

Aspects of Remembrance
a sabbatical study
by Revd Bill Young



**Front Cover: 'The Grieving Parents' (Sculptor, Käthe Kollwitz),
Vladslo German Military Cemetery, Belgium**



Back Cover: Poppies, Fletchamstead Highway, Coventry

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2017 - 2018

PREFACE

This document describes the background and content of a study on the topic of Remembrance carried out principally from September to November 2017. This was during a 'sabbatical' period of absence from my usual church-related activities, as offered by the United Reformed Church ('URC') to its ministers every ten years after ordination. At this time and since October 2015 I have had shared oversight of a Group of four United Reformed Churches in Coventry: Foleshill Road URC, Holyhead Road URC, Keresley URC and Potters Green URC.

I say that the study was 'principally' carried out during the formal three-month sabbatical period, since in fact there had been thoughts about the 'Remembrance' topic stirring for some time and a proportion of the reflection and the vast majority of the write-up of the material then took place after November 2017 and into late 2018. Some of the foundations of the material presented here were laid during initial work on my own family's history, undertaken while looking at Scottish Church History topics as part of my first sabbatical in 2006. I made a special, if brief, study of the origins of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission as part of a certificate course in History at the University of Warwick in 2014-15. The resulting essay is among the Appendices to this report.

A presentation of this work was made at a meeting in Holyhead Road URC on the evening of 26 April 2018 with an attendance of 25, comprising Group and Area church members and worship leaders as well as two associated with the West Midlands Synod.

A further presentation was planned as a West Midlands Synod event to take place at the Synod Office on Saturday 29 September 2018 but was cancelled due to low numbers.

My thanks are due to the URC for the space and time to conduct this study and to numerous people who have given ideas, encouragement, the loan of materials, active help or simply their friendly interest during this period. I would like to single out:

- My two 'Synod' visitors to the April meeting, Stuart and Jan Scott. Revd Stuart Scott, Training and Development Officer of the URC West Midlands Synod, was my supervisor through the sabbatical period and helped to focus thoughts that otherwise all too easily ran away down various avenues. Jan very generously lent her time and

personal archive of Aberfan material to illustrate a particularly vivid instance of active Remembrance and also hosted me in a visit to the village of Aberfan at Easter 2018.

- Revd Dr Stuart Jennings, now retired but lately chaplain at the universities of Warwick and Coventry and tutor on my University of Warwick certificate course in WW1 Studies 2014-15. The Edinburgh (Scottish National War Memorial) visit was his idea.
- Nora and Mick Bridge of our Keresley church who have taken kind interest in the whole enterprise and acted as roving researchers, thinking of me during their own visits to the National Memorial Arboretum and to the Pearl Harbor and USS Arizona memorials while on holiday in Hawaii.
- My wife Erica who took on some of the 'missing preacher' load for our four churches during my sabbatical break when she more than deserved a break herself, as well as encouraging and living with the consequences of my various journeyings. She accompanied me to Edinburgh and negotiated for us the privilege of entry into the National War Memorial Shrine, while other visitors to the castle looked on in awe and envy from the other side of the gates! Through our Cologne visit in February 2018 she came to appreciate Kollwitz and Barlach, and it was the greatest joy to share the 'coda' to this study with her and the Kollwitz statues at Vladslo German Cemetery on 3 August 2018. She is also my principal reviewer and proof-reader.

Note on online materials

This report is available as a free download from the website www.revdbill.info. The website also includes a link to the original presentation used in the April meeting at Holyhead Road URC, and a number of additional photographs accumulated during the study.

Note on illustrations

The write-up of a clergyman's sabbatical is the last place to be contravening copyright laws if one can avoid it. Although it is frustrating not to be able to illustrate all aspects of my studies to the extent I would wish (for example, photography is banned in the Scottish National War Memorial), with a few exceptions licensed from the 'Shutterstock' website or elsewhere all of the photographs in this report are either my own or my family's.

1 Introduction – Why Remembrance?

The deeper I delve into the theme of Remembrance, the more shallow my researches seem. Every different aspect that I have looked at could itself spawn other avenues to explore, and there has been a risk throughout this period of study that there would be no kind of coherent 'whole' to present at the end of it. As it is, labelling both the April presentation and this write-up as '**Aspects** of Remembrance' allows for the fact that on this topic there can be no single answer to a single question. This could perhaps be a life's work, certainly a much longer and more academic study. There are many other 'aspects' that could have been addressed. If, in the end, this report is a 'taster' or a limited anthology then this will simply represent the richness of the many different strands I have encountered on the journey. But why embark on the journey? Why this topic? The answer, like the topic, is not a simple one.

The Young Family and World War One

I spent my first ministerial sabbatical (in late 2006) looking at the theme of Scottish Church History through the lens of my own family background – grandparents on two sides of the family being from different strands of the Presbyterian Church and having lived through the unions, schisms and re-unions of the first part of the 20th century. My grandfather Revd John Young BD trained and ministered in three different denominations¹ between the 1890s and the 1940s.

The genealogical material which I began to amass during 2006 gave me a foundation for later interpreting the large quantity of physical material that came to me after the death of my godmother, my father's cousin Moira, in July 2012. Moira's father, my great-uncle William Auld Taylor Young (known variously in the archive as 'Willie', 'WATY' or 'Wilyam'), had a large helping of the Young family 'don't throw anything away' gene. Moira inherited this along with notebooks, photographs and negatives from as early as 1900, the half-plate camera that took some of them, an old moth-eaten uniform, souvenir editions of various newspapers and a small archive of family letters. The latter seem to have been sent and received almost as often as texts today; some are very short and obviously continue a previous day's conversation.

¹ The United Presbyterian Church, the United Free Church and the Church of Scotland

The richest vein of this family material is found in and around the period of First World War and relates to my great-uncles' experience of it. Willie's working life was spent as a salesman with a jewellers and watchmakers' business in central Glasgow. His retained letters dating from the War years are especially interesting, as is his written chronological record of his war service. He completed this account in the early 1920s after having kept diary notes throughout the period from 1915 to 1919, during which he served in the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC). To further investigate and curate this family material seemed a form of 'Remembrance' that I should usefully pursue. This remains a work-in-progress. A few gems from the collection are discussed among the evidence in Section 2.1.

2014-15 University of Warwick Course

The sense of marking the First World War centenary has been in the air since 2014. During the academic year 2014-15 I attended a certificate course in First World War Studies at the University of Warwick, following a programme that looked not just at the social and political history of the War period but also at its literature and art. This gave me an opportunity to look more broadly than before at the poetry of the War, to take a first look at the output of war artists of all nationalities, both official and not, and to revisit some of the historical themes that I had not seriously considered since early secondary school days.

I think the overall experience of this course was both very useful background for the present study of Remembrance and something of a spur to undertake it. This especially relates to the brief study I made of the origins of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission ('CWGC') for one of my Warwick essays. The essay 'In what ways did the design and purpose of the British War Cemeteries seek to meet the challenges of grief and loss at the end of the war?' is appended to this report.

Podcast Promptings

Neil MacGregor, who is currently the (founding) director of the Humboldt Forum museum project in Berlin was formerly director in turn of the National Gallery in London and then the British Museum. He wrote and presented a 30-episode series of quarter-hour programmes on BBC Radio 4, aired between September and November 2014: 'Germany – Memories of a Nation'. Each broadcast was shaped around describing objects, people or buildings that evoked a particular phase of German history, art or science and hence helped to define the German collective memory. These objects were also featured in a British Museum exhibition of the same name, open from October 2014 to January 2015. With members of my family I

saw this exhibition in the November, having devoured the radio programmes in podcast form on my daily commute. I have listened again, with a couple of re-runs of the series since.

Certain revelations within the series, and objects first heard described and then seen, have become cemented in my brain. I was fascinated, for example, to hear of the early development of the German language and sense of nationhood, the language given a boost by Luther's approach to Bible translation. I was also attracted by the story of post-Second World War Germany and of post-reunification Germany, each with something of a shadow on them of earlier conflicts. Again, a flavour of Remembrance.

Two episodes were particularly telling. One was the story of the post-First World War memorial sculpture, Ernst Barlach's 1926 'Hovering Angel', which was to survive in its place in Güstrow Cathedral for only eleven years before being destroyed by the Nazi authorities as part of their purge of 'degenerate' art. A re-cast version, after being in hiding for some time, was installed in a church in Cologne. I had first seen it there during a visit in January 2012. Güstrow now has its own copy again, which, astonishingly, was lent to the British Museum for the 2014 exhibition. The other episode I have returned to multiple times (this whole series remains available online and as a podcast²) featured the story and Expressionist art of Käthe Kollwitz. These artists and artworks resonated with my growing thoughts on Remembrance study and I have added their stories to the sabbatical 'episodes' described and discussed more fully in Section 2.

A further podcast prompt came from a 'Philosophy Bites'³ interview which I came across in late 2016 while looking for other material published by an academic philosopher friend of mine. Philosophy Bites are short interviews available to download and keep or to simply listen to on the web. I have sampled others – frankly, they are sometimes quite opaque but this one resonated and made me think I could look seriously at Remembrance during my sabbatical (planned for nearly a year later) and not just use the time as a contrived excuse for more family history research! The interviewee Cécile Fabre is an Oxford academic with a particular focus on Cosmopolitanism and the ethics of war. Again, more on this in Section 2.

Remembrance Practice in the Church

A final good reason to look at Remembrance was its inexorable annual return as the focus of worship in our churches. For many years I have had a personal struggle with the subject,

² <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b04dwbwz> (3 October 2018)

³ <http://philosophybites.com/2016/09/c%C3%A9cile-fabre-on-remembrance.html> (3 October 2018)

how I should treat it and how to manage church members' expectations of 'Remembrance Sunday'. I delivered my first Remembrance Sunday service, as a Lay Preacher, over 30 years ago at Keresley URC. They invited me back twice in the next five years, and there are other churches where I have a similar record. If nothing else, this is good discipline in not repeating yourself. This is also an occasion when one cannot ignore the obvious subject matter. Within those 30 years I did have a period where I avoided trying to blend my own preferences with other people's expectations by visiting my brother and sister-in-law in London with our young family for the Lord Mayor's Show and firework display each year. This event usually falls on Remembrance Sunday weekend. The children are grown up and I no longer deploy this avoidance technique. I have my own approach to preparing such a service, I am comfortable with it, and thanks to this sabbatical I have some new ideas to blend in, new illustrations to bring to the party not just this centenary year but for years to come. I had already thought of reviewing some of the family history material to make use of in Remembrance Day worship in 2018, when 11 November itself falls on a Sunday. My ideas on how to do this are more mature, now that I have looked again at this material at the same time as looking at other Remembrance topics.

In considering the Remembrance topic I have thought and discussed with others how I might have first picked up, as a child, on the elements of standard or conventional Remembrance practice. It is impossible to pinpoint when I was first reasonably aware of the details. The encounter with poppies at school, around the shops, at church would come first. A little like Christmas, there were aspects of the observance that simply came along at the right time every year. The two minutes' silence. It was one of the services in the year at our church in Cheshire⁴ when the National Anthem would be sung at the close. My parents would also treat viewing of the Saturday evening Royal Albert Hall Festival of Remembrance as a part of the ritual, featuring as it still did in the 1960s and early 1970s various veteran soldiers as commentators and entertainers with whom they could identify.⁵

'Episodes'

These various promptings allowed me to shape a programme of visits during the three-month formal leave of absence from local church activities, achieved alongside my continuing full-time employment in the automotive industry. In the following section I record further details of each and of the additional material gathered right up to September 2018.

⁴ Hale Congregational Church, then URC; we attended from 1966 to 1975.

⁵ Notably Raymond Baxter (ex RAF) to commentate and Ralph Reader leading community singing.

2 Sabbatical 'Episodes'

Appendix 1 gives a chronological list of the main 'events' of my sabbatical and the ensuing period of reflection and follow-up visits and other activity. The following 'episodes' draw on these events and others, not necessarily in chronological order, to feed the subsequent reflection.

2.1 A Family at War (Young Family archive extracts)



Figure 1: The Young Family of Abbey Drive, Glasgow, 1908
(Rear) Alick, Bob, Kate, John, Nell, James, Willie, (Front) Jenny, William, Maggie, May

Through my great-uncle's 'War Record' we have an insight into the life of one particular individual, caught up in the national emergency, having not seen it coming and to begin with not realising how long it would go on. Willie's preface (1921) looks back and acknowledges that this is just one way the War was experienced:

In 'The Great War for Civilization' (as the medals call it), 1914-1919, it is doubtful if any two men taking active part in it for any appreciable time had the same experiences. Even friends

joining the same unit together soon had different duties. Had different guards and pickets, 'clicked' for different fatigues, got home 'leaves' at different times, or when abroad got wounded, admitted to Hospital, or transferred to different units separately. Some got commissioned, some got the 'birdcage' (in army language, field punishment) not that they differed from many others, but that they were found out.⁶

Willie's enlistment had come about unexpectedly, in the period after the Battle of Loos. As he recalls:

The cry was now for 'men and more men' and the Derby Scheme⁷, which was a system of compulsory enlistment by groups, according to the age and responsibility of the man, came into force. Many who had refrained from joining the army through responsibilities, age and the hope that things would always take a turn and something would finish it, now saw that they would be required in the end and thought it better to join up voluntarily than wait on compulsion.

The age limit in the first months of the War was 35 and at this time I was in my 39th year. My brother Alick, who was 29, had been debarred from previously joining through defective eyesight, not being able to pass the test for the infantry.

He was now anxious to try again so I agreed that I would go with him and try to enlist in the Royal Army Medical Corps where the requirements were not so strict.

This was in the last week of October 1915. I was accepted as being fit and 'A1' but he was rejected again through the eyesight test, and we had to part company.

Having crossed the 'Rubicon', the rest of the week was a busy one squaring up affairs, and on Saturday I presented myself at the Headquarters of the unit at Yorkhill to receive my uniform and equipment.⁸

Willie's account (see Figure 2) finishes with his demobilisation, back in Glasgow again, in March 1919. In the intervening time he had trained and exercised in various locations in Scotland, England and Ireland⁹ before being sent overseas to a Field Hospital in Salonika, Greece, supporting the local campaign against Bulgaria. Willie was still in Greece when the War finished.

⁶ William A T Young 'War Record' manuscript, Preface

⁷ A system of recruitment, short of actual conscription, initiated by the Earl of Derby in the autumn of 1915.

⁸ Young, War Record, entry for 30th October 1915.

⁹ We should recall that Ireland in 1916 was a potentially troublesome and dangerous posting.

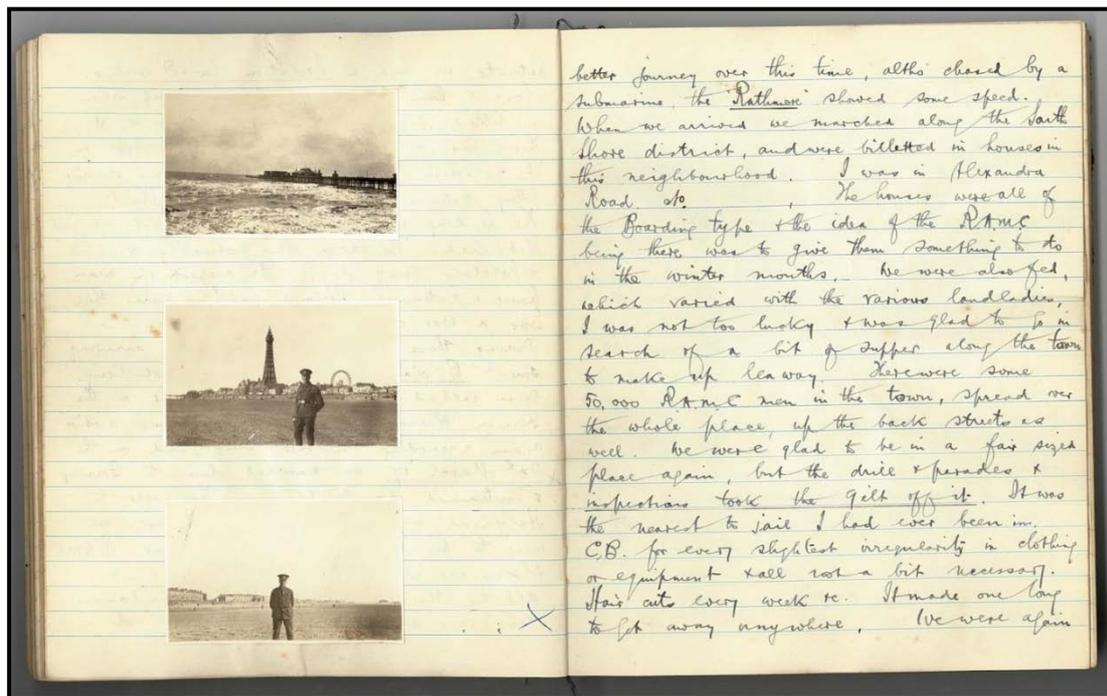


Figure 2: Pages from Willie's 'War Record'

After being stationed in Ireland in 2016, Willie was based for a short period in Blackpool

Willie's record, surprisingly, was lavishly illustrated with his own photographs. There is no suggestion in his account that this contravened any regulations, though certainly he would not have been allowed this freedom on the Western Front. Close to our topic is one of his Salonika photographs (Figure 3) of what I take to be a just-completed burial in the cemetery, parading comrades on the right and the departing padres' flapping surplices clearly visible on the left. The Salonika cemetery is still there and maintained, as so many others, by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

A letter to Willie from his mother survives from Armistice Day, 11 November 1918 (see Figure 4):

My dear Willie

This is a wonder-full day. Peace has been signed and we all feel as if Wars were at an end. And we can't help thinking of the friends we will never see again so that joy and sorrow mingles.



