



COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES COMMISSION

Hard and Soft Landscaping in War Cemeteries

The Founding Principles

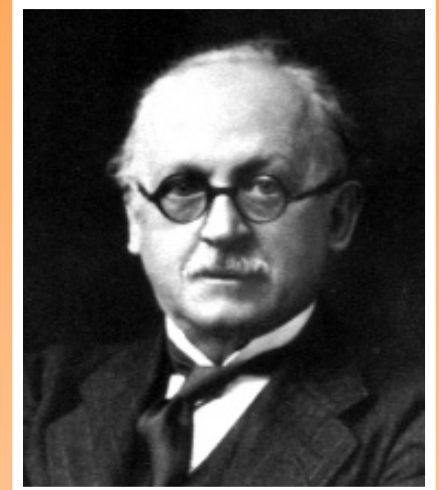
It is probably fair to say that the Commission's work of commemorating the sacrifice of those who gave their lives for freedom was the most extensive landscape project ever undertaken. Sir Frederic Kenyon, the Director of the British Museum, was given the task of bringing together the differing views expressed by numerous eminent architects of the time as to how the cemeteries were to be laid out. His report, presented to the then Imperial War Graves Commission in November 1918, articulated the principles: that each of the dead should be commemorated individually by name either on the headstone on the grave or by an inscription on a memorial; that the headstones should be uniform; and that no distinction should be made on account of military or civil rank, race or creed.

Of the first three Principal Architects, Reginald Blomfield, Herbert Baker and Edwin Lutyens, it was probably Lutyens whose direction and breadth of vision laid the foundations for the successful design and construction of the first of many thousands of war cemeteries throughout the world. Under the supervision of the architects numerous younger assistants worked. Thus a balance was struck between youth and experience and between individuality and a common theme of design.

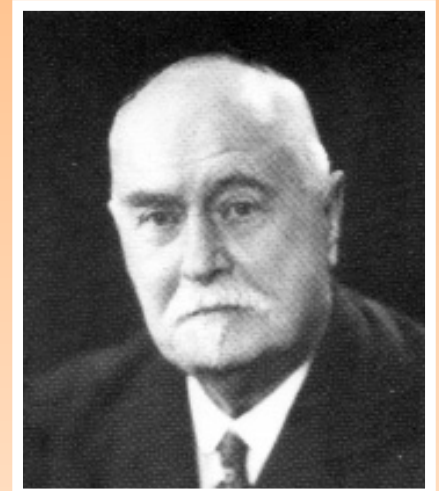
Early Designs

It has always been the policy of the Commission to create cemeteries and memorials at, or as near as possible to, the places where death occurred. Yet a comparison can easily be made between the designs of the First World War and the Second World War cemeteries. Generally the 1914-18 cemeteries took shape on the ground where the men actually fell and quite often they had to be designed around peculiar layouts and existing burial grounds. For instance, some were built around shell holes, ammunition dumps, collecting outposts or casualty clearing stations. On the other hand the 1939-45 cemeteries are mainly "concentration cemeteries". Most of them were specifically designed to take a given number of burials at pre-selected sites and, therefore, the architects had much greater scope - they were able to use the siting aspect and prospect to full advantage and this produced fewer problems in design.

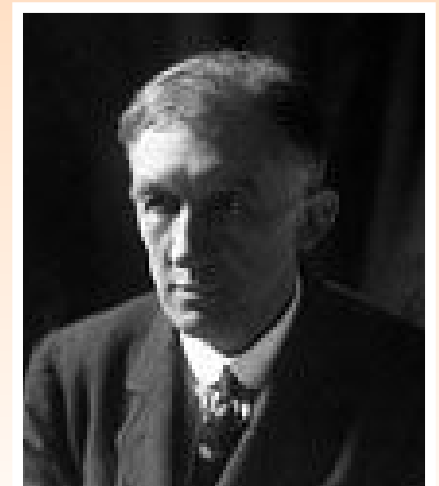
Thus it can be seen that the cemeteries, though following a general pattern of design, have individual characteristics, derived from the rocks and soil, the climate and vegetation of each locality, as well as from the contours of the site. Each cemetery becomes a natural part of its surrounding scenery and no two are identical.



