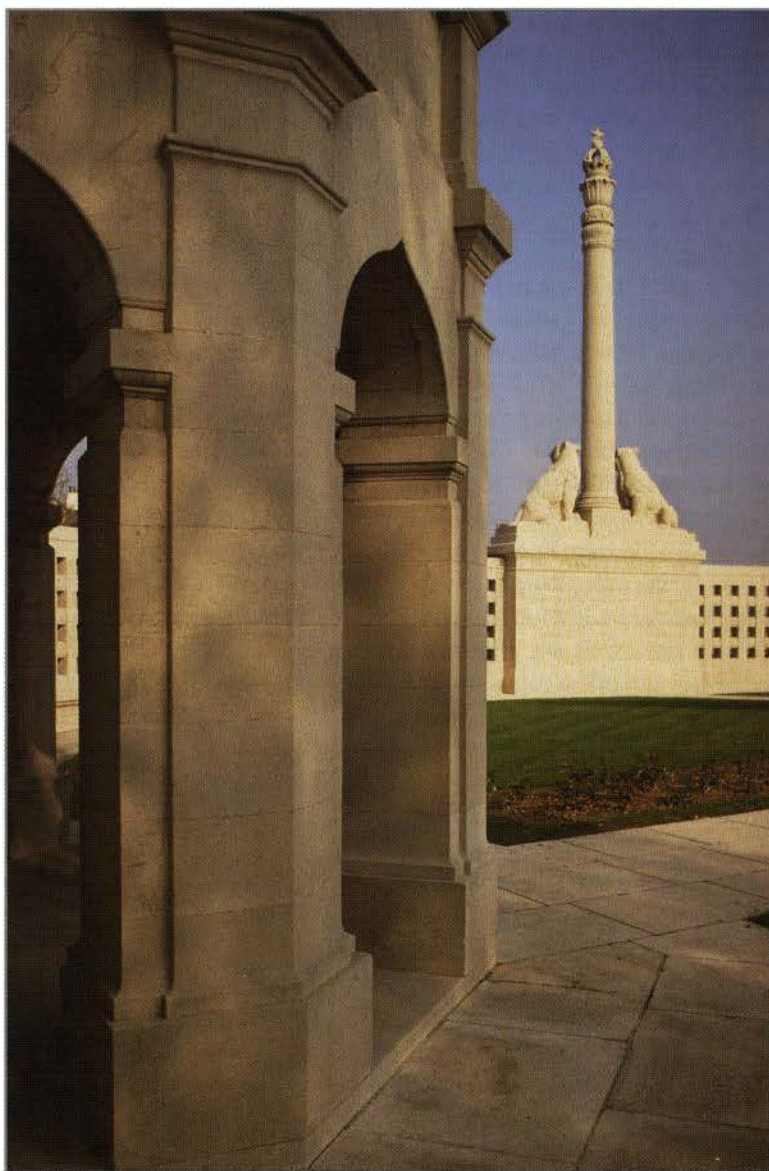


FIG. 14. INDIAN ARMY MEMORIAL, NEUVE-CHAPELLE, FRANCE: HERBERT BAKER. | GAVIN STAMP 1990.

in the shape of a Star of David or one given the profile of an Islamic arch.

With the war over, however, the policy of equality of treatment provoked growing opposition. Campaigns were mounted against the War Graves Commission which emphasised the cruelty of preventing families and bereaved relatives from having any say in

the way soldiers were buried. Lady Florence Cecil, the wife of the Bishop of Exeter, who had lost three sons in the war, made a direct appeal “in the name of thousands of heartbroken parents, wives, brothers and sisters” to the Prince of Wales as President of the Commission to permit a cross as an alternative to the standard headstone. “It is only through the hope of the cross,” she

wrote, “that most of us are able to carry on the life from which all the sunshine seems to have gone, and to deny us the emblem of that strength and hope adds heavily to the burden of our sorrow”.<sup>18</sup> Ultimately the matter was settled by Parliament and in a crucial debate in May 1920 the Commission’s policies were upheld. Equality in death, like equality in life, had to be enforced by the



state, and the British people had to learn that liberty is incompatible with war, and that once a man had enlisted, his body – whether alive or dead – belonged to the King. It is nevertheless remarkable that such rigid egalitarianism and secularism was enforced by a parliamentary democracy so often characterised by compromise and by sentimental gestures.

Other general principles regarding the design of the cemeteries were less contentious. From the beginning, the importance of horticulture was stressed. The war cemeteries were intended to convey something of the character of the England the dead had fought for, an ideal England full of gardens and beautiful landscapes. Just as the Commission's work manifested the contemporary interest in classical architecture, so it reflected the enthusiasm for garden design which flourished in the Edwardian years (fig. 8). The war cemeteries can almost be seen as a recreation of that fusion of architecture and gardening, and that reconciliation of the formal and the picturesque approaches to garden design, achieved by the collaboration of Lutyens and his mentor, Gertrude Jekyll, before the war. Lutyens had recommended to the Commission that

The design of any further arrangements, or of any planting of evergreen tress – Ilex, box, Bay, Cypress, Yews or Juniper, or of other trees or shrubs of such a kind as may be suitable to a special climate, would be determined by the character of the buildings, and by the area and nature of the ground; but all should be planned on broad and simple lines... But though it will be important to secure the qualities of repose and dignity there is no need for the cemeteries to be gloomy or even sad looking places. Good use should be made of the best and most beautiful flowering plants and shrubs....