Figure 3: Cemetery Scene, Salonika, 1918

(Photograph, William A T Young)

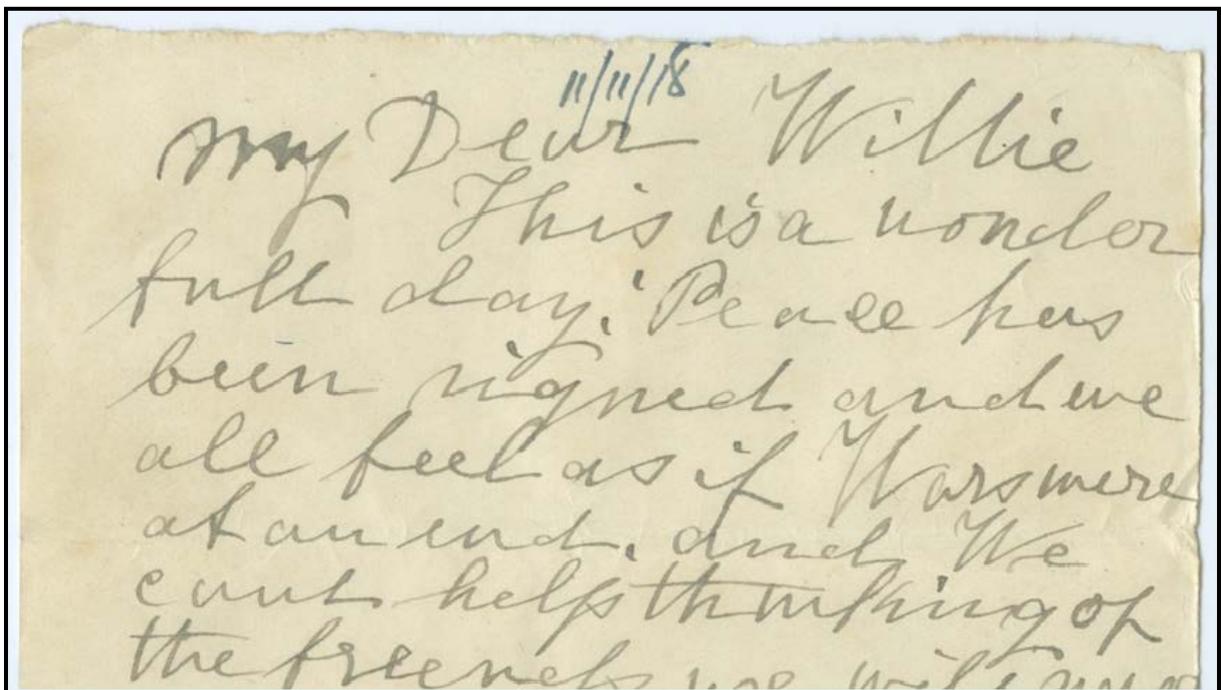


Figure 4: Armistice Day letter from Maggie Young to Willie Young, detail

When will Willie get home we are all saying and I have a parcel ready to send and I don't know whether to post it or not.

Aleck is hear just now he has had the influenza pretty bad and he has 7 days leave. He is looking better now and is at Greenock seeing John today¹⁰. James came home yesterday morning and was up with little Betty. James looks well he does not know what he is likely to do yet.

I hear Willie Young has been wounded and is in London. Jack McTaggart has been wounded but he's getting better.

O Willie what a blessing that the war is ended. How many poor fellows are suffering and I do hope the Kaiser and all his helpers get their deserts.

Jenny is going some day this week to France to the Womens Hospital Scottish near Paris. She wanted a change she has got a good outfit from them and is well fitted out with everything she has signed on for a year. I hope she will arrive safe and like the work.

We are all as usual, Father still keeps well I hope this finds you well.
Love from Mother.

Maggie had a slightly naive and optimistic idea of how armies and their demobilisation were organised. She was in no danger of missing Willie in Greece if she posted her parcel. Nor were the wider family's sufferings to be restricted to the wounds to a couple of cousins that she had mentioned in the letter. Willie's return was to be delayed until his eventual demobilisation on Wednesday 5 March 1919; his cousin John died in Cologne nine days later while serving with the occupying forces, one of the many victims of the global influenza pandemic of 1918-1920. There is a contemporary photograph of his grave in the Cologne Military Cemetery at Figure A2.1 (Appendix). My great uncle Alec (Alick, Alex) died in May 1921 of leukaemia, after various medical problems the family always felt were brought on by driving trucks in the War.

As Maggie's letter notes, her daughter Jenny had enlisted to serve as a nurse during the War, and was bound for one of the hospitals in France founded by Dr Elsie Inglis (1864-1917). Jenny had earlier been part of the Red Cross effort and served in a hospital set up in Bellahouston Park, west of Glasgow. A family relic from those days is an album in which various patients would contribute a joke or other comment, often illustrated. The quality of

¹⁰ John was my grandfather. Alick's own, altogether more laconic, diary entry survives from 11 November 1918: *'Dentist; peace declared; went to Greenock.'*

some of the art involved is remarkable. Some sample album pages are given in Figure 5, and further research on the background and fate of some of Great-Aunt Jenny's patients is yet another project-in-waiting. Their contributions are a fascinating mix of basic humour and classic jingoism with a certain amount of stoic acceptance of the War thrown in. One may assume, however, that there was a self-filter applied along the lines of 'if you can't write something pleasant, don't write anything'.



Figure 5: Pages from the 'Nurse's Album' of Jessie Ross Young ('Jenny')
Bottom left: 'The joys of soldiering, Observation: "Have a squint through this, Bill, you can see one of the _____'s eatin' a sausage"' George Buchanan of the Black Watch has copied a 1916 cartoon published by the well-known artist Bruce Bairnsfather.

Given the size of the family, there was quite a range of experiences of the War. There is some family tradition that my grandfather, John, attempted to sign up but was turned down. He would have had age against him, being 39 at the outbreak of the War, and there may have been a health issue. His memoir does note that he undertook additional oversight of churches in the Greenock area while clergy colleagues were away:

During the war I had charge of three congregations as interim moderator, Princes Street, Port Glasgow, North Greenock during war service of Mr Keir, and later St John's, Gourrock during absence of Rev. Homer Young on chaplain duty.

Further family photographs and notes show how another of the brothers, James, gained a commissioned rank in the army. The youngest of the brothers, Alick, was deployed as a driver of heavy transport in England. A memorial account written about him just after his death in 1921 noted his reaction to the Anglican (therefore Episcopalian) worship available to him in the army (in a letter of 16 April 1916): 'I was at the Church parade on Sunday last – "Church of England" – but I thought the service so disgusting I won't go back unless I can't help it.'¹¹ It seems from a later comment that the Anglican worship might not be the worst standard, after all:

There are quite a few Scotch fellows in our company, and on Sundays we try to go to the Presbyterian Church: but the only one near here is two miles away, and we marched there last Sunday and found a small tin building. The whole service was so poor that next Sunday I am for the Church of England. You can get a sleep in comfort there, if nothing else. We have no set chaplain for the regiment that I know of. The minister last Sunday preached to us from a text in Hebrews I think. It was on 'What we could do without.' I think he just made up his remarks as he went along, but I thought it a very good subject for soldiers who have got to do without so much.

The last of the brothers, Bob, was engaged in trade, selling leather accessories for industry at a time when machine tools would rely on belting for power transmission between rotating shafts. He was abroad on business when the War started. He appears in 'civvies' at my grandfather's wedding in September 1916 and I suspect, if he was not in a reserved occupation, that he had some medical exemption.

¹¹ It was my grandfather's habit to go into print at times of family crisis and he wrote a lengthy memorial to his youngest brother when he died. And circulated carbon copies to the rest of the family; I have WATY's copy.

2.2 WW1 Battlefields, 'Ring of Memory', France

Initial Encounters, 2012

Our habit over more than 20 years, in travelling to holiday destinations in southern France, has been to break up the journey with an overnight stay. In July 2012 we made this stop-off rather further north than before, and found accommodation in Arras. Following up on an entry in my grandfather's memoirs¹² we sought out the cemetery in Cambrin to locate the grave of my great-aunt Nell's 'sweetheart', Lt Archibald H MacDonald.



Figure 6: Cambrin Military Cemetery, Jul 2012
The grave of Archibald H MacDonald, died 5 March 1916

It was no surprise to us that the cemetery at Cambrin (818 graves) was neat and well-kept. A little advance research had prepared us for the general layout and the uniformity of treatment of all ranks. Some of the implications of (for example) the grouping and spacing of the graves we did not know. This was, however, our first encounter with the nameless

¹² Revd John Young Biographical Notes entry for 8th March 1916: 'I heard of death of my sister Nell's sweetheart Lieutenant Macdonald, killed on Sunday at the front.' The Commonwealth War Graves Commission record reads 'Second Lieutenant MACDONALD, ARCHIBALD HILLCOAT; Died 05/03/1916. Aged 28. 1st Bn. Cameronians (Scottish Rifles). DCM. Son of Henry Bell Macdonald and Margaret Hillcoat Macdonald, of 33, Rowallan Gardens, Broomhill, Glasgow.'

graves we were to see many more of, and the reinforcement through the inscriptions of the youth of so many of the combatants and (therefore) casualties.

There is an image that I have remembered ever since seeing the film of the musical 'Oh! What a Lovely War' in the 1970s. The final scene has the individual we are led to assume is the War's final casualty being guided through to a field in which he lies down and is absorbed into the ground, with a cross as a grave marker. The camera pulls back to reveal a limitless sea of such crosses. The nearest we came to this experience was at the French cemetery at Neuville-Saint-Vaast (near Vimy Ridge), which contains nearly twelve thousand graves. The graves (Figure 7) sweep across the landscape, their regular spacing and scale creating mesmerising lines and curves.



Figure 7: French Cemetery, Neuville-Saint-Vaast (near Vimy Ridge) July 2012

The sheer numbers of dead and the scale of slaughter in the archetypal trench warfare of the Western Front are supremely portrayed in the Thiepval Memorial to the missing of the Somme campaign. This is one of a limited number of such memorials around the battlefields of France and Belgium where the names of combatants whose remains were never identified are recorded. The impact of first seeing and understanding this memorial (Figures 8 and 9) was well described in a memorable passage of Sebastian Faulks' book 'Birdsong'.

His modern-day character Elizabeth, researching her grandfather's role in the First World War discovers Thiepval, in Faulks' words a 'peculiar, ugly arch that sat among the crops and woods... it was made of brick or stone on a monumental scale. It was as though the Pantheon or the Arc de Triomphe had been dumped in a meadow'¹³:

As she came up to the arch Elizabeth saw with a start that it was written on. She went closer. She peered at the stone. There were names on it. Every grain of the surface had been carved with British names; their chiselled capitals rose from the level of her ankles to the height of the great arch itself; on every surface of every column as far as her eye could see there were names teeming, reeling, over surfaces of yard, hundreds of yards, over furlongs of stone.

She moved through the space beneath the arch where the man was sweeping. She found the other pillars identically marked, their faces obliterated on all sides by the names that were carved on them.

'Who are these, these...?' She gestured with her hand.

'These?' the man with the brush sounded surprised. 'The lost.'

'Men who died in this battle?'

'No. The lost, the ones they did not find. The others are in the cemeteries.'

'These are just the... unfound?'

She looked at the vault above her head and then around in panic at the endless writing, as though the surface of the sky had been papered in footnotes. When she could speak again, she said, 'From the whole war?' The man shook his head. 'Just these fields.' He gestured with his arm.

Elizabeth went and sat on the steps on the other side of the monument. Beneath her was a formal garden with some rows of white headstones, each with a tended plant or flower at its base, each cleaned and beautiful in the weak winter sunlight.

'Nobody told me.' She ran her fingers with their red-painted nails back through her thick dark hair. 'My God, nobody told me.'¹⁴

At the time of writing¹⁵ the memorial records the names of 72,335 members of British and South African personnel serving in this sector of the Western Front before March 1918 who

¹³ Faulks, Sebastian. *Birdsong*. 1994. London: Vintage, p263

¹⁴ *Ibid* p264

¹⁵ As of 2 September 2018 the CWGC website notes this figure. The number is likely to reduce over the years, if only slightly. In the event of a casualty being recovered from the battlefield and identified, their remains are buried appropriately and their name is removed from this memorial by cementing over the incised letters.

have no known grave. Over 90% of these casualties fell between July and November 1916. The initial impression of this memorial is overwhelming.

One habit I have adopted when seeing such lists of casualties is to look for my own name and those of friends and relatives. This reinforces the universality of the losses within the UK. Even if the 'missing generation' idea can be slightly oversold, there were few areas of Britain, whether speaking geographically or about class strata who were not affected.



Figure 8: Thiepval Memorial to the Missing of the Somme, July 2012

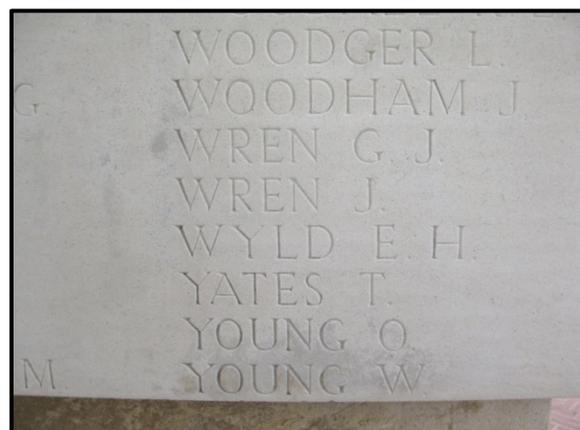


Figure 9: 'W Young' discovered on the Thiepval Memorial¹⁶, July 2012

¹⁶ 21775 Private William Young, aged 27, 8th Battalion the Royal Berkshire Regiment; died 18 August 1916.

French Memorials, 2016

Our journey to stay with relatives and friends in Normandy in the summer of 2016 was punctuated by an overnight stay, again in Arras. This city was a focus of activity during the fighting on the Western Front in the First World War, and to the north-west of the city at Ablain-St-Nazare is located France's largest military cemetery, Notre Dame de Lorette. With an ossuary as well as an extensive graveyard this cemetery (Figure 10) contains the remains of approximately 43,000 casualties of the First World War battles in the Artois region.



Figure 10: Nécropole Nationale de Notre Dame de Lorette, July 2016

On this visit we were well-prepared for the extent of the traditional graveyard. The site, however, now also features a completely new memorial which was completed and dedicated in November 2014. This is the 'Anneau de la Mémoire' ('Ring of Remembrance', Figures 11, 12, 13) which memorialises the War dead of the local area in an intriguing and effective way. The memorial is a large elliptical structure comprising 500 10-foot-high panels inscribed with the names of all 576,606 casualties of all nationalities and ranks who perished in the Nord and Pas-de-Calais regions. These are displayed in alphabetical order of surname. The cosmopolitan make-up of the list is emphasised even in the first dozen lines of the first panel. Leopold Aab and Hermann Aal are soon followed by Jean Francois Abadie, with Ben Mohamed Abbas and John Gibson Abbey not far behind. Once again it is not difficult to locate familiar-looking names. We spotted our connection, Archibald MacDonald, and also

the poet Wilfred Owen. We soon found examples of our son's partner's family names, Bösenberg (German) and Bonnard (French). Almost inevitably there was a W G Young.



Figure 11: L'Anneau de la Mémoire, Ablain-St-Nazare, August 2018
Looking towards the east



Figure 12: L'Anneau de la Memoire, Ablain-St-Nazare, August 2018
The Basilica of Notre Dame de Lorette

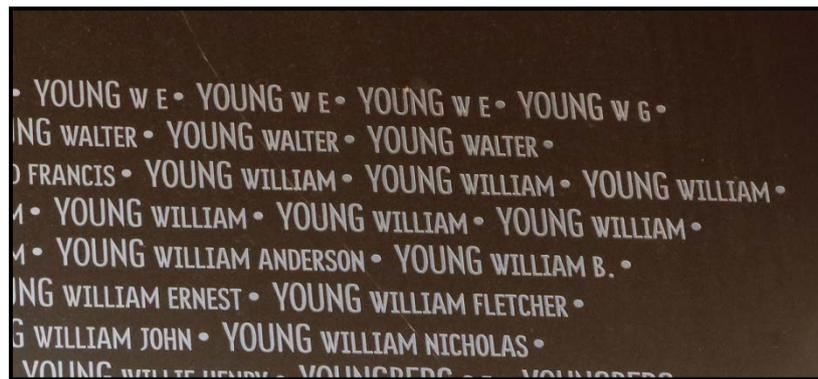


Figure 13: L'Anneau de la Memoire, Ablain-St-Nazare, August 2018
Inscribed, familiar names

We visited the 'Anneau' once more in early August 2018. In her 'Philosophy Bites' podcast, Cécile Fabre nominates this memorial as a 'cosmopolitan' contrast to the contemporary installation 'Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red' seen at the Tower of London between July and November 2014. The poppies of the latter work (Figure 14) were designed and presented to speak only of the 888,246 British or British Empire War deaths, without reference to other victims or casualties of the War, military or civilian. Fabre proposes in the interview and in a chapter on 'Remembrance' in her book that although (she argues) war remembrance is 'usually a means to cement a particular political identity' it still has relevance even when we are trying to transcend national or political borders if it is seen as 'a way to honour the memory of war victims and a vehicle for discharging our general, relationship-independent duty to bring about peace.'¹⁷ Fabre is eager to promote remembrance not just as a cosmopolitan but as an active thing, which resonates with my own attitude: 'when I speak of remembrance, or use the phrase "to commemorate", I shall mean the active recalling to one's mind of wars of the past through shared practices, accompanied by the requisite emotional and moral attitude.'¹⁸ The 2016 and 2018 encounters with the Anneau de la Mémoire reinforced my growing sense that effective Remembrance was an active thing and a changing thing and that the norms of the 1920s and 1930s should be challenged over time, even if I have an attachment to some aspects of the now century-old traditions of British Remembrance. But insofar as I can 'rank' different memorials at all, my judgement is based on *who* is remembered and *how* they are remembered, and the even-handedness with which they, their names and even their remains are treated.

¹⁷ Fabre, Cécile. *Cosmopolitan Peace*. 2017. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p281

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p286



Figure 14: 'Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red', Tower of London November 2014

2.3 'National Memorial Arboretum

I visited the National Memorial Arboretum, near Alrewas, north of Lichfield, on Sunday 10 September 2017, a day of dull weather. My prior knowledge of the place was limited. There had been, and still are, occasional short items on the local news as successive new memorials have been dedicated on this site. The planting of the Arboretum (on reclaimed land, a former gravel extraction site) was begun in 1997; the official opening was in May 2001. The trees and the number of memorials on site continue to grow; the 2017 edition of the guide book notes 'over 330' memorials at the time of my visit.

Visitors must have a variety of motivations. Some will have an attachment to one of the bodies whose dedicated memorial is present. Some will be looking to see 'in the flesh' the site that they have seen in the media. The guidebook promotes the Arboretum as a 'national focus for Remembrance', and it is certainly a popular destination. Coachloads were arriving as I parked, and although I had timed my visit with plenty of time to reach the 'Millennium Chapel of Peace and Forgiveness' for the 11am ceremony of two minutes' silence there was plenty of competition and not everyone who wanted to was able to enter.



Figure 15: St Andrew, one of twelve Apostles carved on the Arboretum Chapel pillars

I was in two minds about the Chapel. The guidebook and signs assert that it welcomes people of all faiths and none, and aims to provide a space where everyone will feel comfortable.' It is, however, bristling in explicitly Christian imagery. The rush to enter in time

for the ceremony, which was preceded by an explanatory talk and bracketed by the usual bugle calls, was matched by the rush to leave again. I noted that three minutes after the 'Reveille' I was the sole remaining visitor still looking at the Chapel contents and decoration while the others had moved on to tour round the other parts of the site. The Chapel roof and porch are supported by twelve timber columns, featuring carvings of the twelve apostles. These latter are rather jokey in nature and I wondered at the motivation behind representing St Andrew as a bonneted caricature Scotsman as in Figure 15.

Outside and elsewhere in the 150-acre site, there is memorial overload. I paced myself but could not react thoughtfully to all of them. I was impressed by the concept of the location, and the growing environment in which there was a continuing potential for the installation of more memorials when appropriate subjects were identified and the designs passed the approvals process. I resorted to identifying a route through most of the grounds, punctuated by stops for reflection at the memorials I had identified as of interest. I was occasionally diverted by the design of some of the other memorials I had not pre-chosen but which caught the eye.