Edwin Lutyens



Reginald Blomfield



Herbert Baker

Principal Design Features

The consistent elements of the cemeteries are plain, uniform headstones in a garden setting, the Cross of Sacrifice designed by Sir Reginald Blomfield and the Stone of Remembrance designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens. Although the architect responsible for designing a cemetery occasionally had some scope for individuality in gateways and ancillary buildings, (shelters and chapels), his work was principally a matter of skillful landscaping and layout in embodying these elements. Imaginative use of the contours in forming levels, the design of retaining walls, the pattern of paths, lawns and flowerbeds, the placing of the larger trees and shrubs, the layout of approaches provided the lesser elements - in themselves deceptively simple - with which the architect had to work. The scheme of planting in each cemetery was given most careful study, the architect working in close liaison with horticultural advisors.

This subtle, restrained field of design seems to owe much to the tradition of English landscape gardening and perhaps something to the typical English churchyard. That this is so appears from the striking differences between these Commonwealth war cemeteries and those of other nations.

The **Tyne Cot Memorial** forms the north-eastern boundary to **Tyne Cot Cemetery** and gets its name 'Tyne Cottages' or 'Tyne Cotts' from the Northumberland Fusiliers. The reference is to a group of German blockhouses situated close by, three of which still stand in the cemetery. The memorial, designed by Sir Herbert Baker, is a semicircular flint wall over 150 metres long, faced with panels of Portland stone. There are three apses and two rotundas. Two domed arched pavilions mark the ends of the main wall, each dome being surmounted by a winged female figure with a head bowed over a wreath.

Baker supervised the design of 112 cemeteries in France and Belgium between 1918 and 1928. Prior to his work with the Imperial War Graves Commission he assisted Sir Edwin Lutyens at New Dehli in 1913 where he designed the Secretariats and the Legislative Assembly. After the war he was commissioned to design India House, South Africa House and the rebuilding of the Bank of England.



Tyne Cot Memorial, Belgium



VC Corner, Australian Cemetery, France: Architect Sir Herbert Baker

The cemetery contains the graves of 410 unidentified Australians and records the names of 1,298 Australian 'Missing'. The bronze register box is set in a stone wall at the entrance. A simple planting of *Iris pallida* 'Variegata' in a niche picks out the highlighted cross and surround of the box and alleviates the problem of mowing.

VC Corner, Australian Cemetery, France

Ostende New Communal Cemetery, Belgium:
Architect Major George Hartley Goldsmith

Goldsmith designed 67 cemeteries including the Memorial to the Missing at La Ferté on the Marne. At Ostende New Communal Cemetery his simple stone shelter houses the bronze register box and is a setting for a colourful display of Disco Dancer roses, *Stachys byzantina*, *Alchemilla mollis* AGM, *Doronium caucasicum* (syn. *D orientale*) and *Scabiosa caucasica*.