Baker, for once, agreed, later writing that the cemeteries "should express the sense of

reverence and peace... My own thoughts always turned to the beauty associated with churchyard and cloister, a sacred *place*, a *temenos*" (fig. 9).<sup>19</sup>

Gertrude Jekyll prepared planting plans for four cemeteries for which Lutyens had responsibility – Hersin, Gézaincourt, Daours and La Neuville – as well as for Warlincourt Halte, which was designed by Holden. Jane Brown has argued that these set the pattern for all the others and that, under Lutyens's influence, the British war cemetery became

the modern apotheosis of the secret garden... there is the enclosing evergreen (holly or yew) hedge, the symbolic fastigiated oak or Lombardy poplars, massings of workaday shrubs of the English countryside – blackthorn, whitethorn, hazel, guelder rose and honeysuckle – with the Virgin's flowering meads ushered into soft borders where the headstones stand, hellebores, narcissus, forget-me-not, fritillaries, foxgloves, columbines, London Pride, bergenia, nepeta and roses. These are Arts and Crafts gardens, outdoor rooms of green walls, their vistas ordered and closed by the most sublime stone works, most with book-room pavilions and shelters, all of them laced and imbued with meaning and double-meaning....<sup>20</sup>

"Those who doubt the power of landscape to console", Ken Worpole has recently written, "should visit some of these cemeteries, the design and care of which successfully embody and integrate so many nuances of public and private emotion".<sup>21</sup>

The Commission's architects were also generally agreed that for both the memorials and the shelter buildings required in each cemetery, monumental classical architecture was enough and that little sculpture was needed. As Blomfield later recalled, "many of us had seen terrible examples of war memorials in France and

were haunted by the fear of winged angels in various sentimental attitudes".<sup>22</sup> Among the Commission's principal architects, Lutyens and Holden used the least sculpture and carving, Baker the most. Fine work was done for the Commission by Gilbert Ledward, Charles Wheeler, William Reid Dick, Ernest Gillick, William Gilbert, Laurence Turner and by Charles Sergeant Jagger. Arguably the greatest British sculptor of the last century, Jagger was responsible for carved panels on the Memorial to the Missing at Louveral as well as for the reliefs and the bronze figures on his great masterpiece, the Artillery Memorial at Hyde Park Corner in London, in which the heroism and brutality of war is conveyed without any sentimentality.

Because of the disagreements between the architects first consulted and about the methods to be used to secure designs, Frederic Kenyon, Director of the British Museum, was invited to act as Architectural Advisor in November 1917 and he recommended the senior architects to be employed by the Commission. Lutyens, Baker and Blomfield were appointed Principal Architects for France and Belgium in March 1918. They were joined in 1920 by Charles Holden, who had already served as an Assistant Architect to the Commission and who applied his severe neoclassical style both to the war cemeteries (fig. 10) and to the contemporary stations for the London Underground. Their salary was initially £400 per annum, raised to £600 in 1919. The Commission's work was not, however, confined to the Western Front. Robert Lorimer, designer of the Scottish National War Memorial, was appointed Principal Architect for Italy, Macedonia and Egypt, and was responsible for rugged war cemeteries high up in the foothills of the Alps. Another Scot, the great Beaux-Arts trained Glaswegian, John James Burnet, was appointed Principal Architect for Palestine and Gallipoli, and was assisted in his work





FIG. 16. LANGEMARK DEUTSCHE SOLDATENFRIEDHOF, BELGIUM: ROBERT TISCHLER. | GAVIN STAMP 2007.

by his partner Thomas Tait. Finally there was E.P. Warren, who was appointed Principal Architect for Mesopotamia and designed the Memorial to the Missing in Basra.

The task of designing and supervising the execution of hundreds of cemeteries in France and Belgium could not be undertaken by the Principal Architects alone, especially as all were also running their own private practices. On Kenyon's recommendation, the actual work of designing the many cemeteries was entrusted to younger architects who had served in the war, but supervised by the senior architects. This team of Assistant Architects was based at Saint-Omer in France. Two were South African: Gordon Leith and Wilfrid von Berg; two were older, and had served in the London Ambulance Brigade of the Red Cross: Holden and W.H. Cowlshaw; the others were W.B. Binnie, H.C. Bradshaw, G.H. Goldsmith (who had been Lutyens's assistant before the war), Frank Higginson, A.J.S. Hutton, Noël Rew, Verner O. Rees and J.R. Truelove. In theory, the Principal Architect would make suggestions for

a particular cemetery, and later approve or amend a sketch design made by the Assistant Architect. For the smallest cemeteries, with under 250 burials, the Assistant Architects would seem to have enjoyed more or less complete independence. "In retrospect," Ware later wrote, "the chief merit of this system is seen to have been the variety of treatment which resulted from the free play thus given to the interest in individual cemeteries natural to architects who were dealing with burial places of their comrades in arms".<sup>23</sup>

The ultimate authorship of a particular war cemetery is often confirmed by the Commission's standard report sheets, on which the Principal Architect as well as the Horticultural Expert and the Deputy Director of Works would indicate approval or make suggestions. On that for the Chinese Labour Corps Cemetery at Noyelles-sur-mer (fig. 11), which was designed by Truelove in an appropriate style, Lutyens wrote that, "I know nothing of Chinese art. I can but express my admiration. Capt

Truelove should go to London and visit the British Museum and the wholesale Chinese warehouses in London". It is clear from the cemeteries themselves that the principal influence on their architecture was that of Lutyens, although Lutyens himself may well have been influenced by the severely abstract work of Holden (fig. 12).