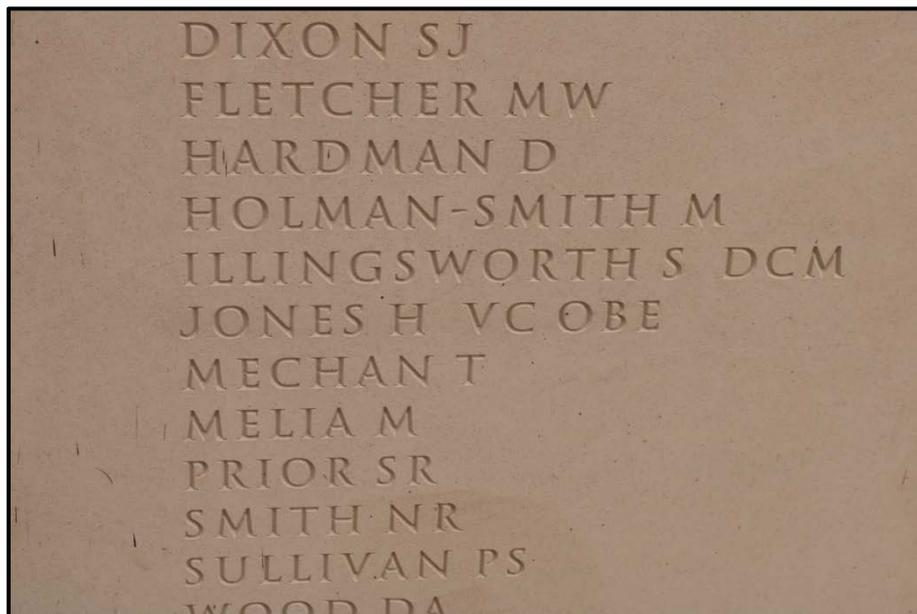


Figure 16: Armed Services Memorial. Colonel 'H' Jones commemorated.

Central to the site and on a mound rising above it like a pre-historic barrow or howe is the national Armed Forces Memorial. This records the names of the over-16,000 personnel of all forces, all ranks who have died in service since the end of the Second World War. The style of the record appeals – no ranks are noted and the names are strictly chronological so that those who fell in the same action or incident are commemorated together. I sought out the

name of Colonel 'H' Jones who I recalled had been killed in fighting during the Falklands conflict of 1982 (Figure 16). The memorial structure is augmented by two bronze sculpture groups. In one, the 'Gates', a fallen serviceman is tended by his comrades, and one figure points through a 'gate', a slit in the walls, to the rising sun. Clearly care has been taken to achieve a gender and racial balance in the group, and none the worse for that.



Figure 17: The Stretcher Bearers, bronze statue group, Armed Forces Memorial



Figure 18: The Stretcher Bearers, detail. The grieving parents

I was more taken with the other sculpture, the Stretcher Bearers (Figure 17). Four service personnel (the kit denoting Navy, Army, Air Force and Marines) carry a fallen serviceman aloft on a stretcher. The central group is flanked by a distraught woman (the bereaved partner) and a young child at her feet. And also by grieving parents (Figure 18), the woman in a state of collapse and the man supporting her, looking helplessly and grimly at the scene. This evokes but in no way replicates the Kollwitz statues at Vladslo cemetery in Belgium, for which see Section 2.11. All are victims. All have made a sacrifice. All are recognised.

Some memorials in the Arboretum have been transplanted from sites where they can no longer be accommodated because of building development or the dissolution of the institution in which they were housed. Some have had temporary homes and are now come to a permanent site. In the latter category are those memorials which were created in the military camps of Iraq (Basra) and Afghanistan (Camp Bastion). The latter structure made me pause; it features as an engraved and gilded quotation the 'Kohima' Epitaph of John Maxwell Edmonds. This was famously used in the military cemetery of Kohima, the northern Indian location where Japanese forces were forced to retreat from invasion of India in 1944: 'When you go home, tell them of us and say, for your tomorrow we gave our today'. I question whether the loss of life in our troops' involvement in the policing and pacification of post-Taliban Afghanistan constitutes a sacrifice with such a direct effect on the 'tomorrows' of the citizens of the UK. Perhaps in the original location and context it had a more direct relevance.



Figure 19: Shot at Dawn Memorial

I sought out the 'Shot at Dawn' memorial, which commemorates the 309 British and British Empire soldiers shot during the First World War for desertion, cowardice, striking a senior officer, disobeying an order, throwing away their gun or sleeping on duty. A statue of a 17-year old soldier is surrounded by concentric arcs of stakes, each representing and named for one of those shot (Figure 19). The memorial had been inaugurated in 2000. There was a general pardon issued in 2006 after a long campaign by relatives and others. The details, post by post, of the – one can't help but think of them as victims – once again give away the extreme youth of those who were fighting and being obliged to keep on fighting. This is a memorial that, two generations back and before the relatively fuzzy idea of 'shell-shock' gave way to a more understood 'Post-traumatic Stress Disorder', would never have been proposed. The circumstances of the general pardon were still problematic in 2006, as the House of Commons 'Hansard' record shows. The pardon upheld the individual convictions, as the passage of time meant there was no equitable way to assess in which cases an actual injustice had been dealt. Fully 2,700 members of the forces were convicted of these offences but were **not** shot. What then, is the meaning of the pardon other than a general confirmation that these circumstances were wrong? The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence, Derek Twigg MP, moving the relevant motion in the Commons summed this up: 'It is important that I put it on record that the intention of the pardon is to remove the dishonour of execution. It is not intended that it will quash the convictions or sentences. It stands as a recognition that execution was not a fate that servicemen deserved.'¹⁹



Figure 20: Burma (Kwai) Railway Memorial

¹⁹ Hansard, 7 November 2006.

There are a plethora of military memorials; the arrangement and landscaping ensures that these are encountered in a rational order and setting. As I implied earlier it is difficult to 'appreciate' all of them, and for anyone coming to the Arboretum without an agenda or a particular cause, unit or individual in mind to remember, the reaction may be 'O look, another memorial.' My own particular interests included the Burma (Kwai) Railway Memorial (Figure 20); my father's brother, another Alec, was imprisoned by the Japanese after the 1940 fall of Singapore and worked on the railway, of "River Kwai" (in)fame.



Figure 21: Coventry commemorated in the British German Friendship Garden

The practice of the Arboretum allows for memorials of various kinds outside the military or police genres. There is a memorial to the dead of '9/11', memorials for Scouting, the Soroptimists, Lion's Club International, a number of other associations devoted to activities one might term 'service' and others still. One such is a ring of birch trees augmented by a Ginkgo tree and centred on a German oak, the gift of people of Dresden. This symbolises British-German friendship in the spirit of 'despite the destruction of the Second World War'. Blocks of smoke-stained stone salvaged from the ruins of the Dresden Frauenkirche support plaques with the names of cities bombed by one side or the other during the 1939-1945 conflict. Dresden itself is one such city, also Coventry (Figure 21).



Figure 22: Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Memorial Garden

A final example and yet further removed from military units and war is the garden dedicated to the Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society ('SANDS'). Behind high hedges an area of garden features a poignant statue of a sleeping child in the foetal position (Figure 22). Recent flowers show the living nature of this memorial and pebbles painted with children's names, dates, messages cover the beds around the lawns.

2.4 The Hovering Angel

On each of my two visits to Cologne - in January 2012, and again in February 2018 - I visited two churches. One was the Cathedral, the 'Dom' with its immense spire – for a few years this had been the tallest structure in the world in the 1880s, before the completion of the Washington Monument. The other, more modest church building was the 'Antoniter Kirche' (Figure 23). This 'Antonite Church' houses two sculptures by the Expressionist artist Ernst Barlach (1870-1938). One is a straightforward crucifix, the other a floating or hovering angel figure. This angel (Figure 24 and following) has an intriguing history.



Figure 23: The Antonite Church, Cologne

In his Radio 4 talk on this subject²⁰ and in his book, MacGregor reflects on the contrast between Britain's set commemoration of Remembrance Day and the *absence* of such a day or any set commemoration in Germany. Certainly after the First World War there was no organised publicly expressed gratitude to, or pride in the fallen. The War had been lost. Germany had been blamed, and was being obliged to pay reparations. Memorials were,

²⁰ MacGregor, Neil. 2014. *Germany; Memories of a Nation*. London: Allen Lane, p529.

however, eventually commissioned by civic and Christian authorities. The angel is a work that was commissioned in 1926 for the cathedral of Güstrow, north of Berlin.



Figure 24: Ernst Barlach's 'Hovering Angel', the Antonite Church, Cologne

Barlach had served in the army during the War and was invalided out in 1916. His experience of the conflict made him a devout pacifist for the rest of his life. This shows in his attitude to this and other memorial commissions. He rejected the notion that such a work should glorify war or even show the combatants in a manly, heroic light:

Barlach developed a new type of war memorial. There is no heroism, no glorification of death or war. Instead, in his war memorials for Magdeburg, Güstrow, Hamburg and Kiel, you find an exploration of pain, death, mourning and grief. Barlach's angel is a timeless symbol of peace and non-violence.²¹

²¹ Ibid, p533

Barlach wanted the angel to represent the attitude the observer should take to the War: '*Errinerung und innere Schau*', 'recollection and inner reflection'. This was not the attitude that the Nazi regime wanted to promote. After their rise to power in the early 1930s, they determined that public art and certainly memorials should follow a different style. One example cited by MacGregor has two muscular nude male figures holding a sword, the dates of the War accompanied by the text '*Ihr seid nicht umsonst gefallen*'; You did not die in vain.²²

The authorities removed Barlach's sculpture in 1937 and it was later melted down for the metal. But friends of the artist located and preserved the original mould and re-cast the bronze before hiding it elsewhere in (north-west) Germany. After the Second World War this second angel was hung in the Cologne church, Güstrow being inaccessible after the partition of Germany into East and West. The angel looks down on a slab bearing the dates 1914-1918 and 1933-1945, thus bracketing the War and the whole era of Nazi domination and addressing, recollecting and reflecting on the whole sweep of crimes of that regime to and through the Second World War. A recess in the church wall adjacent to the angel holds a Coventry Cross of Nails, symbol of work of peace and reconciliation. '*Vater, vergib*': 'Father, forgive'.



Figure 25: Angel with Coventry Cross of Nails

²² Stralsund Memorial designed by Georg Kolbe, noted in MacGregor, Germany p537

Güstrow was not to be left forever bereft. In 1953 after much debate on the meaning in a communist state of this piece of art, a copy was made of the Cologne angel to hang in Güstrow. Annually there is a ceremony of silent meditation in the cathedral:

We meet to remember the removal of the Angel and to consider how deeply our people erred and strayed. The depth of that error cannot be grasped through words, but a sculpture like this helps us to focus on it, and to learn from it; with God's help and by our own actions, we seek to find ways of transforming this dark inheritance into a means of reconciliation. That is the challenge of the statue today.²³

Astonishingly, the people of Güstrow allowed the removal of their statue for the exhibition in London in 2014, where we saw it. It is as if Coventry gave up its original cross of nails for a time. Even this temporary absence has been grasped as another opportunity for *Errinerung und innere Schau*:

While the sculpture is away, we decided not to put up any replacement, but to leave a void. That void, and our response to it, will be part of the London exhibition. I hope we can use it to address the questions it raises: are we ready to assume responsibility, are we willing to put ourselves on the line in the cause of reconciliation?²⁴

Remarkably, whereas the Cologne Dom is reportedly Germany's most-visited landmark²⁵, it is possible to sit peacefully with just a handful of visitors (or are they pilgrims?) in the Antonite Church and consider, as if with the people of Güstrow, what it is that the Hovering Angel is inviting us, as individuals, to recollect and reflect on.



Figure 26: Barlach's Angel

²³ Pastor Christian Hoser of Güstrow, quoted in MacGregor, *Germany* p536.

²⁴ *Ibid*, p542.

²⁵ Wikipedia cites a source to propose average 20,000 visitors a day.

2.5 Berlin and the Holocaust, *Stolpersteine*

We had a long weekend visit to Berlin around Easter 2014. This was rather in advance of any thoughts of my sabbatical study but nevertheless inevitably involved visiting or noticing plentiful memorials or memory-evoking places and buildings around the city.

The fall of the Berlin Wall in the late 1980s is evoked in some places by its absence (around and near the Brandenburg Gate, for example) and elsewhere by the purposeful presence of surviving stretches of this high, graffiti-covered concrete structure. The effects of the wall on the population and the efforts made to escape to 'The West' are commemorated in the Wall museum near Checkpoint Charlie, in the mocked-up checkpoint itself with the photo opportunities and role-playing 'guards' and most poignantly in the scattering of named memorials here and there where someone died in an attempt to reach freedom. A row of these by the river (Figure 27) reflects how the Spree was part of the border. The path of the Wall is retained in markings on the ground, although other differences in housing, public buildings and atmosphere from one side to another seem now almost erased. There has been a strong collective will that both the balance and the Remembrance should come about.



Figure 27: Riverside Cold War Memorials, Berlin

The people of Berlin thus have the ills of the Cold War forever before them. Some former memorials and memorial spaces have been re-purposed (see the end of the next section for the example of the *Neue Wache*). Now that the city is once again capital of a united Germany it has become the site of more than one national memorial. One such is the

Holocaust Memorial, more fully the '*Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas*' (Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe), situated on a site near the Brandenburg Gate.

The Memorial comprises 2,711 concrete slabs arranged on a grid pattern. They are of varying height and from little more than ankle height up to 4.7 metres tall. (Figure 28). When we visited I knew little about it, but I appreciate the criticisms some have made of its design. The blocks of concrete bear no names, no dates, no Jewish symbols, no indication that this is the Holocaust Memorial. There is no guide to how one is supposed to interpret this artwork as representative of the Holocaust, even if one can lose oneself in it – as Jews were lost.



Figure 28: Holocaust Memorial, Berlin

Much more powerful is the realisation that this memorial represents the ongoing will of the German people, or the majority of them, not to shrink from the fact of the Holocaust and national responsibility for it. There are parallels for this in other countries. In France, especially since a declaration by President Jacques Chirac in 1995, it is accepted that French citizens including the civilian police force collaborated in deporting around 76,000 Jews to their deaths in camps during the Second World War. Schools and other institutions on whose premises these operations took place are obliged to commemorate them with plaques or other memorials making explicit reference to the complicity.

Another attractive mode of very active Remembrance is the ‘*Stolpersteine*’ (‘stumbling block’) project initiated by the German artist Gunter Demnig in 1992. Each *Stolperstein* is a 10cm x 10cm concrete cube incorporating an inscribed brass plate (Figure 29), set into the ground at the threshold of a dwelling or place of business which was once the last freely-chosen residence of Jews or other victims of Nazi persecution, creating:

An art project that commemorates the victims of National Socialism, keeping alive the memory of all Jews, Roma and Sinti, homosexuals, dissidents, Jehovah’s Witnesses and victims of euthanasia who were deported and exterminated.

In August 2018 there had been over 70,000 *Stolpersteine* installed in almost 2,000 locations²⁶. The brass plate, whose inscription always begins ‘Here lived...’ reconnects the individual with a place where they were at home. It affirms their personhood and existence after their erasure by a regime that didn’t believe they counted or had a right to exist.



Figure 29: Stolpersteine in Stuttgart (Shutterstock.com)

²⁶ Data from www.stolperstein.eu website

2.6 Käthe Kollwitz – grief, guilt and the art of war

As with Ernst Barlach, so with Käthe Kollwitz; I owe much of my initial knowledge of this Expressionist artist's life to the Neil MacGregor Radio 4 series about Germany²⁷. However, a few other accidents of timing and geography in the last year have allowed me also to encounter her art 'in the flesh' in Cologne, London, Birmingham and Vladslo, Belgium.

Käthe Kollwitz was an art teacher in Berlin, where her husband worked as a doctor among the poor. She, and presumably he, had a passion for social justice. She specialised in print-making and during her life time produced a number of series of prints which focused on the plight of ordinary people caught up in conflict. This predated the War, although her life and work were each to become centred on the War in quite dramatic and tragic fashion. One of Kollwitz' sons was under-age when the War broke out, and his father denied him the permission he needed to join up. Käthe persuaded the doctor to allow this son, Peter, to go to the War. He was killed in action just ten days after leaving home.

Looking at examples of her art it is very easy to feel that this event, with its inevitable mixture of grief and guilt, coloured the rest of her life and influenced whatever work she did thereafter. Not that her pre-War work had been cheery and bright! Very few of the works I saw in three different exhibitions, at the Ikon Gallery in Birmingham celebrating 150 years since her birth, at the Kathe Kollwitz Museum in Cologne or in the Tate Gallery 'Aftermath' exhibition²⁸ were in colour or featured anything but grim faces. Rather before the War and the loss of her son she was using him as a model for drawings which focused on the social deprivation she saw around her (Figure 30)²⁹. An edition of this print was published, the subject representing every lost child, every bereft mother, in 1918. The anguish of a mother unable to provide for and protect her children was later to be the template for the other anguish of a mother obliged to watch the sacrifice of her child in war.

The print 'Need' (Figure 31) showing the context of poverty in which weavers revolted in the province of Silesia in 1844 features a mother despairing of being able to look after her sick child. The focus is on the mother and child. MacGregor comments³⁰ that Kollwitz has adopted a Christian formula – the nativity scene – to her altogether less positive message. Subsequent prints in the series show the initiation, inept execution and almost inevitable

²⁷ MacGregor, *Germany*, Chapter 22, p397

²⁸ *Aftermath; Art in the Wake of World War One*. Tate Britain 5 June – 23 September 2018

²⁹ Photographs in this Section were all taken in the Cologne Kathe Kollwitz Museum. Measures I took to avoid reflections have introduced some distortion!

³⁰ MacGregor, *Germany*, p401

result of the revolt, which was harshly suppressed. Once the Christian imagery is identified then whether or not it is intended it is tempting to see a version of the 'Madonna and Child' in every maternal scene of Kollwitz'.