Ostende New Communal Cemetery, Belgium

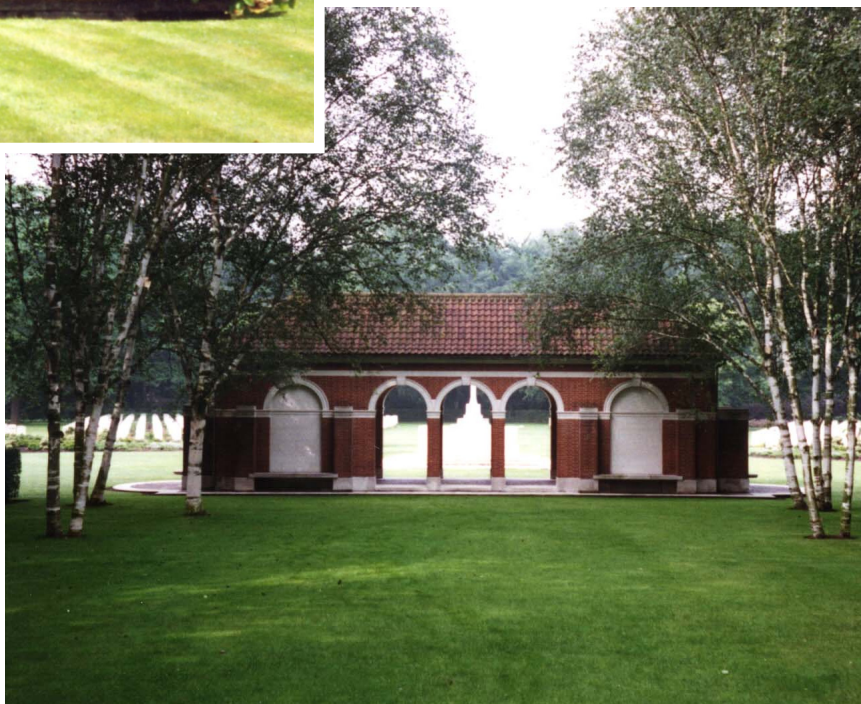
The style of architecture chosen for the stone shelter at **Becklingen** is reminiscent of local designs. The setting is woodland and the shelter is incorporated into the cemetery design by large colourful mounds of *Hydrangea paniculata* 'Grandiflora' AGM. Quite a contrasting style is chosen for the entrance feature at **Jonkerbos War Cemetery**, Netherlands. Dutch brick is chosen, reflecting local use, and an avenue of *Betula pendula* in groups flanks the entrance and provides shade to two seats.



Becklingen War Cemetery, Germany

Becklingen War Cemetery, Germany;
Jonkerbos War Cemetery, Holland:
Architect Philip Hepworth

Hepworth was an architect of great speed and brilliance, a man of sensitivity and eccentricity. Rarely modernistic, he was influenced by classical, English and local Norman styles. He planned the layout only after intensive consultations with gardeners. His influence extended to the design of cemeteries in France and Belgium and later in Holland and Germany.



Jonkerbos War Cemetery, Netherlands

Mazargues War Cemetery, France:
Architect Arthur James Scott Hutton

Hutton trained at Glasgow school of architecture and designed 67 cemeteries in northern Europe. After leaving the Commission in 1926 he went to Kenya to work for the Public Works Department (on the recommendation of Sir Herbert Baker) to supervise the erection of Government buildings. The cemetery at Mazargues, in the south of France near Marseilles, is laid out featuring stone water channels and circular pools. *Iris pallida* 'Variegata' again has been selected for its vertical swords of foliage complementing the knife edge channels and crisp turf edges.



Mazargues War Cemetery, France



Queant Communal Cemetery British Extension, France

Croisilles Railway Cemetery, France and Queant Communal Cemetery British Extension, France: Architect Sir Edwin Lutyens

From the very beginning, Lutyens' influence was significant. Not only did he design the Stone of Remembrance (seen in the photograph of **Heliopolis War Cemetery**) but also the Memorial to the Missing at Arras, Faubourg d'Amiens; the **Thiepval Memorial** to the Missing on the Somme and the **Villers Bretonneux Australian National Memorial**. He supervised the design of 126 cemeteries including **Etaples Military Cemetery**, France. Prior to his work with the then Imperial War Graves Commission he was Architect for New Delhi and designed the Viceroy's House. He is perhaps remembered mostly in the United Kingdom for designing the Cenotaph in Whitehall.

Queant Communal Cemetery British Extension is a simple design for a small cemetery with the Cross of Sacrifice at the entrance in a paved area flanked by two *Crataegus laevigata* 'Paul's Scarlet' of similar stature. Surrounding walls are of local flint.