Asked half a century later about his work for the Commission, Wilfrid von Berg wrote that,

Blomfield, I recall, took a meagre and superficial interest in my work and rarely had much to contribute. Lutyens, on the other hand, showed a lively concern coupled with a delicious sense of humour. I remember how once he introduced an asymmetrical feature into one of my designs saying with a chuckle 'That's cockeye but let's do it'. Away from the drawing-board he was the greatest fun and at a party in the chateau at Longuenesse, I.W.G.C. headquarters, to everyone's delight he climbed on a table and danced a little jig. Holden, serious and painstaking, was a senior





FIG. 17. VLADSLO DEUTSCHE SOLDATENFRIEDHOF, BELGIUM: FIGURES OF THE MOURNING PARENTS BY KÄTHE KOLLWITZ. | GAVIN STAMP 1988.



FIG. 18. TERLINCHUN BRITISH CEMETERY, FRANCE: GORDON LEITH. | GAVIN STAMP 1990.

architect for whom I had the greatest respect. Of Baker I have no recollections since his work was almost exclusively with Gordon Leith.<sup>24</sup>

Von Berg also recorded his recollections of his fellow Assistant Architects, who deserve to be better known.

Truelove was highly talented and a man of great charm. In his spare time he won a place in the first premiated designs for the Quasr-el-Aini Hospital in Cairon. Goldsmith was a slavish devotee of Lutyens and allowed his own talents to be submerged in his efforts to copy the master. Gordon Leith was a brilliant architect who worked chiefly under Baker. In later years he received a Doctorate in recognition of his outstanding achievements in South Africa. Of Rew, Hutton, Cowlshaw and ... Salway Nicol, I have little to say beyond the fact that they were painstaking and efficient.

And of two others who seemed to have designed cemeteries and memorials,

I am surprised to learn that Frank Higginson did any designs since he was [...] an administrator. He was a delightful fellow and both he and his wife were my close friends. I cannot say the same of one W.B. Binnie, also an administrator, who was an aggressive little Scotsman sadly lacking in polish.<sup>25</sup>

The colossal task of caring for 580,000 identified and 180,000 unidentified graves was begun early in 1919. Some were in small temporary cemeteries, others scattered and isolated, so that bodies had to be moved to the permanent cemeteries to be constructed by the Commission. Today, when film makers wish to emphasise the carnage of the Great War, the camera often pans over a vast sea of crosses. But this, at least for British war cemeteries, gives a quite false impression. Not only are the British dead marked by standard headstones rather than crosses, but few of the cemeteries are very large and in most there are but several hundred headstones. Only those sited near base-camps or hospitals where men died of their wounds, like Étaples and Lijssenthoek, are the graves to be counted in thousands (figs. 7, 13).

What is awe-inspiring – terrifying – about the British cemeteries of the Great War is not their size but their number. Even after the bodies in several hundred cemeteries had been moved, there were almost a thousand separate British war cemeteries constructed along the line of the Western Front between the North Sea and the Somme. Their very locations tell the story of the war. As John Keegan has written about the Battle of the Somme, along the old front line north of Thiepval,

at intervals of a few hundred yards, run a line of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's beautiful garden cemeteries, ablaze near the anniversary of the battle with rose and wisteria blossom, the white Portland stone of headstones and memorial crosses gleaming in the sun... A few ... stand a little forward of the rest, and mark the furthest limit of advance. The majority stand on the front line or in no man's land just outside the German wire. The soldiers who died there were buried where they had fallen. Thus the cemeteries are a map of the battle. The map tells a simple and terrible story.<sup>26</sup>

Because of the controversy over the Commission's policies, three experimental cemeteries were completed by 1920 to demonstrate what was being aimed at. It was first intended that each should be designed by one of the three Principal Architects but, in the event, all three – Le Tréport, Louvencourt and Forceville – had Blomfield as Principal Architect. There is strong evidence, however, that Forceville, the most successful of these cemeteries, as well as Louvencourt were actually the work of Holden as Blomfield's assistant and the economical severity of its design would serve as a model for the Commission's architects.<sup>27</sup> These cemeteries were well received by the visiting British public;





FIG. 19. MENIN GATE AT YPRES, BELGIUM: REGINALD BLOMFIELD. | LANE BORSTAD.

a correspondent for *The Times* considered that Forceville Community Cemetery Extension, planted with yew hedges and lindens as well as flowers, was “The most perfect, the noblest, the most classically beautiful memorial that any loving heart or any proud nation could desire to their heroes fallen in a foreign land... It is the simplest, it is the grandest place I ever saw”.<sup>28</sup>