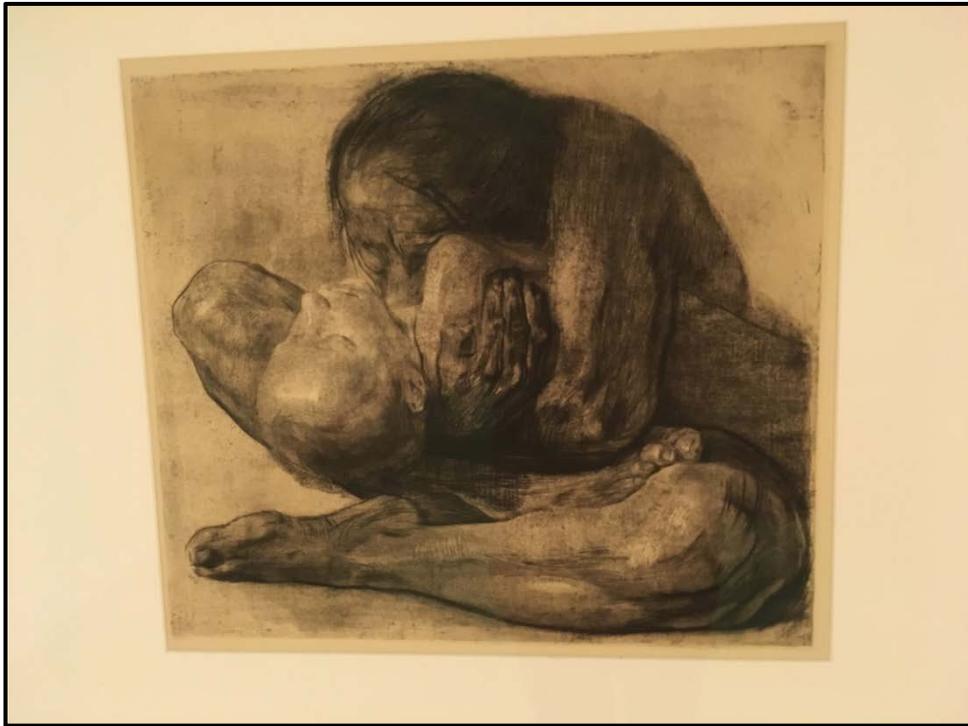


Figure 30: Käthe Kollwitz, 'Woman with Dead Child', 1903 (Cologne)

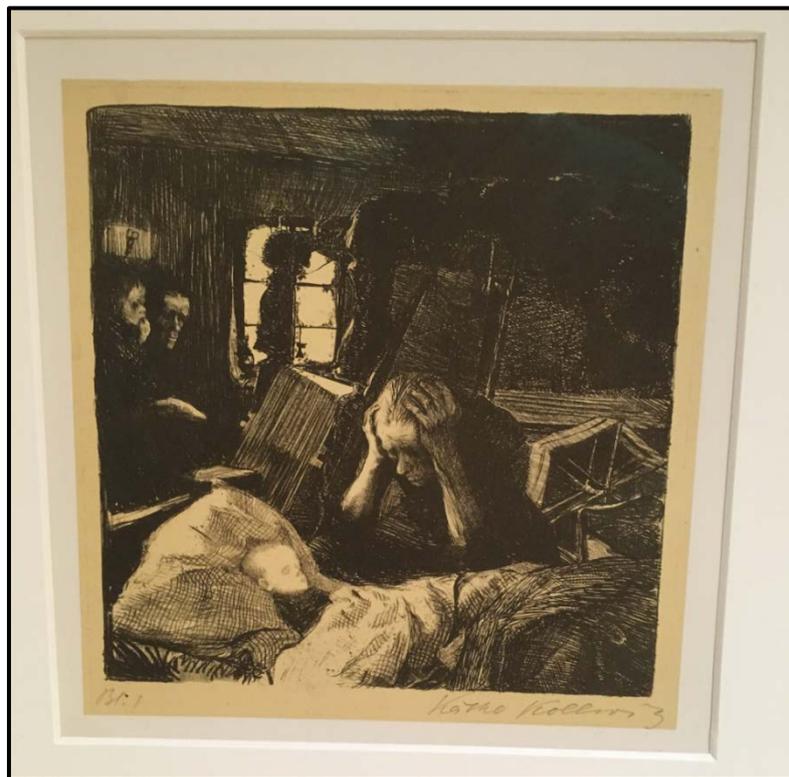


Figure 31: 'Need', Plate 1 from Series 'A Weavers' Revolt' 1893-97 (Cologne)

Another attempted uprising, the Peasants' War of the early 16th century was the subject of a series of prints completed in 1908.

Kollwitz' reaction to her son's death and to the War was a fervent pacifism and even attempted subversion of recruitment to the forces in the latter stages of the conflict. She also strove to find a way to commemorate her son, although an early sculpture was abandoned, and actually destroyed in 1919.

She continued to observe and protest social problems in Germany – the post-War economy suffered under reparations – an example of the challenges for mothers in this period is 'Brot!' – 'Bread!', Figure 32. The uncomprehending expression on the face of the child on the left is perfectly captured. Why is the mother upset, why is she not giving what is asked for? The child on the right is being more demanding and in spite of herself the mother is fending away both the child and the request for food.



Figure 32: 'Brot!', 'Bread!', 1924 Cologne

In 1926 she published another series of prints on the subject of 'Krieg' – war. Unlike a number of her contemporaries, Kollwitz did not attempt a representation of the battles or the trenches but concentrated on the effect of war on families and the home. A mother holds out

her child, representing the sacrifice made to the nation's requirements. Other mothers (Figure 33) make a protective circle around their children. For Kollwitz the failure and the pity of war are the inability of the parents – the mothers in particular and perhaps as representative of the mother-land – to protect the children. The parents grieve for their lost child (Figure 34), the father's role in this version at least to comfort while he grieves.



Figure 33: 'The Mothers', from 'War', 1924. (Cologne)

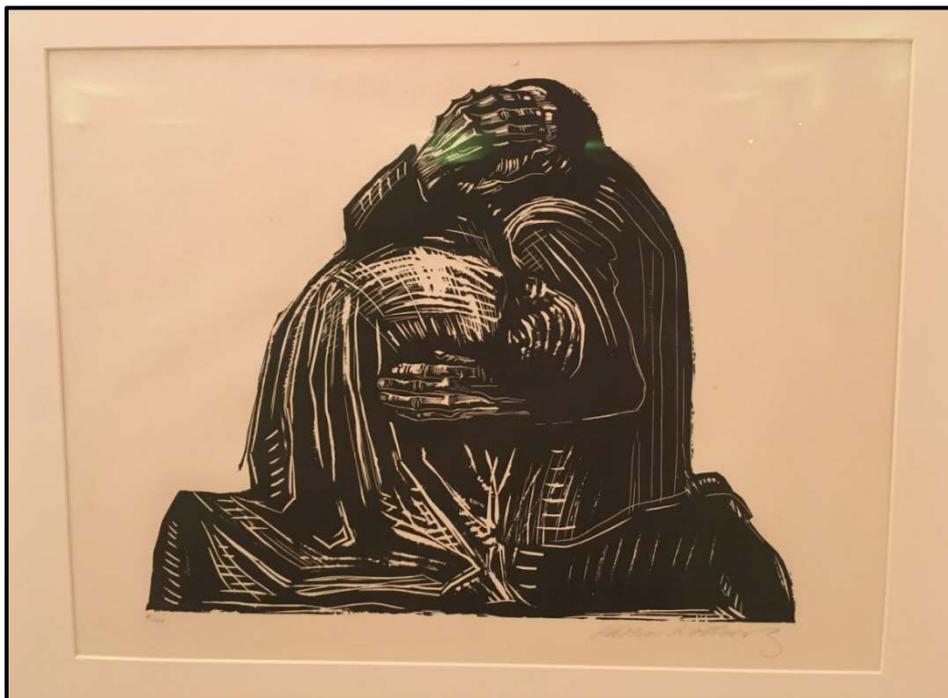


Figure 34: 'The Parents', from 'War', 1924 (Cologne)

Kollwitz returned to self-portraiture often during her career and in a gallery of her work you can see her ageing in front of your eyes. A late self-portrait (Figure 35) featured in her last significant series of prints, 'Death', published in 1935.



Figure 35: 'The Call of Death', from 'Death', 1937 (Cologne)

Käthe Kollwitz memorial for her son Peter was eventually finished in 1932, a pair of statues set in the cemetery in Roggevelde, Belgium in which he was buried. The German authorities later transferred that cemetery's remains to Vladslo, where now the statues keep watch. Preparatory drawings are shown in Figure 36.

One more staple motif of Christian art should be noted, as a Kollwitz sculpture was chosen to be a memorial, set in the *Neue Wache* ('New Guardhouse') building in Berlin, to '*den Opfern von Krieg und Gewaltherrschaft*' - 'victims of war and tyranny', a decision made by Chancellor Helmut Kohl in 1993 soon after the reunification of Germany. The location had been a Prussian memorial to the dead of the Napoleonic Wars, a Weimar Republic memorial after the First World War and a Soviet memorial to World War Two victims of fascism.

The sculpture (Figure 37) is of a mother cradling her dead child between her legs, almost adopting the form of the *pieta*, the classic representation of Mary holding (and offering for adoration or worship) the dead Christ. Kollwitz' theme of a mother trying to hold in and

protect her child, and failing, has been embraced (not without controversy) by the German state to symbolise what has happened in a succession of failures over time.



Figure 36: 'The grieving parents' statues, preparatory work, 1927 (Tate)



Figure 37: Enlarged 1993 version of Kollwitz' 'Pietà' sculpture (~1937, Neue Wache memorial to Victims of War and Tyranny, Berlin (Shutterstock.com))

2.7 London Remembrance Weekend

The government website instructions for visitors intending to witness the National Service of Remembrance promised ‘extensive police security procedures’³¹ for those who queued to enter Whitehall on the morning of 12 November 2017. This was fulfilled – the most sensitive metal detectors I have ever encountered spotted the foil wrapper on some sweets in my pocket as I passed through, having waited from 07.20 at the Parliament end of the road. My brother and I were a couple of dozen from the front of the line and were still beaten to our target viewpoint opposite the Cenotaph itself by some who had arrived from the Trafalgar Square end. But the good view was secured. And there we waited for the next three-and-a-half hours, watching the swift accumulation of the crowd and the more measured preparations around the Cenotaph.



Figure 38: Politicians gather for National Ceremony of Remembrance, 2017

There was obviously an ambition of as few leaves as possible on the road surface surrounding the monument. A small army of sweepers traversed the area three or four times, the overhanging trees teasingly dropping yet more leaves in their wake in the slight breeze. The representative detachments of the various armed services arrived and lined the road; the band marched down Whitehall to its place. A team of officials made ready the monument itself, stencilling and numbering the location of dozens of wreaths. The lectern and sound

³¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/find-out-how-you-can-join-the-commemorations-on-sunday-12-november> (6 September 2018)

cables for the transmission of the words of the Dean of the Chapels Royal was installed and checks made by the BBC.

We in the crowd were a mixed bunch. Some in suits, or otherwise formally dressed. Most, like ourselves, simply well wrapped-up. A few with medals, although the most ardent of veterans would presumably have been more eager to join those who assembled on Horseguards for the march-past.

Minor drama as one of the soldiers near to us was helped away, feeling faint during the build-up. The ranks closed up. I usually find an opportunity to watch and listen to this ceremony even if in recorded form, so was familiar with the music programme, which I have discovered has followed the same pattern since 1930. The scheme can be easily decoded – priority is given to music relevant to the Royal Navy, the ‘Senior Service’. Each of the UK’s four nations gets a look-in through folk songs, though some connections are more obvious than others. The folk music is played as a relatively short ‘sample’ in each case without multiple verses. The pipers play twice:

Rule, Britannia! (Thomas Arne)
Heart of Oak (William Boyce)
The Minstrel Boy (Thomas Moore)
Men of Harlech
The Skye Boat Song
Isle of Beauty (Thomas Haynes Bayly)
David of the White Rock
Oft in the Stilly Night (John Andrew Stevenson)
Flowers of the Forest
Nimrod from the Enigma Variations (Edward Elgar)
Dido's lament, ‘when I am laid in earth’ (Henry Purcell)
O Valiant Hearts (Charles Harris)
Solemn Melody (Walford Davies)

Much of this music is available in recorded form online or on CD. I used a collection recorded by the Band of the Irish Guards to accompany phases of the April presentation.³²

³² The Band of the Irish Guards. *Music for Remembrance*. Bandleader Recordings. CD BNA 5014

By the time 11 o'clock draws near the crowds are ten to fifteen deep. Despite each of us being rather over 6-foot, we ignore the occasional *sotto* and not so *sotto voce* comment from behind us of how nice it would be to be nearer the front, and to see. We are lucky the guards with the high bearskin helmets are further up the road from us. The bandmaster is being guided using a system of lights on his rostrum as the array of politicians past and present together with faith leaders and Commonwealth High Commissioners gathers, and one wonders, irreverently, if the Royal Family members are similarly held for the green light. We can see clearly how grim some of the politicians are looking; past prime ministers are placed in chronological order, which puts Blair between Major and Brown. Boris Johnson, still Foreign Secretary at the time, has the honour of carrying a wreath made from grasses and flowers native to Britain's Overseas Territories (although the wreath is actually assembled, a different design each year, at Kew). More irreverence – Boris's wreath evokes Carmen Miranda's headdresses. The only downside to our viewing position is that the Cenotaph falls directly between ourselves and Her Majesty the Queen. She arrives on her balcony (the first time she has not laid the nation's wreath herself) and the next two Royal generations arrive at their allotted places on the tarmac at the right time, to the second, and Big Ben strikes. This is something that our country really does do **very** well.³³

During the preamble there had been uniformed Scouts passing up and down the crowd and handing out what was obviously many thousands of copies of an order of service. This is also the same each year, and I have reproduced it below from the file available online.³⁴

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY - 12 November 2017

Order of the Ceremonial at the Cenotaph

At 11 o'clock, **Silence** will be kept for two minutes, beginning at the first stroke of Big Ben.

For all present, suggested subjects for thought and prayer during the Silence are:

We remember those who made the great sacrifice during
the two World Wars;

We remember those who have given their lives in
the service of their country in other conflicts;

We pray for those who suffer at this time;

³³ The BBC broadcast of the build-up and 2017 ceremony remains available to view at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ZmUKgW0fS0>

³⁴ Search on www.gov.uk.

We pray for those who have been bereaved;
We pray for peace;
We pray that we may be worthy of the sacrifice
made on our behalf.

The end of the Silence will be marked by **The Last Post**.

Wreaths will then be laid on the Cenotaph.

The Dean of Her Majesty's Chapels Royal will offer the following prayer:

O Almighty God, grant, we beseech thee,
that we who here do honour to the memory of those
who have died in the service of their country and
of the Crown, may be so inspired by the spirit of
their love and fortitude that,
forgetting all selfish and unworthy motives,
we may live only to thy glory and to the service of mankind
through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN

The following hymn will be sung, accompanied by the Bands of the Guards Division.

All present are requested to join in the singing:

O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home.

Beneath the shadow of thy throne
Thy saints have dwelt secure;
Sufficient is thine arm alone,
And our defence is sure.

Before the hills in order stood,
Or earth received her frame,
From everlasting thou art God,

To endless years the same.

A thousand ages in thy sight
Are like an evening gone;
Short as the watch that ends the night
Before the rising sun.

O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Be thou our guard while troubles last,
And our eternal home.

The Dean of Her Majesty's Chapels Royal will offer the following prayer:

Teach us, good Lord, to serve thee as thou deservest;
to give and not to count the cost;
to fight and not to heed the wounds;
to toil and not to seek for rest;
to labour and not to ask for any reward, save that of
knowing that we do thy will;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN

*All present are requested to say **The Lord's Prayer**:*

The Dean of Her Majesty's Chapels Royal will then give **The Blessing**:

Unto God's gracious mercy and protection we commit you
The Lord bless you and keep you
The Lord make his face to shine upon you
And be gracious unto you
The Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you
And give you his peace this day and always. AMEN

The Rouse

God Save The Queen

There was more music for the wreath laying, which was led by The Prince of Wales, for the Queen. Princes William, Harry, Andrew and Edward and Princess Anne laid theirs, also the Duke of Kent. Politicians, diplomats and representatives of the services and the police took their turn.

The service was led by Dr Richard Chartres in his capacity as Dean of the Queen's Chapels Royal. The standard wording, repeated annually, has much more of the Old Testament in it than the New (the Aaronic blessing; the hymn is a setting of Psalm 90) and no explicit scripture reading or text. I was impressed that the crowd was offered subjects on which to meditate during the two-minutes' silence. Web-based information on the ceremony included an appeal not to interrupt the two-minutes' silence with camera shutters, an appeal that seemed to be heeded.



Figure 39: March Past, 2017 National Ceremony of Remembrance, Whitehall

After the end of the ceremony the various lead participants disappeared inside the adjacent government buildings and the march-past of veterans and others began – and continued for an hour, accompanied by the band's limitless medley of marches from 'Tipperary' to 'Those Magnificent Men in their Flying Machines', the latter a witty selection for the departure of the RAF honour guard.

I reflected on the fact that so many people had waited for hours, out of sight of the Cenotaph, the various famous folk, the Royal Family, for the chance to walk past at the end³⁵. A recurring question in all my travels had been 'who is Remembrance for?' At this point I felt that Remembrance Sunday was 'for' these marchers. The 1919-vintage inscription on the Cenotaph, 'The Glorious Dead' begs the question, how 'glorious' was anything about the War? In the course of the War there was a transition from volunteer to conscript armed services that begs another question, is being 'grateful' to men and women who had no choice but to serve the appropriate response?

³⁵ The 2018 ballot for places in the march has a 10,000 limit.

2.8 Edinburgh Visit and Scottish National War Memorial

There are multiple strands of Remembrance on and around Calton Hill at the east end of Princes Street in Edinburgh. To the tourist this is the mound on which, adjacent to the original site of the Scottish Royal Observatory and daily at 1pm, a large ball drops down a staff on the top of a Monument to Horatio Nelson. This action is visible from the castle, where a gun is simultaneously fired. More relevantly to the origins of this time check, the Nelson monument is also visible to the boats in Leith harbour, on board which, in the late 19th century at least, ships' captains would have a daily opportunity to check their clocks.

Climb on to Calton Hill and the more energetic tourist finds it covered in monuments. Most were designed by William Henry Playfair, the architect responsible for the layout of the hill and surrounding roads in the Regency period. They include one in honour of his uncle John Playfair, an eminent mathematician. A monument to the philosopher Dugald Stewart is based on a small Greek temple on a circular plan; a nearby, similar structure commemorates Robert Burns. These are all, however, dwarfed by the 'National Monument'. This looks like one end of the Parthenon and was originally, at the time of construction in 1826-29, supposed to become a complete building dedicated to the memory of Scots killed in the Napoleonic Wars. Funds ran out and the scheme remained unfinished and was for many years regarded as a shameful folly and a warning against the dangers of over-reaching with schemes reliant on fundraising and subscriptions.



Figure 40: The National Monument, Nelson Monument; Calton Hill, Edinburgh

Playfair Memorial, National Monument, Nelson Monument, Calton Hill

From the hill one can see down into the old Calton Burial Ground. Here is buried David Hume, the atheist philosopher (d1776), with a large monument. A tall obelisk is a memorial to five members of an organisation seeking universal suffrage and rights for common people who were sentenced to transportation from Scotland to Botany Bay, Australia in 1793.