Lutyens' design for **Croisilles Railway Cemetery** included a stone seat with a curved 'backcloth' rubble wall which not only curved in the vertical plane but also wrapped around the seat providing a sense of enclosure and protection. *Rosa* 'Iceberg' completes the setting on either side.



Croisilles Railway Cemetery, France

Dehli War Cemetery, India: Architect Henry J Brown

Very little is known of Henry Brown other than that he also designed the cemeteries at Karachi and Madras. Beyond the entrance building, and just inside the cemetery, is a paved forecourt of Dholpur stone. A formal planting of *Platyclusus orientalis* 'Compacta' (syn. *Rosedalis* or *Sieboldii*) clipped squares leads the visitor to the Stone of Remembrance and on to the Cross of Sacrifice down an avenue of the flamboyant trees (*Delonix regia*).

Behind the Cross of Sacrifice vertical spires of *Polyalthia longifolia* 'Pendula' complete the formal planting in the cemetery. Across the cemetery the architect chose to use four long pergolas which have been planted with *Bougainvillea* to provide shade from the burning sun.



above and left: Dehli War Cemetery, India



below: Taiping War Cemetery, Malaysia

Taiping War Cemetery, Malaysia:

Architect Colin St C. R. Oakes

Oakes was the Principal Architect for India, Burma and south-east Asia and was responsible, among many others for the design of **Kohima War Cemetery**. His drawing for Kohima was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1947. Within the cemetery are two shelter features where the visitor can take respite from the tropical sun. The sealing wax palms, *Cyrtostachys renda*, stand guard astride the seat with a *Plumeria rubra* behind gently wafting its fragrance into the warm air. *Axonopus* grass forms a dense, green carpet around.



Orchard Dump Cemetery, France:

Architect Noël Ackroyd Rew

Rew who was responsible for designing 42 cemeteries in France and Belgium came from a background in ecclesiastical work. He chose an attractive local stone for a rubble wall linking two shelter features. Climbing roses admirably suited to this south-eastern aspect, flower profusely.

Orchard Dump Cemetery, France



Phaleron War Cemetery, Greece

is from a busy, noisy main road into a tranquil setting of lush green grass and flower borders. The architect has used an expanse of marble from the entrance feature (not shown) to the memorial stelae and featured multiple bastions which have been planted with the deep red rose 'Scarlet Pimpernel', *syn. Gem.* Walking further into the cemetery, and similar in layout to **Dehli War Cemetery**, the visitor is guided to pergolas incorporating stone seats and covered with a multitude of climbers including *Bougainvillea*, *Parthenocissus* and *Vitis* on the horizontal spars and beams, with *Solanum jasminoides*, *Jasminum* and *Tecoma capensis* AGM (*syn. Tecomaria capensis*) on the pillars.

A strikingly designed cemetery is that at **Ancona**

Phaleron War Cemetery, Greece; Ancona War Cemetery, Italy; Cassino War Cemetery, Italy; Rimini Gurkha War Cemetery, Italy; Rome War Cemetery, Italy: Architect Louis de Soissons

In the United Kingdom, Louis de Soissons' main work was at Welwyn Garden City. An ardent classicist, he reflected the art of Greece and Rome in a host of minor features: urns, pediments, drainage grilles. At Phaleron he used pentellic marble with which the Parthenon was built. In Italy, he favoured travertine stone, local rustic tiles and long narrow bricks like tegulae. In all, the cohesion of his designs depended upon landscaping, and whilst conveying something of the spirit of the formal Italian style, he succeeded in making gardens essentially English in their charm.



Ancona War Cemetery, Italy

The entrance to **Phaleron War Cemetery**



incorporating a long flight of mule steps in travertine with individual designs in multicoloured pebbles from the Adriatic beaches. *Nepeta racemosa* (*syn. mussini*), shown here in May, and chosen for its faultless complementary colour against the pebble steps, will eventually cascade over the brick faced bastions.