Lutyens, as Principal Architect, was responsible for designing or supervising 127 war cemeteries in France and Belgium, although many of these were actually the work of his former assistant, Goldsmith. Lutyens himself was certainly personally responsible for some of the larger cemeteries, notably Étaples Military Cemetery near Le Touquet, next to the site of the notorious “Eat Apples” base camp – where a mutiny had occurred in 1917. Here, above stone retaining walls on rising land overlooking the railway from the Channel ports to Paris, he placed two extraordinary cenotaphs either side of the Stone of Remembrance (fig. 13). Each of these pylons rises above an arched base and is flanked by stone flags that hang ever still – as he wanted to do with

the flags on the Cenotaph in London but was overruled. The design of a cemetery was scarcely a new problem, but Lutyens demonstrated here that he was able to rise to new heights of originality in abstracting and developing the Classical language of architecture to give dignity to these “silent cities of the dead”.

Another impressive cemetery by Lutyens is that at Villers-Bretonneux where Lutyens placed two exquisite lodges like eighteenth-century garden pavilions at the roadside entrance. From here, the ground rises in a gentle convex slope, past the Cross of Sacrifice standing between lines of headstones, to reach a wall covered in names either side of a look-out tower. This is the Australian National War Memorial, for it was here that Australian troops checked General Ludendorff’s offensive towards Amiens in 1918. Originally the memorial was to have been the work of the Australian architect, William Lucas, who had won a competition in 1925, but his design was disliked by Ware and by General Talbot Hobbs, who had chosen the site for the memorial. When the project was

suspended in 1930 for economic reasons, Hobbs approached Lutyens instead (not for the first time did he cheerfully supplant another architect).<sup>29</sup> The memorial as built is one of Lutyens’s last and most idiosyncratic executed works; in the flanking pavilions and the observation pavilion at the top of the tower he returned to themes that had exercised him early in his career, deconstructing Classical forms and making them hang, as it were, in space. This memorial was dedicated in 1938, completing the Commission’s task.

Ware was distressed that the various constituent parts of the Empire chose to erect their own memorials as it undermined his vision of Imperial co-operation and also led to anomalies and the duplication of the names of the Missing in certain cases, but his persuasiveness – for once – was in vain. The Union of South Africa naturally turned to Baker for its memorial at Delville Wood, where hellish fighting had taken place during the Somme offensive. Baker was also responsible for the Indian Memorial at Neuve Chapelle, one of his happiest works in which the Moghul, Hindu and Buddhist elements used at New Delhi were combined in a beautiful circular enclosure (fig. 14). New Zealand chose to build several memorials to its missing in different cemeteries. That at Grévillers is by Lutyens; the one at Caterpillar Valley by Baker; and those in Belgium, at Polygon Wood and Messines, were designed by Holden in his severe neoclassical style. Canada, of course, chose not to use one of the Commission’s own architects, but selected the sculptor Walter Seymour Allward (as discussed by Lane Borstad and Jacqueline Hucker in their articles).

It is instructive to compare the British war cemeteries with those of the other fighting powers. The French chose to concentrate their dead in large cemeteries, with the bones of the many unidentified casualties put into ossuaries, as at Douamont near





FIG. 20. TYNE COT CEMETERY AND MEMORIAL TO THE MISSING: HERBERT BAKER. | GAVIN STAMP 1987.



FIG. 21. TYNE COT CEMETERY, PASSCHENDAELE, BELGIUM, BEFORE RECONSTRUCTION. | IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM.



FIG. 22. BERKS CEMETERY EXTENSION AND MEMORIAL TO THE MISSING, PLOEGSTEERT, BELGIUM: HAROLD CHALTON BRADSHAW; LIONS BY GILBERT LEDWARD. | GAVIN STAMP 2007.

Verdun where a strange monumental streamlined structure with a tower, designed by Azéma, Hardy & Edeiri and built 1923-32, encloses a long barrel vaulted chamber containing thousands upon thousands of bones. As already mentioned, the gravestone adopted by the French was the cross, usually made of concrete, with a stamped tin label attached bearing the name of the dead man or the single, pathetic word "*Inconnu*". A characteristic example of French war memorial architecture is the national memorial and cemetery of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette, north of Arras, where a tall lantern tower, containing an ossuary, and a basilica rise above a vast sea of crosses (fig. 15). There are 40,000 bodies in this melancholy and desperate place, 24,000 of them in marked graves. The buildings were designed by Louis-Marie Cordonnier and his son Jacques Cordonnier, architects of the basilica at Lisieux, and built in 1921-27. Artistically they are puzzling, as although there is a slight Art Deco or modernistic quality about the tower, the Byzantinesque church might well have been designed decades earlier. Such architecture exhibits nothing of the discipline and monumentality of the British war cemeteries and memorials. It is as if France had been so devastated by the war that her architects were unable to rise to the terrible occasion. The torch of classicism, once kept alight at the *École des Beaux-Arts* in Paris, would seem to have been passed to American architects, so

many of whom were educated there. Their monumental but rather pedantic classical memorials are to be found in the American war cemeteries east of the Somme, establishing a ratio between the volume of masonry and the number of casualties far in excess of those of other nations.