**Figure 41: Dugald Stewart Monument and Central Edinburgh.
Martyrs' Memorial, Old Calton Cemetery etc.**

We were in Edinburgh, from 24 to 26 November 2017, principally to visit the Scottish National War Memorial. This was opened on 14 July 1927, just over ten years after the idea for such a National Memorial had been mooted, with over a year of the War still to run, by the Duke of Atholl.³⁶

The Duke's initial proposal was principally aimed at staking a claim for a unified and distinctively Scottish memorial (and War Museum) after the conclusion of the War, at a time when some thought there might either be dispersed museums all round the country, or that a single museum and memorial in London might suffice. There was an optimistic idea of how much longer the War would continue, and also sufficient optimism about the outcome to allow the legal groundwork of the National (later "Imperial") War Museum to be laid in early 1917.

³⁶ Macmillan, Duncan. 2014. *Scotland's Shrine; The Scottish National War Memorial*. Farnham: Lund Humphries, p20.

In Scotland, the initial 'museum' focus became overshadowed by the ambition to have a national 'memorial'. The number of Scots casualties was originally estimated (in 1917!) to be 100,000. Later corrections and recalculations brought the total to nearly 150,000. As a proportion of the population this is roughly double the casualty 'rate' in England. The basic arguments were won and the legal basis for the Memorial was established in January 1918.

The form that the Memorial should take was the subject of controversy and the debate on the matter was not without some dirty tricks. For example, one design was pilloried in the press as looking like 'a huge jelly mould' after an incorrectly dimensioned drawing was used to mock-up a photograph of the likely finished structure. It was proposed that the Memorial should feature a prominent "shrine" in which the dead were commemorated, with adjacent halls celebrating the contribution of the different regiments and other groupings. The relative size of these two elements was difficult to resolve. A site for the memorial was determined quite early – a barracks building high up in Edinburgh Castle was marked for demolition in the post-war period and its 'footprint' was therefore available, on one side of 'Crown Square' opposite the Great Hall of the castle, built by James IV in the late fifteenth century. It was felt most desirable that the harmony of the castle buildings should not be disturbed more than necessary and that the well-known silhouette of the castle as seen from the low ground to the north of Castle Mound (the 'New Town') should not be much altered.

Within all of these constraints, and after a period of building from 1923 to 1927, the Memorial was completed and dedicated with great ceremony by the King and Queen. They, along with key military chiefs, laid printed records of the dead in a steel casket on the altar of the shrine – a distinct space offset from the rest of the building at its mid point (see the plan, Figure 42).

There was discussion of who should be commemorated here. The Memorial is to those who fell while serving in Scottish regiments and other units with Scottish titles, also 'all those for whom their families claim Scottish nationality'. How to define the latter category?

The necessary qualifications were summarised thus [in 1920]: *To be entitled to appear on the Roll of honour of the Scottish National War Memorial, a man or woman must have died between the specified dates or as a result of sickness or wounds acquired on service between these dates; must have belonged to a distinctively Scottish Unit, or must have been of Scottish origin, as follows; Scottish parents on both sides; Scottish parentage on his or her father's side; continued residence in Scotland.* By this definition, although one wrong was righted and... women – who had not been mentioned in the records subcommittee's earlier report – were now to be included, having a Scottish father was alone sufficient qualification to be called a Scot. Having a Scottish mother, was not. These conditions were repeated when

the records subcommittee reported again on 2 December 1926, but having a Scottish mother was now added as a qualification.³⁷

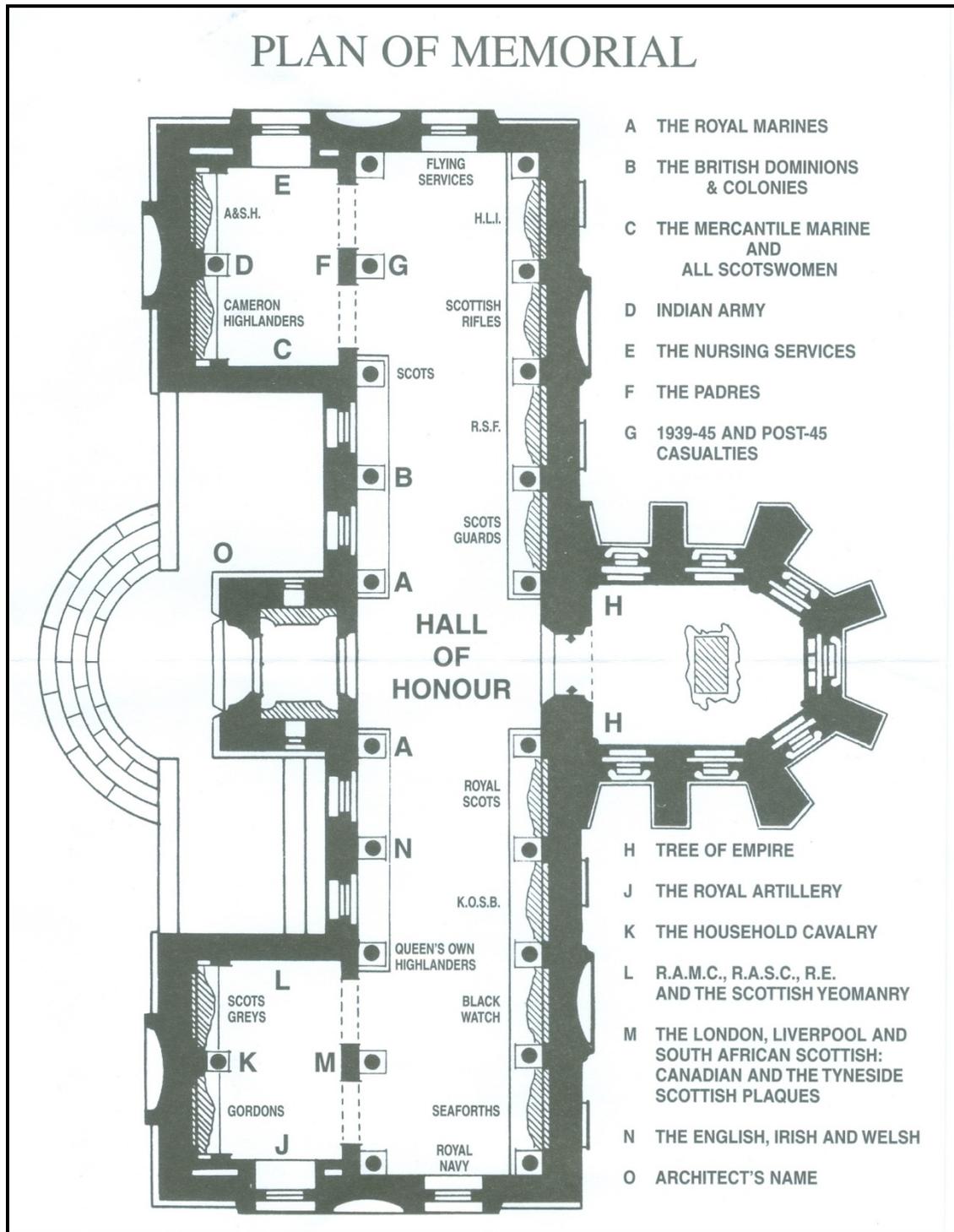


Figure 42: Scottish National War Memorial Plan
 (note detail in the 'Shrine' of the rock intrusion around the altar)

³⁷ Ibid, p55

The 'specified dates' relevant to the First World War were amended in the 1950s to encompass the Second World War and subsequent conflicts and a small additional memorial stone (Item 'G' in the plan at Figure 42) acknowledges the ongoing and active commemoration.

The Memorial is freely accessible to everyone who visits the Castle, and is clearly regarded by many as just another stop on the tour. As a result, and despite the constant efforts of a small army of attendants who politely try to impose the rules on maintaining a respectful quiet in the building and no photography, the Hall of Honour (the main space that extends the whole length of the building) was busy and noisy. Within, a succession of alcoves is each dedicated to a different regiment or other unit or class of combatants or participants. In each alcove and supported on a carved ledge is a pair of bookstands. These in turn support folders of names of the fallen. We looked in the Scottish Rifles – the Cameronians – for Archie MacDonald³⁸. And couldn't find him, until an attendant pointed out that the officers and men had different sections within the book. This rank-based distinction struck an odd note – it is exactly what is (gratifyingly) missing in the layouts of the War Graves Commission's cemeteries, where the ranks are acknowledged on the grave markers but play no part in the location of the grave.

The carvings and decorations within the Memorial are very fine and (to a non-specialist!) evoke the Art Deco style still being developed in the 1920s. Individual sculptures as well as friezes and much stained glass tell many stories and record the equipment, the people, the animals and the places of the War as well as several stories from scripture.

Particularly striking and in tune with the theme of 'sacrifice' was the story of Abraham and Isaac from Genesis 22. This is illustrated in the first window of the Shrine (Figure 43). Even without the stained glass we have sacrifice evoked by the Memorial architecture: a shrine, an altar, the relics (records) laid on it. Impossible to stray far into First World War literature without finding Wilfred Owen's take on this Bible passage:

The Parable of the Old Man and the Young

So Abram rose, and clave the wood, and went,
And took the fire with him, and a knife.
And as they sojourned both of them together,
Isaac the first-born spake and said,

³⁸ My great-aunt's sweetheart, again – see Section 2.2

My Father, Behold the preparations, fire and iron,
But where the lamb for this burnt-offering?
Then Abram bound the youth with belts and straps,
and builded parapets and trenches there,
And stretchèd forth the knife to slay his son.
When lo! an angel called him out of heaven,
Saying, Lay not thy hand upon the lad,
Neither do anything to him.
Behold, A ram, caught in a thicket by its horns;
Offer the Ram of Pride instead of him.

But the old man would not so, but slew his son,
And half the seed of Europe, one by one. ³⁹



Figure 43: Shrine Window, Abraham and Isaac

This must be a very solemn and dramatic place when it is still and silent. No visitor is now going to encounter it so, unless on a special occasion. But some respect is imposed for the Shrine itself by virtue of the iron gates kept shut to exclude tourists. The view through the

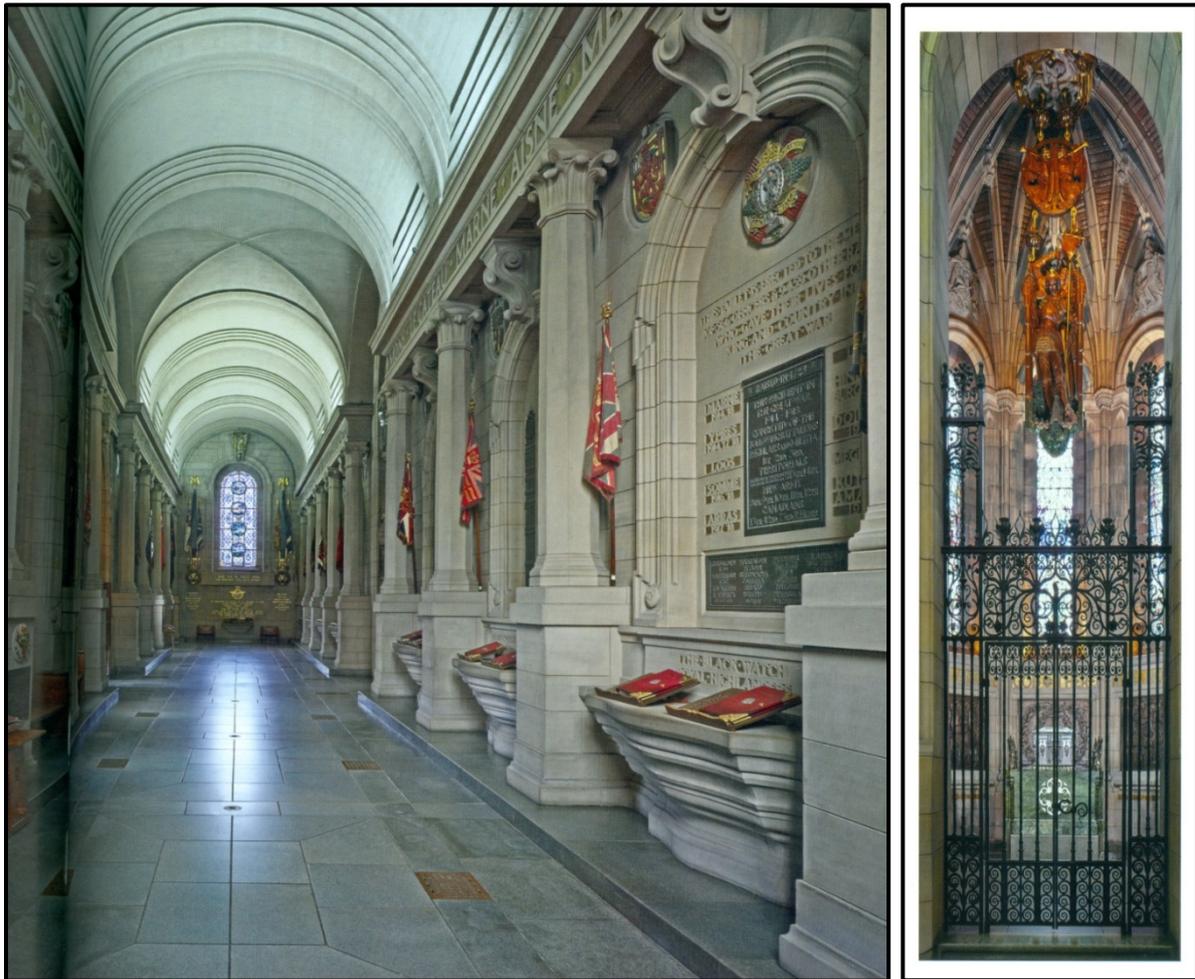
³⁹ Stallworthy, Jon (Ed). *Wilfred Owen, the complete poems and fragments*. 2013. London:Chatto & Windus. Volume 1, p174.

gates shows the steel casket sitting on a massive block of green stone, effectively an altar. This stone in turn is sitting on the Castle Rock, part of which protrudes through the Shrine floor at this point. Thus the commemoration is literally bound to the land, to the Nation. Erica spoke to one of the attendants and explained our purpose – the attendant surprised me with an invitation into the Shrine itself, which we took up while she kept guard at the gates. An honour, and very special to have seen the whole of the Memorial.

Through reading Macmillan's recent and authoritative (and beautifully and exhaustively illustrated) book on the subject I understand the Memorial's purpose and appreciate its design. Whether it remains to present day Scots anything like the focus of nationhood that it became for those of the 1920s, I would very much doubt.



Figure 44: National War Memorial, Edinburgh Castle (exterior)



**Figure 45: Scottish National War Memorial (interior)
Hall of Honour; Shrine**

2.9 Other Remembrance – from Coventry to Pearl Harbor

Coventry and its churches

One does not have to travel to Cologne, to the battlefields of France and Belgium or even to Edinburgh to encounter signs of Remembrance. Any local church of a certain age is going to feature some sort of memorial. Civic memorials in their hundreds are spread across the country and Coventry has a higher density than many because of the Coventry Blitz. Over 1200 were killed in bombing raids on the city and adjacent industrial areas in the period from 1940-1942. Over 800, more than 550 of them casualties of the raid of 14 November 1940, are buried in a mass grave in Coventry's London Road Cemetery (Figure 46).



**Figure 46: The Coventry Blitz Mass Grave and Memorial
London Road Cemetery, Coventry**

The Cathedral ruins have become a focus for remembrance, a magnet for memorials which are still being added to. It is impossible to list or comment on many in this report. The 'Father Forgive' inscription of the Cologne Antonite Church owes its origins to the words on the Old Coventry Cathedral altar. (Figure 47). A more recent addition (2000) to the ruins is a memorial to 'the self sacrifice of all those who served on the Home Front during the Second World War' (Figure 48). The memorial is skirted by the commendation to selflessness in Philippians 2.4: 'Let each of you look not to your own interests but to the interests of others'.



Figure 47: 'Father Forgive', Coventry Cathedral Ruins



Figure 48: Home Front Memorial, Coventry Cathedral Ruins

Coventry planted an area to the south of the city centre as a War Memorial Park in the 1920s. The trees are now mature and the plaques dedicating each to a different casualty with Coventrian connections are aging but still for the most part legible (Figure 49). The Art Deco memorial (Figure 50) seems surprisingly modern but was the original 1920s design with some additions to recognise the Second World War and a fresh landscaping and access to recognise modern day requirements. Although the park as a whole is the venue for a wide variety of activities all year long, the City Council tries to impose restraint on games and use of cycles, skates and skateboards in the immediate vicinity of the memorial. Surrounding it are other landscaped areas dedicated to Remembrance, including a fresh re-creation of a 'German Peace Garden' (Figure 50) first created in the 1960s.



Figure 49: Coventry War Memorial Park; tree and plaque⁴⁰

⁴⁰ According to the CWGC website records Private Frederick Grant died on 25 September 1915; his name is also recorded on the Menin Gate in Ypres along with over 54,000 others who died in the Flanders zone of the Western Front but have no known grave.



Figure 50: Coventry War Memorial Park; War Memorial and German Peace Garden

The four churches of my own Group each have aspects of Remembrance 'built-in'. The Holyhead Road church is the successor to two churches which were badly damaged in the Blitz, a single new (Congregational) church being built to the west of the city in the early 1950s to replace them. A board commemorating those who served in the First World War and were associated with the Vine Street church has been retained for occasional display. The Potters Green chapel has a similar list with mention of those who fell. (Figure 51). At the Keresley Chapel there are plaques commemorating two members lost overseas or at sea and one who died in the raid that destroyed the old Cathedral. Foleshill Road URC has a graveyard; one grave is a war grave with an official marker installed after a short campaign led by the Junior Church. Gunner Walter Atkins of the Tank Corps died in February 1917 at Bovington Army Camp, of complications during an operation after being sent home injured.

On a side road in Coventry – formerly a through-route but cut off by highway development decades ago – there is a small memorial, biannually bedecked with poppies. This is a stone (Figure 53) marking the spot where seven members of a bomb disposal team were killed while unloading a number of unexploded bombs in October 1940. A local history group erected the stone and plaque in 2008. A volunteer keeps the grass tidy on what is otherwise an unadopted and remote verge.



Figure 51: Vine Street 'Roll of Honour' at Holyhead Road URC, Potters Green URC Memorial



Figure 52: Keresley URC Memorials; CWGC Grave Marker at Foleshill Road URC



Figure 53: Memorial to Bomb Disposal Personnel, Whitley Common, Coventry

Nuneaton

In Nuneaton's Riversley Park stand a number of memorials. The most recent of them commemorates the service of Gurkha regiments to Britain through 200 years 1815-2015 (Figure 54). The inscription 'Better to die than to be a Coward' is the regimental motto. The nearby Bramcote Barracks is home to the Queen's Gurkha Signals Regiment; they play an eye-catching role in the annual Remembrance Day parade in the town. The parade salute is taken by the town Mayor on the Town Hall steps opposite our Nuneaton URC building; I have led remembrance Day services there a number of times and the morning service in the church typically finished with worshippers (after-service coffee in hand) becoming spectators.

The apparently anachronistic recruitment of hardy mountain folk from another sovereign nation, (and Nepal is not even a Commonwealth country), to augment UK forces seems to go without adverse comment in both countries. There was however a recent campaign to try to bring about better retirement settlements for former Gurkha soldiers. Some retirees have remained in the Nuneaton neighbourhood; there are certainly more Nepalese restaurants than the average.