Cassino War Cemetery is often said to be one of his finest creations, situated at the base of Monte Cassino which saw some of the fiercest fighting of the Italian campaign in 1944. The garden created is highly formal with beds of *Berberis thunbergii* 'Atropurpurea Nana' AGM and *Buxus sempervirens* 'Suffruticosa' AGM surrounding a pool of water lilies and enclosed by a low hedge of *Abelia chinensis*. Paving is in light and dark travertine with raised pebble insets. Terminals of *Thuja orientalis* lead to the entrance feature and *Pinus pinea* flank the view in the distance.

Cassino War Cemetery, Italy



left: Rimini Gurkha War Cemetery, Italy

centre: Rome War Cemetery, Italy

below: Rhodes War Cemetery, Greece

A spring scene here in **Rimini Gurkha War Cemetery** of colourful herbaceous borders, crisp turf edges and *Cercis siliquastrum* AGM trees around a cremation memorial in Botticino. *Cedrus deodara* AGM trees are chosen for commemorative purposes and reflect the distant origins of the Gurkha soldiers.

Rome War Cemetery lies under the shadow of the Aurelian Wall of the ancient city of Rome and close to the Protestant cemetery where Keats and Shelley are buried. The entrance to the cemetery is through a rotunda which has a conical roof with handmade tiles. Trees of *Pinus pinea* AGM and *Cupressus sempervirens* 'Stricta' AGM, so typical of the region, provide shade and majesty to complement the building.



Rhodes War Cemetery, Greece:

Architect William Stewart

Immediately behind the war cemetery is a Greek burial ground of the second century B.C., the tombs being cut in the rock face below the hillside. Stewart designed the cemetery in order to harmonise with these archaeological remains. Instead of turf, the ground is covered in pebbles and herbaceous plants, to include *Coryopsis grandiflora*, *Geum*, *Saxifraga*, *Dianthus* and *Erigeron karvinskianus* AGM (syn. *mucronatus*), which tumble over the border's edge.

Bedford House Cemetery,



Belgium:

Architect Captain Wilfrid Clement Von Berg

Von Berg, appointed assistant architect working under **Baker, Lutyens** and **Blomfield**, designed over 39 cemeteries, Bedford House being one of his greatest challenges. Bedford House, sometimes known as Woodcote House, were the names given by the army to Chateau Rosendal which, by the end of the war, had been destroyed by shell fire. Its remains lie within the cemetery. Berg united the various cemeteries or enclosures around the chateau into **Bedford House Cemetery** and introduced a small tempietto shown here in the photograph. The narrow avenue to the tempietto is planted with *Lavandula angustifolia* 'Dwarf Blue'



Bedford House Cemetery, Belgium

Alexandria (Hadra) War Memorial Cemetery, Egypt; Fayid War Cemetery, Egypt; Heliopolis War Cemetery, Egypt: Architect Sir Hubert Worthington

Worthington was Principal Architect for north Africa and his designs included the cemeteries of El Alamein, Tobruk and Medjez el Bab. In his early days he worked as an assistant to **Lutyens**.



Heliopolis War Cemetery, Egypt

Heliopolis War Cemetery, situated east of Cairo in a moderately quiet suburb surrounded by a dense belt of *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*. The Stone of Remembrance, at the entrance to the cemetery, is surrounded by beds of *Aloe* sp. (possibly *Aloe lineata* 'Muirii') and four clipped *Cupressus sempervirens* 'Stricta' AGM.

Fayid War Cemetery is situated near the Suez Canal amongst palm and mango groves. The raised beds in Helwan stone, quarried on the east bank of the Nile near Cairo have been planted with a single specimen of *Agave americana* 'Variegata' underplanted with *Aloe* sp. (possibly *A. lineata* 'Muirii').



Alexandria (Hadra) War Memorial Cemetery, Egypt

A colourful headstone border in **Alexandria (Hadra) War Memorial Cemetery** shown here in April planted with *Roses, Verbena, Calendula* and *Irises*.

Fayid War Cemetery, Egypt