The Germans were not permitted to erect memorials in the places in France where so many of their soldiers died. Many bodies were eventually taken back to Germany; most were exhumed in the 1950s to be concentrated in a few cemeteries, often in mass graves. Where the Belgians permitted permanent cemeteries to be constructed, with lodges and walls, they were designed in a rugged Arts and Crafts manner in dark stone by Robert Tischler, architect to the *Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge*, the German counterpart to the War Graves Commission, which had been established in 1919. Inside the walls, the graves are sometimes marked by rough stone crosses but many bodies lie under squares of granite bearing perhaps eight or more names on each. The cemeteries are often planted with oaks, associated with Thor, the god of war. These places were as carefully and subtly designed as the British war cemeteries and have a distinct stern, Teutonic character. The most impressive examples are at Langemarck and at Vladzlo (figs. 16 – 17). At the latter are the *Trauernden Elternpaare* – the Mourning Parents – by Käthe

Kollwitz, in front of which lies the body of her son, killed in 1914. Originally installed at a nearby cemetery at Roggevelde in 1932, these granite figures are surely among the great sculptures to emerge from the war – powerful works of art to be ranked with Allward's at Vimy, Jagger's on the Artillery Memorial in London and Rayner Hoff's on the Anzac Memorial in Sydney.

Most of the permanent British cemeteries were completed by the mid-1920s. As a feat of construction, this was a prodigious achievement, not least as the Commission's engineers had to construct foundations in unstable or waterlogged land, or in ground riddled with old trenches, dug-outs, craters and unexploded shells. Writing in 1937, Ware recorded that,

in France and Belgium alone there are 970 architecturally constructed cemeteries surrounded by 50 miles of walling in brick or stone, with nearly 1000 Crosses of Sacrifice and 560 Stones of Remembrance, and many chapels, record buildings and shelters; there are some 600,000 headstones resting on nearly 250 miles of concrete beam foundations. There are also eighteen larger memorials to those who have no known grave...<sup>30</sup>

This was one of the largest schemes of public works ever undertaken by Great Britain, far larger than the contemporary achievement of the Office of Works erecting post





FIG. 23. VIS-EN-ARTOIS BRITISH CEMETERY AND MEMORIAL TO THE MISSING, FRANCE: REGINALD TRUELOVE. | GAVIN STAMP 1977.

offices and telephone exchanges (consistently neo-Georgian in style) back home or the celebrated creation of new modern stations on the London Underground. Furthermore, high standards of design and construction were maintained despite increasing financial pressure as economic conditions worsened. Yet the work was surely cheap at the price. The total cost of *all* the Imperial War Graves Commission's cemeteries and memorials was £8,150,000, and to put this into perspective it is worth remembering that the Treasury's account for the so-called Third Battle of Ypres, that is, the horror of Passchendaele in 1917, was £22 million while just one day's shooting and shelling in September 1918 cost some £3.75 million. Sometimes it is cheaper as well as better to build rather than destroy.

Edmund Blunden, in his introduction to Fabian Ware's book, *The Immortal Heritage* published in 1937, wrote how visitors to the cemeteries

must be impressed and even astonished at the degree of beauty achieved by the creators and guardians of these resting places... The beauty, the serenity, the inspiration of the Imperial cemeteries have been frequently acknowledged by more able eulogists; for my part, I venture to speak of these lovely, elegiac closes (which almost cause me to deny my own experiences in the acres they now grace) as being after all the eloquent evidence against war. Their very flowerfulness and calm tell the lingerer that the men beneath that green coverlet should be there to

enjoy such influence; the tyranny of war stands all the more terribly revealed.<sup>31</sup>

Enough of the permanent cemeteries had been completed by 1922 to convince King George V that the Commission's principles were right when he and Queen Mary went on a pilgrimage to the battlefields. At the end, in the cemetery at Terlincthun outside Boulogne (fig. 18), in the shadow of the Colonne de la Grande Armée raised to the glory of Napoleon and commemorating the planned invasion of England, the King gave a speech in which he claimed that,

Never before in history have a people thus dedicated and maintained individual memorials to their fallen, and, in the course





FIG. 24. LE TOURET MILITARY CEMETERY AND MEMORIAL TO THE MISSING, FRANCE:  
REGINALD TRUELOVE. | GAVIN STAMP 1990.



FIG. 25. DUD CORNER CEMETERY AND LOOS MEMORIAL TO THE MISSING, LOOS, FRANCE:  
HERBERT BAKER. | GAVIN STAMP 1990.

of my pilgrimage, I have many times asked myself whether there can be more potent advocates of peace upon earth through the years to come, than this massed multitude of silent witnesses to the desolation of war.<sup>32</sup>

However, even with most of the Commission's war cemeteries completed, over half of the casualties remained uncommemorated: the Missing – those whose mutilated or burnt bodies were never identified, or who were blown to pieces, or lost at sea. Once the records had been gone through and the sums done, it emerged that there were over half a million of them: 517,000 men of the British Empire who had, in effect, disappeared between 1914 and 1918. The Commission's principles nevertheless held good and it was determined that every single missing man was to receive a permanent memorial. The question was how. The idea of "false graves" – headstones with no bodies beneath – was mooted, and rejected. Furthermore, if there were to be memorials bearing the names of the missing, were they to be organised by regiments, which was not popular with relatives of the dead, or by the geographical location of their death? It was at first decided to have the names of the missing carved on walls in eighty-five of the cemeteries.