Figure 54: Nuneaton; Gurkha 200th Anniversary Memorial Stone

Near the Gurkha memorial stands an older statue commemorating those locals who fought in what is known as the 'Boer War' (Figure 55) though this is not how the inscription describes the conflict:

Erected to perpetuate the memory of the men of the Nuneaton district who at the call of duty went forth to fight their country's battles in South Africa during the years 1899-1902 by public subscription through the agency of the Midlands Counties Tribune newspaper.

I was intrigued by the thought of a newspaper or newspaper group instigating the erection of a memorial (and crediting themselves on the end result), though there are modern parallels in the support of national titles for "Help for Heroes" and campaigns to support the annual Poppy fundraisers. But I include this principally as an example of a martial subject adopted for a memorial – a uniformed and armed soldier ready for the fight – which is a contrast with so many more recent memorials which either invite contemplation or evoke sorrow and regret. Another such, with a medieval knight figure used to represent chivalry alongside heroism is the Royal Lancers memorial seen in Canterbury Cathedral (Figure 56) during a visit in March 2018. The town monument in Fort William (Figure 57) incorporates a Scottish soldier of the Great War with rifle reversed; as with so many memorials this has been

pressed into service for commemoration of the casualties of the Second World War and other conflicts, in this case up to and including the Gulf War of 1991.



Figure 55: Nuneaton, Boer War Memorial



Figure 56: Royal Lancers' Memorial, Canterbury Cathedral



Figure 57: Town War Memorial, The Parade, Fort William

Pearl Harbor: The USS Arizona

Nora and Mick Bridge, friends and members of our Keresley congregation, were kind enough to spend part of a holiday trip collecting materials for me in Hawaii. The USS Arizona Memorial is a cleverly designed structure (Figure 58, postcard) straddling the submerged wreck of the battleship, which had been sunk during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941. It is part of the integrated network of memorials sites in Alaska, California and Hawaii, the ‘World War II Valor in the Pacific National Monument’.

Those visiting the Arizona memorial arrive by boat. The Arizona was settled on the sea bed on an even keel; some parts of the wreck superstructure still protrude above the water. 1177 of the 1511-strong crew of the ship died as a result of the attack, and by the mid-1960s the remains of the ship (the superstructure and main armament having been removed, scrapped or recycled) were declared a national shrine. There is a wall of remembrance – the ‘shrine’ – on which all of the casualties are listed. And the list has an appendix, being the names of those survivors of the attack who have chosen to have their ashes placed within the ship by

divers after an appropriate interment ceremony. Nora and Mick brought me back a video record of one such event.⁴¹ The US military places a high value on the precision and solemnity with which they carry out these duties. Despite the presence of a separate video-camera operator-diver the diving team handled the ceremony in a very respectful way that evidently meant much to the relatives of the deceased. The *Arizona*, then, is still an active and even growing memorial.

It is a significant commitment that is made to US armed services personnel that, even when retired and so long as they had an honourable discharge, their funeral will be provided, if requested. This will be according to a set ceremony which will include an honour guard representing their arm of the services, three volleys of rifle shots and a flag to drape the coffin. The flag is subsequently folded to a set pattern and presented to the next of kin⁴².



Figure 58: (Postcard) USS Arizona Memorial, Pearl Harbor

⁴¹ The story of survivor (former coxswain) Raymond Haerry who died in 2017.

⁴² ...with the words 'On behalf of the President of the United States, the United States (Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force or Coast Guard), and a grateful nation, please accept this flag as a symbol of our appreciation for your loved one's honorable and faithful service.'

2.10 Another kind of Remembrance – Aberfan

I remember not so much the facts of the Aberfan disaster as the reaction, my mother being upset and a little 'clingy'. By 21 October 1966 we had moved from Glasgow to Hale, in Cheshire and my brother and I were at the start of our first full year in our new schools; my brother John in the Junior School and I (just turned 7 years old) in the last year of the Infants'. I remember the (black-and-white) pictures on the TV news and talk of children having to take shelter under desks. I assume one of the talking heads of the day was Harold Wilson, but other details are hazy. Only during this study have I properly revisited the data; 144 dead, 116 of them children.

On Easter Tuesday 2018, a day when the weather swung from bright to overcast with the odd brief shower I was shown the key sights of present-day Aberfan by Jan Scott, who had been at a Merthyr Vale Junior School in October 1966, but not at *that* Junior School. Her school at Troedyrhiw, the next village up the valley, was to receive some of the survivors from Aberfan's Pantglas Junior School the term after the disaster.



Figure 59: Aberfan Village from the Cardiff Road, April 2018

Looking across the valley from the A4054 Cardiff Road, across the River Taff, there is nothing now to be seen of the multiple tips that used to dominate the town. If you know where the Memorial Garden lies, central in Figure 59, a little to the left of the orange-yellow Community Centre building and next to the all-too-explicable discontinuity in the pattern of

the housing, you can however imagine where the collapsed Number 7 tip, made unstable by a combination of insecure foundations and erosion, flowed down the hillside and destroyed Pantglas School. 'Flowed' is the right verb. The combination of circumstances and the materials involved meant that once certain physical thresholds had been reached, the material of the tip, waste which had been brought out of the Merthyr Vale colliery (that at that time stood with its main buildings and surface workings in the valley floor), turned to a liquid sludge with a density approximately twice that of water⁴³. And after all was quiet again, the energy of the motion gone, the solidity returned and the school and the victims were buried in material that defied any attempts at quick clearing. To mention Aberfan to anyone in the wider (former) coalmining community area is to invite reminiscence of family involvement in what happened next. The father of a close friend of ours crossed from Cefn Fforest in the neighbouring Sirhowy valley to join the digging. Jan's parents were asked to visit school parents on the evening of the disaster to help establish which children were missing.

Aberfan is no longer dominated by the tips – they were removed in the late 1960s after considerable campaigning on the part of local residents but only after the charity fund that had been set up in the aftermath of the disaster had been raided to pay a £150,000 share of the then £1 Million estimated costs. This last injustice was not addressed for thirty years until the money was repaid, though without interest, by the incoming Labour Government elected in 1997. Further payments to right this further wrong were made in 2007 by the Welsh Government.

I'm apprehensive that this section will do far less than justice to the village and the people of Aberfan, but this is not the place to explore the chronology of the disaster, or its causes or aftermath, or the justice or injustice of Tribunal of Inquiry, or the last 50 years. I realise that this would be a fascinating study – on being lent it I was tempted to sit and read the Tribunal Report of 1967 from cover to cover. The 50th anniversary in 2016 saw some of those who survived as children now going into print with their own story, and I gained much from reading – though not thoroughly – in Gaynor Madgwick's account of her own and her family's lives in the period since 1966.⁴⁴ The book's introduction by local journalist Vincent Kane gives a detailed overview of the way the disaster was dealt with and opened my eyes to the wide range of characters in this story who could be allocated some culpability for what happened before or after the slip of 21 October.

⁴³*Report of the Tribunal appointed to inquire into the Disaster at Aberfan on October 21st, 1966.* 1967. London: HMSO, paragraph 50.

⁴⁴ Madgwick, Gaynor with Lewis, Greg. 2016. *Aberfan*. Talybont: Y Lolfa Cyf

There was considerable renewed interest in the disaster at the time of the 50th anniversary in 2016. A special service was attended by the Prince of Wales, whose handwritten note with his wreath was stolen from the cemetery, prolonging the anniversary's tenure of the headlines.⁴⁵ There is an annual commemoration each October, featuring a simple service in the cemetery. This is not exclusively for survivors or families of the casualties, nor for residents, but on the other hand press and photographers are not encouraged.

The Merthyr Vale colliery itself was closed in 1989; there is now a new school for the local area in the centre of the valley, where the colliery stood. We could see this in the foreground when we were looking across the river at Aberfan town, from the east. We had driven from the town up to Troedyrhiw, retracing the route of the trucks that removed the tips in the late 60s, then back south on the main road. Circling back round, past the roundabout with the inset winding wheel and miner sculpture commemorating the passing of the colliery (Figure 60), we parked by the Community Centre whose construction was financed from the Disaster Fund. We walked up the sloping path that led to the cemetery. It is a large cemetery but dominated by the memorial; brilliant white, two rows of arches which mark the head of the many graves (Figure 61). Not all of the victims are buried here, because of family practice or preference, but most.



**Figure 60: Southern Entrance to Aberfan Village
(The Disaster Memorial is visible within the hillside cemetery, upper left)**

⁴⁵ As reported, for example at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-south-east-wales-37760684>



Figure 61: Aberfan Disaster Memorial, Aberfan Cemetery

Some of the graves are uniform; the monument incorporates a sloping 'Astroturf' surface which is punctuated by family grave slabs where this has been the family preference. Parents have, inevitably, joined the children during the intervening years; the grave of Joseph Wilkshire (Figure 62) is representative. Its use of his age, '8½ years', is poignant, being exactly how Joseph would have self-identified to his peers



Figure 62: Aberfan Disaster Memorial Grave, Joseph Wilkshire

This is evoked by the composer Karl Jenkins and librettist Mererid Hopwood in their work for the 50th anniversary, *Cantata Memoria, for the children*⁴⁶. One of the movements 'And-a-half' has children squabbling over their relative status:

I'm bigger than you – I'm seven years old.

That's nothing – I'm seven and a half!

I'm stronger than you – I'm eight years old.

That's nothing – I'm eight and a half!

I'm prettier than you – I'm nine years old.

That's nothing – I'm nine and a half!

The point of this (within the choral work) is the noise, the chatter of children. Which was present and then absent from the village, or at least muted for a generation. Not just because of the death of 116 children in the disaster but because thereafter the survivors' guilt and parents protectiveness and sensitivity to their bereaved neighbours kept children off the streets.



Figure 63: Memorial Stone, Aberfan Memorial Garden

We visited the Memorial Garden built within the footprint of the school (Figures 63, 64). Like the village itself, it is well-kept and a calm place without excessive explanation. Those who divert off the Cardiff Road to visit here tend to know already what happened, what the Memorial is about. There is no 'industry' has built up around the disaster other than the

⁴⁶ Jenkins, Karl: *Cantata Memoria. For the Children*. Deutsche Grammophon CD 00289 479 6486

significant number of books on the subject. There is no visitor centre, and signposting is discreet and minimal.

Here and there around the UK, other communities have been struck by tragedy and disaster, then become identified with it. We come across some of them in travelling, sometimes on holiday. Years ago my family visited Lynmouth in Devon, where a flood had devastated this seaside town in 1952, sweeping debris down from Exmoor, demolishing houses and bridges and killing over 30 people. Though this was obscure pre-history to me, the town was clearly identified with the disaster by my parents. Driving north to our Scottish haunts we inevitably pass signs to Lockerbie, on the A74(M), where the bombed Pan-Am Flight 103 came to earth on the evening of 21 December 1988. Everyone in the air died, 11 on the ground in the town where substantial debris fell. 270 in all. We will always remember returning that evening to the news of the bombing; it had been our first night out together after the birth of our daughter. Lynmouth has a Memorial Hall; Lockerbie has its memorial in the cemetery, a parallel with Aberfan.

Less well known, we visited the coastal settlement of Gloup on the island of Yell, second most northerly of the Shetland Islands. Looking out to sea stands a sculpture of a woman (Figure 65) waiting with her child for returning fishermen who will never arrive – the 1981 memorial to the tragedy of July 1881 when 58 local fishermen were killed and 10 boats lost in a freak storm which blew in from Iceland. There were 34 widows and 85 orphans left behind; the devastation to the community and its economy unimaginable.⁴⁷

Back in Aberfan, the Disaster Fund set up in the days following the tragedy made awards to those bereaved and supported the construction of the Memorial, the Memorial Garden and the Community Centre. A range of other projects were funded, many slanted towards providing or improving facilities and opportunities for young people.⁴⁸ A Memorial Charity now administers the residual funds to maintain the Memorial sites in good order.

⁴⁷ Further described at http://www.somuchtosea.co.uk/stories/gloup_disaster.aspx

⁴⁸ Reported in the Aberfan Disaster Fund report of 1970. Grants of £200 to surviving children in the aftermath of the disaster are worth approximately £3000 today.



Figure 64: Aberfan Disaster Memorial Garden, 3 April 2018



Figure 65: Gloup Disaster Memorial, Island of Yell, Shetland⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Photograph by Colin Park [CC BY-SA 2.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0>)

2.11 'Coda' –Vimy Ridge and Belgium, August 2018; meeting the 'Parents'

Two days we had intended to spend on the Cherbourg peninsula at the end of our 2018 summer holiday in France were, ironically, freed up by the absence on holiday in the UK of our intended local hosts. Travelling back to the Channel Tunnel from Normandy we decided on two nights' stay just over the border in Belgium, in the town of Ypres (Ieper).

En route we indulged in a repeat visit to *L'Anneau de la Mémoire*, the Ring of Remembrance at Arras, described in section 2.2. We also paused at the Vimy Ridge Canadian Monument.

This was a little piece of Canada, literally, as the site (of 250 acres) was given to Canada in 1922 by the French Government for the erection of a memorial (Figure 66) and to preserve some features of this sector of the front. Vimy Ridge is high ground long-occupied by German forces before the beginning of the Battle of Arras in April 1917. The Canadian forces, four divisions operating together in battle for the first time as a unit under one command, succeeded in capturing the ridge after four days' fighting. This shared Canadian effort and sacrifice (and success) became a powerful symbol of national identity.



Figure 66: Canadian National Vimy Memorial

Within the site, as well as the monument itself poised on the north-east-facing escarpment of the ridge, are preserved areas of trenches and the shell holes showing the topography of the front-line and No Man's Land as it stood when the ridge was defended. It is an education to see how close the two lines of forces came, also the depth of features in the land across which troops were expected and ordered to advance. Significant areas of the now-wooded terrain are fenced off with warnings not to enter because of the dangers of still-uncleared First World War ordnance, though apparently sheep may safely graze. There is a preserved stretch of the 'Grange' supply tunnel which was aligned at right angles to the front line and was used to allow reserve troops to be brought up safely and out of sight. The public are allowed access to part of this under the guidance of a team of Canadian students seasonally recruited to work in France.



Figure 67: 'Canada Bereft' statue, 'Mother Canada'

The tall pylons of the monument, its most obvious feature when it is seen from a distance and certainly when approaching from the rear or western side, are topped with two carved figures representing Justice and Peace, Peace uppermost and holding a torch aloft. Below these two figures are Faith, Hope and Truth on one pylon, Honour, Charity and Knowledge on the other. On the eastern side of the monument the most striking statue is of a young woman looking out over the plain, 'Canada Bereft', also given the title 'Mother Canada' although there are representations of grieving parents elsewhere around the monument's base.

We moved on into Belgium and to the town of Ypres (Flemish *Ieper*) and wandered, on our first evening, around the central *Grote Markt* square and some of the adjacent old quarter. This is of course old in design but predominantly reconstructed to the original plan and detail after its virtual destruction in the First World War. The reconstruction took enough time to be interrupted by the Second World War. I had been drawn to Ypres with a feeling that attending the nightly 'Last Post' ceremony at the Menin Gate Memorial to the Missing would be a fitting coda to my sabbatical studies. In fact it was not the Menin Gate that provided the highlight of this short visit and neither was it the nearby Tyne Cot cemetery and memorial which would bring down the curtain on the final 'episode'. But we should deal with each, and with Ypres.



Figure 68: The Menin Gate Memorial to the Missing, Ypres/Ieper

There is no doubt that the town of Ypres owes much to the World War One battlefield visit 'industry' that has grown up. Plentiful coaches ferrying hundreds of visitors to multiple sites were in evidence as we drove to and walked around the town. The hotel we stayed in had poppy-themed merchandise on sale, battlefield-themed books and maps available. I suspect this is the only town featuring a Commonwealth War Graves Commission shop and information centre. The Tourist Information area in the 'old' Cloth Hall building was obviously geared to helping visitors plan an itinerary around the World War One sites of their choice. And there are many. This of course is local to the area where the Passchendaele campaign

of the second half of 1917 took place. The Passchendaele ridge lies to the south and east of Ypres, forming part of an arc of high ground from which the town could be attacked from multiple directions. Despite this vulnerability, the German forces never re-occupied the town after being expelled in November 1914. As a gesture of gratitude to the Allies (and despite the comprehensive destruction of the place in 1917) there arose a commitment to enacting the 'Last Post' ceremony at the Menin Gate Memorial every evening at 8pm. This has now continued, with a pause during the Second World War occupation period, since 1928. The pattern of the ceremony follows a set routine (annotation as in the local interpretation boards at the Gate):

- Call to Attention
- Last Post (final salute to the fallen)
- Exhortation (from 'For the Fallen' by L Binyon)
- A minute's silence
- Wreath laying
- Reveille (symbolic return to life)

The local organisers request those present to assemble in nominated areas, to remain silent during the ceremony and not to applaud. When we attended there was a general quiet around the place, but a real throng of people and (I sensed, for most) more to see it happening than to participate in an act of Remembrance. There are those for whom it is just another photo opportunity, for others a crucial pilgrimage. The hotel 'Trip Advisor' entry had a number of entries bewailing less than perfect prospects for fulfilling special arrangements around the November Armistice Day commemoration this year. The Last Post ceremony is augmented, in the period before 8pm, during the wreath laying and after the Reveille, by visiting bands, choirs, pipers and other groups who will march to and into the gate. During our own visit this involved the Sergeant White Memorial Flute Band and the Devon Army Cadet Force, with the Killyman Orange Order and Royal Black District Chapter of County Tyrone, together with representation from other UK Police Cadet and Scout units.

The Gate itself is a counterpart, for this zone of the Western Front, to the Thiepval Monument at Albert. It lists nearly 55,000 missing from the local campaigns, in the period to August 1917. These names are inscribed on the walls under the central arches – the Hall of Memory – as well as in galleries at higher level on the outer sides of the structure. A further 34,000 names are listed at the Tyne Cot Memorial, some miles away, the Menin Gate design lacking the capacity. In total, more casualties than the Somme, but somehow less dramatic.



Figure 69: Last Post at the Menin Gate, August 2018

Fairness requires that we acknowledge Ypres' role in promoting peace and nuclear disarmament, alongside the battlefield tourism. A relationship is maintained with Hiroshima, the point being made that whereas Ypres was an early target of chemical warfare in World War One gas attacks, Hiroshima saw the initial deployment of a nuclear weapon.

We drove out of town to visit an art installation that had been in preparation for many months. This was 'ComingWorldRememberMe', an artwork several years in the planning in which small clay moulded crouching figures were made by 'godmothers' and 'godfathers' of the project at workshop sessions. Each figure was to represent one of the 600,000 victims of



Figure 70: 'ComingWorldRememberMe' installation, Ypres

the War in Belgium. They were to be displayed alongside further larger works representing the world, and with military 'dogtags' listing the War casualties but also the 'godparents', thus establishing a link between the past, the present and ('Coming World') the future. The setting, in a field and woods to the south of Ypres, was pleasant, but we didn't find the installation as impressive as other, similar projects or the evocation of numbers of dead particularly dramatic.



Figure 71: Tyne Cot Cemetery

On the same excursion we visited the Tyne Cot military cemetery and memorial. This is the largest cemetery maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, with nearly 12,000 graves. Of these, over 8,000 are unnamed. The vast extent of the place, with row after row of uniform stones is impressive, and were this the first such visit I had made, I might be overwhelmed (Figure 71). But by now I know about the numbers. I have seen the lists of the missing at Thiepval and the Menin Gate. The French cemeteries of the Arras Area are on a similar scale. This is not compassion fatigue, though it might be cemetery fatigue. I find myself comparing and contrasting, considering how the dead have been listed, categorised, literally *ranked*. I recall how a name at the bottom of the lists on the Menin Gate (Figure 72) reflects the status of 'Sheonarain Tewari – Follower', propping up the rest of the 9th Bhopal Infantry casualties.

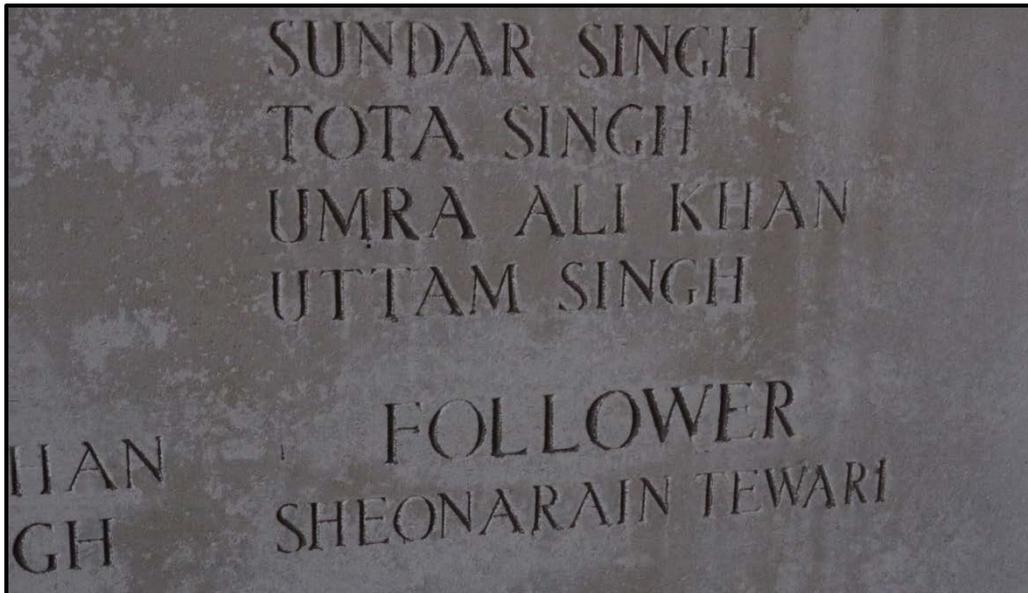


Figure 72: Menin Gate Memorial Inscriptions, detail



Figure 73: Unknown casualties, Tyne Cot cemetery

The grave markers bear witness to the different degrees to which *any* identification of remains has been possible, through uniform, badges or the like: As Figure 73 shows, 'A Soldier of the Great War, known unto God' sometimes gives way to 'A Serjeant of the Great War', 'A Soldier of the Great War, Cheshire Regiment'. Here and there it seems the nationality alone of the casualty was obvious. One of the most significant outcomes of the birth of the (Empire) Commonwealth War Graves Commission was the egalitarian nature of the treatment of the dead. Unlike the names on the Memorial to the Missing that part-

encircles Tyne Cot, the graves contain an *unsorted* array of officers and men, known and unknown.

By chance, and having fixed on a visit to Ypres, I discovered that we would be within 25 miles' drive of the German military cemetery at Vladslo, near Diksmuide in north west Belgium. This was the site of a First World War rest area behind German lines and was selected as one of the four locations where remains of German casualties in the Belgian sector of the Front have been concentrated. Until the late 1950s there had been up to 128 smaller cemeteries; immediately after the First World War there had apparently been over 650. The cemetery is signposted from a little way away, and there is roadside parking provided, though not as generously as for Tyne Cot. A coach party arrived and left while we lunched, before our visit. Not an unknown site, but we then had it to ourselves for 40 minutes or so.



Figure 74: Vladslo German Military Cemetery

In the end, this cemetery would have been remarkable anyway for its difference (from the CWGC norm), for its woodland setting and for its air of reverent tranquillity. But it is notable, and no doubt is much visited, for the presence of the two Käthe Kollwitz statues, the 'Grieving Parents'. The Kollwitz' son Peter, who was killed in the first months of the War, had been buried in the cemetery at Roogvelde, just five miles to the south. His remains, with those of 1,538 comrades, were moved to Vladslo in 1956. With him came his mother's sculpture (first installed at Roogvelde in 1932); the statues which now overlook the

cemetery. The statue of his father looks down on the flat granite grave marker which bears Peter's name, rank and date of death. See Figures 75 and 76.



Figure 75: The Grieving Parents, Käthe Kollwitz, sculptor



Figure 76: Kollwitz grave marker, Vladslø Cemetery

The remains in the cemetery now total 25,644. This number, far more than in any single British cemetery, is made less dramatic by the use of flat granite grave markers, each listing twenty soldiers' names. These are punctuated here and there by pairs of low, basalt crosses. As noted above, this is not the originally intended location for the Kollwitz statues, but their effect comes from the statues' relative, rather than absolute position. The husband and wife are at more than arm's length and each grieving in their own way. This is a different reaction to the parents' at the National Armed Services Memorial in Staffordshire (Figure 18). There, comfort is being given, even while the husband/father looks grimly at the funeral. Here in Vladslo there is grim introspection for the husband, wrapped up in himself, embracing only himself. The wife's pose expresses grief, guilt, contrition. A complex reaction from a parent who has failed to protect her child. In a sense the cemetery is full of children that the nation failed to protect.

We should be reassured that the action of creating and installing these statues gave comfort to Käthe and Karl Kollwitz, as a diary extract quoted by Jay Winter shows:

At Roggevelde, on their knees, Käthe and Karl Kollwitz suggest a family which includes us all, and that might be precisely what she had in mind. The most intimate here is also the most universal. The placing of her memorial in the German war cemetery where her son's body lay was a family reunion, a foretaste of what her broad religious faith suggested would happen at some future date. The sense of completeness, of healing, of transcendence is transparently present in her moving account of her last visit to the memorial. She was alone with her husband:

We went from the figures to Peter's grave, and everything was alive and *wholly* felt. I stood before the woman, looked at her – my own face – and I wept and stroked her cheeks. Karl stood close behind me – I did not even realise it. I heard him whisper, 'Yes, yes.' How close we were to one another then!⁵⁰

The cemetery is situated in a wood of German oak trees. They were dropping acorns as we slowly traversed the ground. I picked up a dozen or so and have planted them in our garden in Coventry. They may grow, who knows? But the visit has itself planted and helped solidify ideas of what Remembrance can be. I noticed Erica touch the statue of the mother, took a photo on the sly and later asked if I could share the picture and her thoughts for this account:

I had no particular expectations of visiting Vladslo cemetery. Our Belgium trip was Bill's suggestion when a visit to friends in Normandy, at the end of a French holiday, fell through. I

⁵⁰ Kollwitz, Käthe. *Diary* (14 August 1932), in Winter, Jay. *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*. 2014. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p113

knew (from Bill) that the German practice was to have horizontal slabs with multiple names rather than the individual erect stones the Allies used and I thought that would have less impact on me. But I am equally moved by the sheer numbers of war dead, regardless of nationality. No good guys, no bad guys, just an awful lot of lost potential and family grief. I knew about the Kollwitz connection of course and was interested to see the *Grieving Parents* statues in situ.

My reaction to arriving in the cemetery was that it was a beautiful and peaceful place. I could have stayed there for hours just breathing in the atmosphere. The stones laid out in a grid beneath (what are now) mature German oak trees give a totally different feel to the serried ranks of stones out in the open elsewhere. A much lovelier place to be for eternity.

And then we got up close to the statues, where the pain of the parents is palpable. Suddenly all the names, not just Peter Kollwitz, came to life and assumed individual importance. The parents are united in grief, but also isolated and divided by it.

Karl Kollwitz looks out over the grave of their son and all his comrades, staring out into the distance. You can see in his face that he is devastated by his loss. But it is a cold, hard grief that he shows.

And alongside him, but out of touching reach, is his wife. The guilt she feels for her part in the sequence of events that led to Peter's death is so evident in her face and her attitude of penitence. And I just reached out and pressed my hand to her cold stone hand, one mother to another across a century. Because of Bill's interest in her I have seen a lot of her art, but in that moment I suddenly felt that I understood how Peter's death had blighted and shaped the rest of her life and work. Words passed between us and I prayed.



3 Reflection

I have arrived at the end of my 'study' without a revelation of a unique formula that means we are 'doing' Remembrance right. My study has shown me, or rather *confirmed* to me that there is more to Remembrance than Remembrance Sunday and more to remember than the World Wars, or conflicts in which British armed forces have been involved. This is not a surprise, and I will not suggest that our Remembrance practice around our churches focuses solely on those topics. But it is hard to deny that 'Remembrance' first and foremost evokes the poppies, Flanders fields, trench warfare, the mud and slaughter of the Somme, Passchendaele and the rest. When the *date* of our annual commemoration is fixed on the end of that one war, which did not end all wars, what are the chances of ever changing these themes? And should we?

I wonder, how will we look at Remembrance when it is not 100 but 200 years since the First World War? Is this a national commemoration which will simply never fall into disuse, or is there a time limit of some sort? We have perpetuated the patterns of Remembrance first invented and refined in the decade after the 1918 Armistice. We congregate around memorials great and small which had their origins a century ago. We make use of the poppy as a symbol, based on a popular poem with imagery which caught the public imagination back then. Which parts of all this are transitory? Which of the embedded ideas and practices are timeless?

Throughout Section 2 there was some ad hoc 'reflection' as I chronicled the different 'episodes' of my study. The following remarks therefore augment rather than necessarily summarising or unpacking what has gone before.

How should we 'do' Remembrance?

This question has practical application for me as I try to find the right way to create and present material appropriate to a Remembrance Service for 2018. As I write, Remembrance Sunday (which this year falls on Remembrance Day) is just five weeks away. I know already that I intend the service that I lead to be based on a certain passage of scripture and to include participation in the national observation of the 2-minute silence at 11am. There are some things that will be inevitably different this year, as at least some focus is placed on the centenary of the Armistice. I shall bring out some of the materials discovered and discussed in the main body of this report. But what are the more general lessons of my study?

How should we 'do' Remembrance? At the event of the 26 April I distributed post-it notes and invited those present to note down things they particularly liked or disliked, would always want to retain or would cheerfully jettison from the Remembrance observance. I didn't then feel able to go into a plenary discussion of people's submissions as there were some seriously conflicting views on the degree to which 'tradition' should play a part and I didn't want to descend into a squabble about the usefulness of this, that or the other local tradition. With similar motivation I am, cravenly, not going to list the post-it responses verbatim here. And of course the answers to my question were more about tradition than innovation. Even if it is hyperbole, one answer to the question 'why do Remembrance this way?' would for some people be 'because we always have.' If our worshipping communities are conditioned by tradition to expect certain elements in our Remembrance Sunday worship, is it reasonable to fail substantially to live up to those expectations?

Time to stop asking questions. By nature I am a balanced person and apt to try to mediate, find a middle way. I am not wedded to every feature of traditional Remembrance practice but I don't want to throw out the baby with the bathwater. My sudden acquisition of the World War One family history material (and I didn't know most of it existed, before August 2012) has made me more willing to retain an older context for Remembrance. But while acknowledging what has gone before I want also to remember that this is 2018. Every generation surely has a new perspective to bring. But change for change's sake? I suggested early in this report that becoming used to Remembrance as a child was a little like becoming used to Christmas. And just like Christmas there occasionally arise suggestions for significant tweaks to traditional ways. All well and good so long as we don't lose or obscure the central meaning.

Should we mirror what goes on at the Cenotaph, or should we *observe* it? I was very encouraged by the sanity and humanity of the material that surrounded the ceremony in Whitehall when I attended last year. The list of subjects for thought during the Silence was a surprise and a help. It is far too easy to spend the Silence thinking 'Oh! We're being quiet!' or perhaps 'We're not being as quiet as we could be.' If listening to the chimes of Big Ben I inevitably count them. That accounts for most of the first minute. If leading worship then one's thoughts also stray to one's next actions. But the Silence 'still bonds the nation'⁵¹ and would be top of my list for aspects of the Whitehall ceremony to translate into the church and worship setting.

⁵¹ ...in the opinion of the *Times* leader writer of 5 June 2018, reflecting on a report that school children were becoming upset at the number of memorial silences being used to mark tragedy and terrorist attacks in schools.

We should be careful not to assume that in some fabled far-off time there was unanimity about the 'right' way to react to suffering in war. Even during and immediately after the First World War there were different opinions on how to react, individually and nationally, to the toll that was taken. These can be seen in some of the poetry that we quote, some that we ought to quote, from the War itself. Consider Lawrence Binyon's well-known poem:

For the Fallen

With proud thanksgiving, a mother for her children,
England mourns for her dead across the sea.
Flesh of her flesh they were, spirit of her spirit,
Fallen in the cause of the free.

Solemn the drums thrill; Death august and royal
Sings sorrow up into immortal spheres.
There is music in the midst of desolation
And a glory that shines upon our tears.

They went with songs to the battle, they were young,
Straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow.
They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted;
They fell with their faces to the foe.

*They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.*

They mingle not with their laughing comrades again;
They sit no more at familiar tables of home;
They have no lot in our labour of the day-time;
They sleep beyond England's foam.

But where our desires are and our hopes profound,
Felt as a well-spring that is hidden from sight,
To the innermost heart of their own land they are known
As the stars are known to the Night;

As the stars that shall be bright when we are dust,
 Moving in marches upon the heavenly plain,
 As the stars that are starry in the time of our darkness,
 To the end, to the end, they remain⁵².

This poem was published in *The Times* in September 1914, after the First Battle of the Marne. This engagement was a decisive turning point when the brief war of movement, with German forces mobile, and threatening to advance as far as Paris, was halted and turned into the four-year confrontation on the Western Front, with its trenches and readily-imagined stalemate. Binyon was therefore reacting to initial losses rather than the colossal carnage of the later campaigns, and giving the families of the early casualties a framework of comfort to lean on. They would be remembered for ever and there had been 'glory' in their passing. Something of the same sentiment endured long enough for Lutyens to have 'The Glorious Dead' engraved on each end of the Cenotaph in Whitehall. It really is accentuating the positive to a remarkable degree to treat mourning as 'proud thanksgiving.' (Line 1).

Perhaps it was inevitable that Siegfried Sassoon would not welcome the monuments of the post-war years. Having produced poetry through much of the War that attacked the complacency, jingoism and ignorance of those observing it from England, he showed his feelings once again in a 1927 sonnet about the Menin Gate at Ypres:

On Passing the New Menin Gate

Who will remember, passing through this Gate,
 the unheroic Dead who fed the guns?
 Who shall absolve the foulness of their fate,-
 Those doomed, conscripted, unvictorious ones?
 Crudely renewed, the Salient holds its own.
 Paid are its dim defenders by this pomp;
 Paid, with a pile of peace-complacent stone,
 The armies who endured that sullen swamp.
 Here was the world's worst wound. And here with pride
 'Their name liveth for ever', the Gateway claims.
 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.

⁵² Binyon, Lawrence. *For the Fallen*. as in Kendall, Tim (Ed). *Poetry of the First World War, An Anthology*. 2013. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p43. My italics; the well-known stanza.

Sassoon through his poem himself derided the notion that there should be pride in the losses, and by his 'conscripted' comment demolishes the notion that the forces were to a man eager for the fight or avidly pursuing what they felt was a noble cause. There is a risk of extrapolating the early patriotic fervour of the volunteer army of the late summer of 1914 further forward in the War than historical evidence actually supports. My own relative's account quoted earlier suggests more that he was 'making the best of a bad job' and then doing his duty, rather than real enthusiasm.

Not about the Germans

Let me get one thing off my chest. This Remembrance thing is not about the Germans!

In the last week of September 2018 there was a sudden flurry of interest in the newspapers in a memo being carelessly carried in Whitehall (or potentially being deliberately leaked in this way) which photographers were able to discern referred to the potential for inviting the German State President to attend the Cenotaph Service this year⁵³. Although quotes had been obtained from a few cautious or disapproving voices, no one with significant influence seemed to be particularly concerned, which was a relief.

I can't help thinking that between the end of the First World War and reunification in October 1990 there had been five or six different regimes in Germany, with only one of which the United Kingdom had gone to war. Also that at the time of the 1918 Armistice we were, in round terms, just a century on from Napoleonic times and the Anglo-**French** enmity that had then prevailed. A particularly long generation gap in the family of my great-grandmother Maggie (pictured in Figure 1) meant that her father, John Auld, had been wounded at Waterloo⁵⁴. During a family trip to Paris in 1912 she gazed on Napoleon's tomb and commented 'yon's the man my faither chased.'

As we discovered in the Berlin visit, there is an acknowledgement within modern day Germany of the faults of the Nazi regime. There are laws that allow prosecution of those who deny the Holocaust happened. I believe we should actively endorse the comment of the philosopher Cécile Fabre, 'The more time has elapsed, the less plausible, indeed the more disrespectful it is to presume of others that they endorse their community's murky past'.⁵⁵ For a period after the Second World War I think that Germans were all too likely to be all

⁵³ For example, as at <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6199859/Ex-Army-chief-warns-against-inviting-German-president-Cenotaph-armistice-100th-anniversary.html>

⁵⁴ Among the family treasures is the musket ball in question, 14g of lead.

⁵⁵ Fabre, Cécile. *Cosmopolitan Peace*. 2017. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p288.

tarred with the same brush. But there should be a permanent change, perhaps deploying Jeremiah's maxim: 'In those days people will no longer say, 'The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.' (Jeremiah 31.29, NIV). We have seen a few eyebrows raised in Coventry when we mention that our son's partner is from Dresden. It's time that this was a non-issue.

The United Reformed Church has published material relating to the centenary of the Armistice based around the story of a shared trip to the Western Front by leaders of the URC and a German denomination. It is good to reflect on how a few generations can change conflict into friendship, but we would be failing if the focus of Remembrance this year is only about things German or about the World Wars.

Saying Thank You; Honesty

I have been interested by the Royal British Legion campaign during these months before the centenary of the Armistice, saying 'Thank You to all who served, sacrificed and changed our world'. Donors are invited to write a message of thanks, or have one written on a weatherproof poppy for inclusion in a display at the National Memorial Arboretum. Those whose on-line messages I have seen have often listed their relatives who served, sometimes those who died. But if I wrote my great-uncle's name on a poppy I don't know what I would be saying 'Thank You' for.