In the end, the project for memorials to the missing was merged with a quite separate proposal for battlefield memorials endorsed by the government – something with which Ware did not want the Commission to become involved. In 1919 a National Battlefield Memorial Committee was set up under the chairmanship of the Earl of Midleton. This soon encountered difficulties and it became clear that there was a danger of wasting taxpayers' money by duplicating memorials in particular places as well as having too many of them. The situation was further complicated by the natural desire of the Dominion governments to erect their own memorials in France and Belgium. When, in 1921, the Commission was asked to handle land negotiations for the proposed battlefield memorials, it seemed more sensible for these memorials to be combined with memorials for the missing. The Midleton Committee was dissolved and, for the first time, the War Graves Commission considered building large architectural monuments.

There were now to be a dozen large memorials to the missing erected in France and Belgium. Others were to be at Gallipoli, Jerusalem and at Port Tewfik on the Suez Canal (all eventually designed by Burnet and Tait), in Basra (by Warren) and

Macedonia (by Lorimer). There were also those to commemorate men lost at sea (memorials at Chatham, Portsmouth and Plymouth were designed by Lorimer, and the Mercantile Marine Memorial at Tower Hill by Lutyens). At Kenyon's suggestion, each of the Commission's Principal Architects was to be given the opportunity to design a memorial while the design of the other memorials was to be decided by competitions. That for the memorial at La Ferté-sous-Jouarre, commemorating the Battle of the Marne, was to be limited to the Commission's Assistant Architects (and was won by Goldsmith).

The first and, in the end, the best known of the Commission's memorials was built at Ypres – "Wipers" -- the ancient, smashed Flemish city whose stubborn defence for four years was inextricably associated with the horror and tragedy of the war in the public mind. The Ypres Salient was the graveyard for a quarter of a million British dead and in January 1919 Winston Churchill announced to the Commission that "I should like us to acquire the whole of the ruins of Ypres" as a memorial, for "A more sacred place for the British race does not exist in the world"<sup>33</sup> – an idea which, not surprisingly, found little favour with its long-suffering and displaced citizens. That



same year, Reginald Blomfield was invited by the government to survey sites in Ypres for a memorial and he recommended the spot where the seventeenth-century Menin Gate by the great French military engineer Vauban had once stood and the road into the city passed over a moat and between ramparts. By 1922 Blomfield's project for the Menin Gate had developed into a Memorial to the Missing containing a Hall of Memory (fig. 19). Work began on building it the following year as, all around, a passable recreation of pre-war Ypres (today leper) was slowly rising.

For Blomfield, the Menin Gate was one of three works he wanted to be remembered by and "perhaps the only building I have ever designed in which I do not want anything altered".<sup>34</sup> The most conservative as well as the oldest of the Commission's architects, he designed a new gateway between the ramparts which was long enough for a noble vaulted stone hall to contain the names of tens of thousands of Missing on its walls. At either end, inspired by Vauban and informed by his knowledge of French Classical architecture, Blomfield created a grand arched entrance articulated by a giant Roman Doric order. Above the parapet of the arch facing outwards from the city he placed a massive lion modelled by William Reid Dick: "not fierce and truculent, but patient and enduring, looking outward as a symbol of the latent strength and heroism of our race".<sup>35</sup>

Perhaps it was the slight triumphalist air created by this feature which encouraged Siegfried Sassoon angrily to dismiss the whole thing as "a pile of peace-complacent stone." Sassoon, who knew well enough what the Ypres Salient had actually been like, wrote his poem, 'On Passing the New Menin Gate', soon after it had been inaugurated with much ceremony in 1927 as the first and most important of the Commission's Memorials to the Missing. "Was

ever an immolation so belied / As these intolerably nameless names? / Well might the Dead who struggled in the slime / Rise and deride this sepulchre of crime." But this justifiably cynical interpretation perhaps needs to be set against the reaction of the Austrian writer (and pacifist), Stefan Zweig, whose article published in 1928 in the *Berliner Tageblatt* Blomfield was pleased to quote in his *Memoirs of an Architect*:

Ypres has gained a new monument ... one that is, both spiritually and artistically, profoundly impressive – the Menin Gate, erected by the English nation to its dead, a monument more moving than any other on English soil... It is a memorial ... offered not to victory but to the dead – the victims – without any distinction, to the fallen Australians, English, Hindus and Mohammedans who are immortalised to the same degree, and in the same chambers, in the same stone, by virtue of the same death. Here there is no image of the King, no mention of victories, no genuflection to generals of genius, no prattle about Archdukes and Princes: only a laconic, noble inscription – *Pro Rege Pro Patria*. In its really Roman simplicity this monument to the six and fifty thousand is more impressive than any triumphal arch or monument to victory that I have ever seen....<sup>36</sup>

This was surely a response which fully justified the tolerant and eirenic vision of the Imperial War Graves Commission.

In the event, although some 57,000 names were carved in the Hall of Memory and on the walls of the higher lateral galleries facing the ramparts, the Menin Gate proved to be nowhere near large enough to commemorate all those disappeared in the mud of the Salient. A further 37,000 names – mainly of those who perished at Passchendaele – had to be carved on the long, curving colonnaded wall of stone and knapped flint which Herbert Baker designed to frame the large Tyne Cot war cemetery at Zillebeke (fig. 20). This cemetery was so

called because a Newcastle regiment had nicknamed the strong German reinforced concrete blockhouses "Tyne cottages" – one, at the suggestion of King George V, being retained to serve as the base for the Cross of Sacrifice (fig. 21). But by the time this cemetery and memorial was completed, the Commission's plans for Memorials to the Missing had undergone a crisis and had completely to be rethought.

The French were not at all happy about the memorials foreign governments proposed to erect on their territory – and that included what was proposed by Canada. Concern was being expressed in local newspapers – particularly about the scale of the American memorials – and questions were being asked in the Assemblée Nationale. In 1926, it was reported that "the French authorities were disquieted by the number and scale of the Memorials which the Commission proposed to erect in France and that some modification of the proposals was necessary". This disquiet had resulted in the Commission des Monuments Historiques reporting adversely on the proposals for Memorials to the Missing at Béthune, Saint-Quentin and the Faubourg d'Amiens Cemetery in Arras. Lutyens had been asked in 1923 to design a memorial at Saint-Quentin to accommodate 60,000 names, later reduced to 30,000, and had come up with the multiple arch concept which would eventually be realised at Thiépval. Here it was to be almost 180 feet high and the principal arch was to straddle a road – an idea no doubt suggested by Blomfield's Menin Gate – but the Corps des Ponts et Chaussées objected to this straddling. At Arras, Lutyens proposed an extraordinary high, thin arch, 124 feet high, as a memorial to missing airmen; its sides were to consist of a vertical series of diminishing blocks, each pierced by an arched tunnel arranged on alternate axes and filled with bells which would swing and toll with the wind.



In April 1926, Major A.L. Ingpen, the Secretary-General of the Anglo-French Mixed Committee established in 1918 to smooth the diplomacy required by the Commission's work, explained the problem to Ware.

The Commission des Monuments Historiques is of the opinion that the designs submitted are somewhat exaggerated, and too grandiose. Further, and in view of the fact that, owing to the present financial conditions in France, the French Government can do nothing to commemorate their own missing, such grandiose monuments will not be understood, or appreciated, by the general public, and may give rise to hostile comment, not only of an international character, but also against the Commission des Monuments Historiques itself for having approved such grandiose schemes put forward by a foreign government, for execution on French territory.

Ingpen feared that to raise a colossal arch at Saint-Quentin would seem, "in the eyes of the public, to be unreasonably obtrusive," especially in a place where the French had sustained as severe, if not greater losses. Ware was not unsympathetic to this argument, for France was suffering even more than Britain from the losses of the war and from the huge cost of reconstructing the great swathe of country devastated by the fighting, and he replied that "The attitude of the Commission des Monuments Historiques does not surprise me; indeed, the only complaint one can offer about it is that it was not made known to us earlier." Others agreed, not least Lord Crewe, British Ambassador to France, who informed Ware "how strongly I feel that expensive and ostentatious Memorials are out of place in this country...".

Ware had to use all his diplomatic skills to "prevent a heap of trouble" and "a first class row". He was particularly anxious to stop the Monuments Historiques formally reporting to the French Foreign Office that

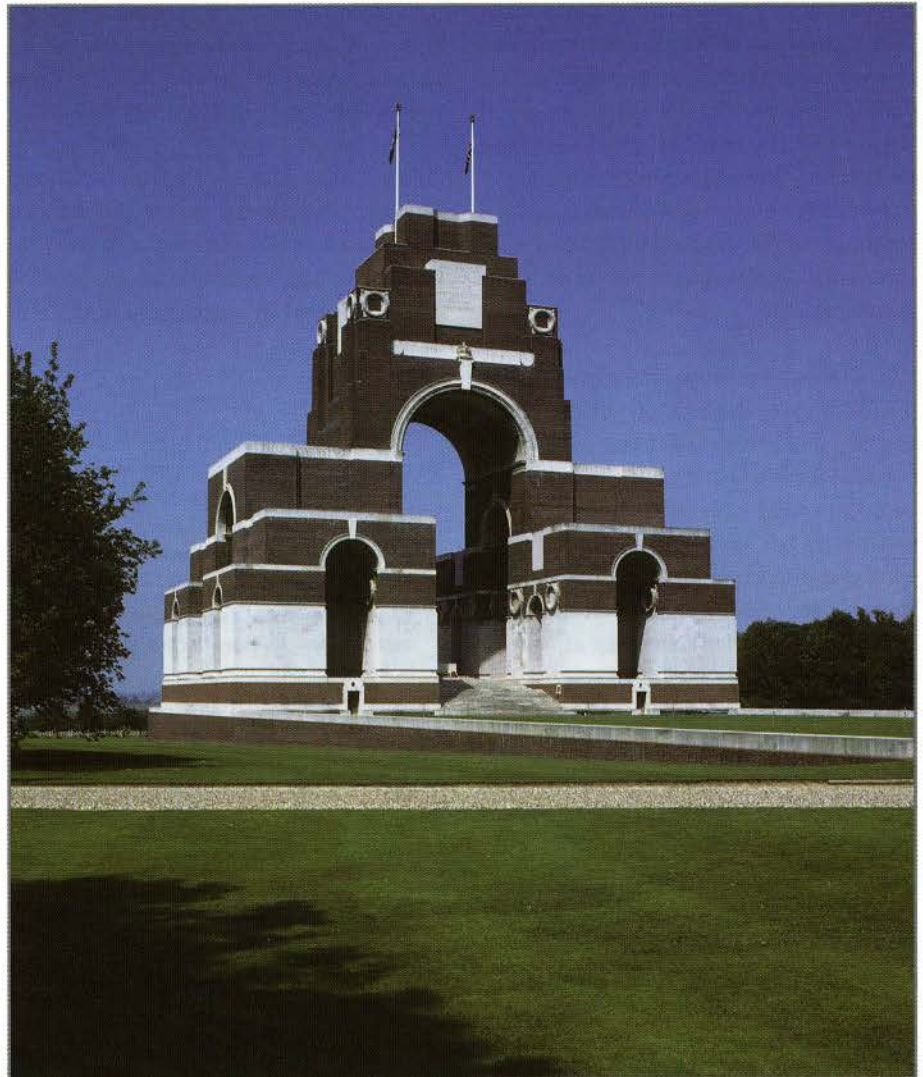


FIG. 26. MEMORIAL TO THE MISSING OF THE SOMME AT THIEPVAL, FRANCE: EDWIN LUTYENS. | PIERRE DU PREY 1987.

it opposed the memorials at Arras, Vimy Ridge and "the imposing and beautiful memorial of Lutyens' at Saint-Quentin". The whole matter was discussed by the Anglo-French Mixed Committee and it was eventually agreed that proposed memorials at Saint-Quentin, Cambrai, Béthune, Lille, and Pozières should be abandoned and that, instead of twelve memorials, there would now only be four in France and two in Belgium. The names of the Missing which could not be accommodated on these purpose-built memorials would be transferred to

smaller memorials to be erected in existing war cemeteries. The proposed memorial at Lille, for which H.C. Bradshaw had won a competition, was therefore taken over the Belgian frontier to the cemetery at Ploegsteert (fig. 22). Bradshaw had also won the competition for the memorial at Cambrai and this was now transferred to Louveral cemetery. Similarly, J.R. Truelove designed memorials within existing cemeteries at Vis-en-Artois and Le Touret (figs. 23 – 24). Some of the names intended for several memorials on the Somme were transferred



to a memorial colonnaded wall designed by W.H. Cowlshaw at Pozières cemetery and Herbert Baker designed a memorial in Dud Corner cemetery (fig. 25) at Loos so called because of the number of unexploded shells found there) to replace the memorial intended for Béthune. At Arras, Lutyens's proposal for the Faubourg d'Amiens cemetery was completely redesigned on a less grandiose scale.

What remained to be established were the locations of the four new memorials in France. Land had already been acquired at Soissons for the rather pedestrian memorial by V.O. Rees with three stiff figures of soldiers by Eric Kennington. The contract for Goldsmith's memorial at La Ferté had already been acquired and work had started on Baker's Indian memorial at Neuve-Chapelle. That left but one memorial to replace the one at Saint-Quentin and the two intended for the Somme battlefield, at the Butte de Warlencourt and between Contalmaison and Pozières (which was to have been designed by Baker). It was decided that this – now the only battlefield memorial to be built in France – must be on the Somme, and at Thiepval. Lutyens was asked to consider moving his Saint-Quentin design to Thiepval Ridge and, after further delicate negotiations, work began in 1928.

The Memorial to the Missing of the Somme (fig. 26), bearing the names of 73,000 men on the internal walls between 16 piers, was the last of the Imperial War Graves Commission's memorials to be completed (although the Australian Memorial at Villers-Bretonneaux was not finished until 1938). Lutyens's vast, astonishing creation was unveiled in 1932 and is arguably the finest British work of architecture of the twentieth century – even if on the other side of the English Channel – although, in both its reliance on developing the classical tradition and in having no place for

figurative sculpture, it represents a very different approach to that adopted by Canada at Vimy Ridge for commemorating the terrible losses of the Great War.

[Editor's note: This article is an expanded version of the relevant text in the author's recent book on *The Memorial to the Missing of the Somme*, Profile Books, London 2006, reviewed by Joan Coutu at the end of this issue.]

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30. Ware: 56.
31. Ware: 20.
32. *The King's Pilgrimage*, London, Hodder & Stoughton.
33. 21 January, 1919, quoted in Dendooven, Dominiek, 2001, *Menin Gate & Last Post*, Koksijde, De Klaproos, p. 20.
34. Blomfield :189; the others were the Quadrant of Regent Street and Lambeth Bridge, both in London.
35. *Ibid*.
36. *Berliner Tageblatt* 16 September, 1916, quoted in Blomfield: 190-191.