Figure 78: Royal British Legion 'Thank You' campaign, 2018

The faces selected to promote this campaign, as in Figure 78 are a modern, inclusive mixture. Canny marketing and proof that the Royal British Legion has itself moved on. My worry about the language is similar to Sassoon's worry about the Menin Gate – the assumption that the sacrifice made by those who served was a willing one and as cheerful as the faces on the adverts. We should be honest about the whole circumstances, so far as we know them.

And we can know so much more now than many in previous generations could have known. Distance from the War has led to an objectivity that earlier historians did not have. More and more data are available on-line. I know things about my father's family that he never knew, and have seen birth, marriage and death certificates the family never saw after their first issue. From the wealth of information and opinion we have to decide, for example, where we stand on the arguments about 'lions led by donkeys'; true to my Libran balancing act in the middle I would say there were mistakes made in the management of the War but that the caricatures of 'Oh! What a Lovely War' and 'Blackadder goes Fourth' are exaggerations.

Can I find a way to say 'Thank You'? Looking at the ranks of grave markers in Cambrin, in Tyne Cot, the lists of names on the Thiepval pillars and beneath the arches of the Menin Gate I almost feel I should be saying 'Sorry'.

Those who would not fight

By chance I came across another memorial in central London – this time for those who would not fight. Not deserters; no one was shot at dawn, here, but in each conflict there are those who do not want to take up arms against fellow human beings and resist – 'conscientious objectors'. A member of our church, a well-known and respected Lay Preacher who died in late 2010, was imprisoned during the Second World War for his pacifist beliefs. I don't know if I would have had the courage, nor necessarily come to the same conclusion when considering whether the War was just, the cause righteous.

In 1982 while visiting my future wife in London and just after the Falklands Task Force had sailed, we worshipped at the Friends' Meeting House on Euston Road on the Sunday morning. One of the Friends who took the opportunity to speak, an elderly lady, had wrestled with her conscience in the matter of this preparation for a conflict that at the time was not quite certain. Diplomacy was still being deployed to avert armed conflict on the islands to resolve the UK/Argentina dispute over sovereignty. She recalled her action, or inaction when

the aggressor was Adolf Hitler and said that she found it very hard to criticise Mrs Thatcher in the matter of threatening the use of lethal force. Her personal debate would go on.

For many there was no debate and there was a consequence to refusing to go along with the law and with the generally accepted obligation to serve in the armed forces. They are among those commemorated with this inscribed stone in Tavistock Square, Bloomsbury:

TO COMMEMORATE MEN & WOMEN, CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS TO MILITARY SERVICE, ALL OVER THE WORLD & IN EVERY AGE

TO ALL THOSE WHO HAVE ESTABLISHED AND ARE MAINTAINING THE RIGHT TO REFUSE TO KILL

Their foresight and courage give us hope



Figure 79: Conscientious Objectors' Commemorative Stone, London

The Poppy Problem

As Christians we are used to being in an organisation where a symbol means different things to different people. That is certainly true of poppies.

My habit these days is annually to acquire a metal pin badge from a British Legion stall as soon as they are available, also a small number of 'normal' poppies. I regard these as a receipt for a charitable donation, not as a sign of solidarity, or patriotism or national identity. At some point in the Poppy Appeal campaign period, dropping in to Sainsbury's for a sandwich, I will be inevitably glared at for not openly displaying a poppy (and not buying one). I resist the urge to hold back my overcoat lapel to reveal the badge on my suit jacket.

From mid-October there will not be a newsreader, a politician, a presenter on any TV show from *Countryfile* to *Strictly Come Dancing* seen without a poppy in place. It is as if the individuals or more likely the programme producers fear accusations of disloyalty. In each of the last two years there have been hoax social media reports of irregularities or "no go areas" in the sale of poppies; reports denied by the Royal British Legion. I am sorry this fundraiser has been hijacked in this way.

Who is Remembrance for?

In this Remembrance activity as in all of our worship preparation and our life of Christian witness we should be aware of the needs of our communities and our obligation to be true to our faith. And as ever it is useful to reflect on the injunction of Christ in Luke 10 and elsewhere, to love God and to love our neighbour. If we then echo the lawyer who was quizzing Jesus at the time and ask, 'who is my neighbour?' – with respect to Remembrance we might therefore ask, 'Who is Remembrance for?' I believe Remembrance is for the nation, it is for individuals and families, it is for those suffering in other ways and outside the parameters of war and armed conflict and it is for the Church.

This view, this spread of the purposes of Remembrance has had examples in my various visits described earlier. From the national to the individual, Remembrance has a place. Some might say that Remembrance is principally about the losses and casualties of the two World Wars, but this makes the topic unnaturally and unnecessarily static. I think Remembrance needs to keep *doing* something.

For this reason I now regret that I didn't take more photos of monuments and memorials with people involved, interacting with them. One has a natural inclination to go for the perfect 'postcard' type of photograph, with no human presence to spoil the shot. But monuments are there to be seen, inscriptions to be read. My fault; I shall know next time.

Building a list of those who have suffered in other ways where there either has been or should be an active Remembrance is not very challenging. Bring to mind disaster, newsworthy death(s), especially sudden violence resulting in innocent death and there is a situation that deserves active Remembrance. The references are often just one word:

Hillsborough;

Hungerford;

Dunblane;

9-11;

7-7;

Bataclan night club, Paris

The Nice promenade

...and, more recently, Westminster Bridge

This 'other suffering' category would also include those who have been unjustly treated, denied their rights, those who have suffered as a result of medical malpractice, inefficiencies or wrongly licensed treatments and medicines. For an exploration of a yet wider spectrum of remembrance and commemoration see the various examples in Andrews, Jewitt and Hunt's collection of articles, on subjects from slavery to Princess Di.⁵⁶



Figure 80: Memorial to Sufferers from Variant Creutzfeld-Jakob Disease, London (South Bank, South of Westminster Bridge)

⁵⁶ Andrews, Maggie, Bagot Jewitt, Charles and Hunt, Nigel (Eds). *Lest we forget; remembrance and commemoration*. 2011. Stroud: The History Press.

In many cases, active Remembrance requires the resolution that there should be no repeat – ‘never again’. This drove many responses to disasters both natural and man-made, from the League of Nations to the need to safeguard mining communities from another Aberfan. From amended gun laws after the Hungerford shootings to changes in the international order and regime change after 9-11.

Surely our faith is built around active Remembrance. Jesus said, ‘do this in remembrance of me.’ When God has ‘remembered’ his people in the Old Testament narrative⁵⁷, this has been in order to do something for them, not just bring them to mind.

The Kollwitz Story

Despite my wish to promote active Remembrance there is no doubt that an appropriate rendering of grief, regret, resolution or gratitude into some tangible form helps with focus. Our society – in the west, in the UK at least – seems no longer to promote new memorials that have any kind of martial sentiment about them. If there has been an outcome of my study for which I am the most grateful it is the introduction to the work of Käthe Kollwitz, and I will complete these reflections with a further visit to her art, as deployed by the German government at the Neue Wache (Figure 37, Section 2.6).

The image of a parent representing the country, the nation as well as the ‘real’ family was used in Binyon’s poem, ‘With proud thanksgiving, a mother for her children, England mourns for her dead across the sea.’ The parent-child relationship still holds, I think, but the reaction can surely not be of proud thanksgiving. It might be resignation alongside the grief, together with a question, could there not have been another way?

I finish with Neil MacGregor’s closing words in his broadcast account of the Neue Wache statue:

The choice of Kollwitz’s sculpture was not universally welcomed. Some said that one woman mourning her son could not do justice to the victims of the Holocaust, the mass deaths of the Second World War as well as those of the First.

But I would argue that most people can identify only with the personal. It sums up the suffering of everybody, in all wars, in all tyrannies. The face of the dead son is turned

⁵⁷ e.g. Genesis 8.1, ‘God remembered Noah...’, Genesis 30.22, ‘God remembered Rachel’.

up towards the mother. The mother's hand is held over her eyes in grief, looking down on her dead child; helpless, but hoping to protect him. Käthe Kollwitz felt, in the loss of her son, not just the grief of any mother but guilt that she, by encouraging him to volunteer had been complicit in his death.

It makes Chancellor Kohl's choice of this image of a mother, who has failed in her central role to protect her child, a poignantly appropriate one to address the failure of the German state to protect its citizens, with a similarly fatal outcome but affecting millions. Among the critics of Kohl's choice of sculpture was the doubt: was this one woman with one son enough? Looking at this statue in the Neue Wache, one wonders: could any image say more?

4 Liturgy and Remembrance



Figure 81: Facebook enquiry for shared Remembrance Day Service thoughts, 2017

An enquiry on a specialist group page of a popular social media platform on 10 November 2017 as to what material fellow URC ministers had found helpful in preparing Remembrance Day worship (Figure 81) produced a very modest response. In this section, rather than offering a digest of other people's approaches I therefore briefly share my own thoughts on how I am preparing for this year's service, together with reference to a small number of other resources. This topic was discussed fairly briefly at the Area presentation on 26 April 2018, when I canvassed those present on what was important and what wasn't, in Remembrance.

The following list of responses is not complete and includes a little combination and paraphrasing:

Remembrance is important but it is difficult for it to be 'right' for everyone
The two minutes silence should be included, and poppies. Preferably on the 11th (November)
Show respect; educate the younger generation; share the older generation's memories
Traditional things; poppies; church memorial
The Last Post
Quote 'For the Fallen'. Treat the two-minute silence with care without 'forcing' it
Need to move on from World War One
Make practical use of the poppies in people's response
Pray for peace
The poppy remains a valuable link between generations
Not keen on church memorial and poppy-strewn display
Align to Cenotaph service and national remembrance
If the service is too formulaic it loses relevance to each new generation
Focus on peace not war, on people not nationalities
Leave space for people's genuine response; we can't be expected to be sad
Remember more recent conflicts, not just the World Wars
The service needs updating, perhaps without the two-minute silence

If we doubted it, here is evidence that there is no 'one size fits all' approach we can or should look for. It is a considerable feat to meet everyone's hopes and expectations

One response to my Facebook post directed my attention to the Baptist Peace Fellowship material found on their website.⁵⁸ This is an anthology of liturgical resources based around a 1998 publication. The material includes prayers, meditations, congregational responses on the themes of peace and reconciliation.

I appreciated much of the material in the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) publication 'An Order of Service for Remembrance Sunday'⁵⁹. This offers an order of service for corporate or civic use, acknowledges that in many cases there will be participants present of other faiths or of none, and that it will be appropriate to invite other faith leaders to take part in conducting the service. I may well make use of the 'act of commitment' in this publication which demands a response from the gathered worshippers:

⁵⁸ At <http://baptist-peace.org.uk/pdfs/remembrance.pdf>

⁵⁹ Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. *An Order of Service for Remembrance Sunday*. 2005. Peterborough: CTBI Publications.

Will you strive for all that makes for peace? *We will*
 Will you seek to heal the wounds of war? *We will*
 Will you work for a just future for all humanity *We will*

And I use the word 'worshippers' intentionally; whatever the degree of alignment with the national remembrance at the Cenotaph, ours is not an occasion for spectators, even if the CTBI 'act of commitment' is free of religious references. In this spirit I want to be sure that scripture is central to our worship on 11 November. The format of the service will have to be something of a balancing act in order to retain the key elements of the Remembrance ritual without allowing them to dominate.

The Revised Common Lectionary for 11 November 2018, being Proper 27 [32] for the Sunday between 6 and 12 November inclusive offers us:

Ruth 3:1-5; 4:13-17 (Ruth weds Boaz) with Psalm 146
or 1Kings 17:8-16 (Elijah and the widow) with Psalm 119.1-8
 Hebrews 9:24-28 ("once and for all")
 Mark 12:38-44 (the widow's mite)

This Gospel reading is attractive in that it allows us discussion of sacrificial giving, and is used in the 'Roots' published aids⁶⁰ to service preparation with the title 'Do your Duty'. If we turn to the lectionary published in 'Common Order' of the Church of Scotland we find a menu of scripture options explicitly nominated for Remembrance Sunday:

Year A: Isaiah 25.1-9 (Death vanquished; a future, heavenly banquet)
 Psalm 20
 Revelation 22.1-5 (The tree of life, Eden restored)
 Matthew 5.38-48 (Love your enemies; pray for those who persecute you)

Year B: Deuteronomy 4.9-14 (pass on love of the Law to your children)
 Psalm 46
 Romans 8.31-35 (nothing shall separate us from the love of God)
 John 15.9-17 (Greater love has no-one...)

Year C: Micah 4.1-8 (swords into ploughshares)
 Psalm 9.9-20
 2 Thessalonians 2.13 - 3.5 (stand firm, pray)
 Luke 1.68-79 (Song of Zechariah (peace))

⁶⁰ As at www.rootsontheweb.com

My service, then, will be intended to do justice to scripture while retaining elements of the national observance, all in the light of what I have experienced in the last year's study. I know enough about my congregation to know that they will show interest in the latter while wishing to have the basics of national Remembrance observed.

So I will tune in – literally – to the Cenotaph service through the good offices of Radio 4. Turning on at 25 seconds before the hour enables us to hear the preliminary 'Westminster' chimes before Big Ben sounds. I will wait until the Last Post has been sounded before returning to the local order. I will make use of pictures from the battlefield sites and cemeteries. I will mention my grandfather's family, his brother's war service and the experience of the family at home will be exemplified by my great grandmother's letter – I have had this date in mind since I first discovered the letter in 2012. I will have as 'props' some of the surviving contemporary newspapers and photographs in my collection.

My studies have led me to realise that the answer to the question 'who is Remembrance for' is quite a long list. This list can guide my intercessions for the morning. I also want to lean on the idea of the nation as a mother, obliged to make sacrifices and yet yearning to avoid them, grieving for them. My pictures of the Käthe Kollwitz statues and some of her prints will be used in a meditation in the early part of the (10.30am) service as we prepare to join the Whitehall broadcast.

At present (early October) I am minded to make use of Matthew 5, which as well as the rejection of 'an eye for an eye' in the set reading Matthew 5.38-48 is still in touching distance of the Beatitudes and 'how blessed are the peacemakers'. Although much of the context for this service will inevitably evoke the centenary of the Armistice, recent and current conflicts must also be the subject of our '*Erinnerung und innere Schau*', 'recollection and inner reflection', which Barlach wanted to inspire with his floating angel.

9 October 2018

I do not yet have more than this outline to offer. Perhaps a future edition of this document will be updated with the material I deliver on 11 November. For now I hope that anyone reading this report will have found in it something with which to augment or extend their appreciation of what Remembrance can be and who it is for.

APPENDICES

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Appendix 1: Sabbatical Chronology**2017**

September – November	'Sabbatical' leave from church activities and worship leading
10 September	National Memorial Arboretum
22 October	'Portrait of the Artist', Käthe Kollwitz exhibition, Ikon Gallery, Birmingham
10-12 November	London; Remembrance Sunday observance, Whitehall
24-26 November	Visit Edinburgh; Scottish National War Memorial

2018

1-4 February	Cologne; visit Antonite Church (Barlach Angel), Käthe Kollwitz Museum
3 April	Aberfan; guided visit
26 April	'Aspects of Remembrance' evening presentation, Holyhead Road URC, Coventry
2 August	North-Eastern France; visits to Vimy Ridge Canadian Memorial, Notre Dame de Lorette Cemetery and Ring of Remembrance Memorial, Arras
3 August	Belgium; visits to Tyne Cot Military Cemetery, 'Coming World Remember Me' art installation, Ypres, Vladslo German Military Cemetery, Menin Gate Memorial ('Last Post')

Appendix 2: Essay, submitted as part of the requirements for Certificate in First World War Studies, University of Warwick, 2015

In what ways did the design and purpose of the British War Cemeteries seek to meet the challenges of grief and loss at the end of the war?

The story of the evolution of the British war cemeteries and national memorials is the story of a balancing act which sought to address the conflicting demands and expectations of serving and demobilised fighting men in all three services, their wives, parents, dependants and wider families, politicians and diplomats. It was conducted against a background of slaughter more intense, greater and geographically more widespread than had been encountered before. It was also conducted during and after a war whose battles and technology gave rise to particular problems in the retrieval and identification of casualties. The solutions achieved were, in the end, a combination of imagination and pragmatism that may seem very acceptable from today's perspective but was far from universally welcomed at the time.

It has been argued that nearly everyone in Britain would have had an interest in how the war dead were dealt with, if not through losing an immediate family member then through being well acquainted with one of the casualties. Dan Todman deals with one of his 'myths' by debunking various pronouncements about extreme numbers of British killed in the war and reaffirms one well-founded estimate at around 750,000.⁶¹ But whilst he concludes this meant that most men actually came back, and that a whole generation was **not** wiped out, he also allows that 'the wider circle of those touched by wartime death – those people who would have been invited to a funeral – encompassed the entire population.'⁶² Thus there was widespread concern that the dead should be looked after in a seemly and appropriate way.

While our subject relates to the end of the War, the seeds of what was then to become possible were sown early on. David Crane describes how a Red Cross unit and other volunteers, initially looking to assist those wounded and missing, gradually morphed into an agency to record and mark the graves of those who had died.⁶³ He reflects on how the scale of casualties in late 1914 very quickly outstripped anything that had been experienced in earlier conflicts⁶⁴. He also notes the clear distinction in this earlier part of the War between the prospects for relatives of those officers killed finding and even retrieving their loved ones and those for relatives of lower ranks for whom 'there was nothing but an

⁶¹ Dan Todman, 2007. *Myth and memory*. London: Hambledon, pp 44-46.

⁶² *Ibid*, p 46.

⁶³ David Crane, 2013. *Empires of the Dead, how one man's vision led to the creation of WW1's war graves*. London: William Collins. pp. 30-58.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. 39.

interminable wait and the grim sense that nothing had changed in the century since the British Army had last fought in the Low Countries'.⁶⁵

In earlier conflicts the fate of the common soldier falling in battle was often to be buried anonymously in a mass grave. During this 200th anniversary of Waterloo an archaeological excavation is taking place at the Hougoumont Farm site on the battlefield to locate and then deal appropriately with just such a grave.⁶⁶ To address the question of locating the dead of all ranks, the Red Cross unit in question, augmented by Army equipment, personnel and influence became (on 2 March 1915⁶⁷) the Graves Registration Commission, headed by Fabian Ware. During the same period and at Ware's prompting⁶⁸ it was ordered that there should be no exhumation and repatriation of bodies, both 'on the grounds of hygiene and "on account of the difficulties of treating impartially the claims advanced by persons of different social standing"'. Although some repatriation evidently continued to take place⁶⁹, this move made more possible the continuing ambition of the various agencies (under Ware) into which the Graves Registration Commission was later to morph, that that all of the dead were to be treated equally.

In this ambition and its working-out as rules for the location of graves close to where the individual fell or died, the enduring ban on repatriation and in particular the work to develop uniform grave markers, the Commission (the 'Imperial War Graves Commission', from 21 May 1917) sowed the seeds of significant controversy. Crane makes it clear throughout his book that either directly or indirectly it remained Fabian Ware (who was vice Chairman of the Commission until only a year before he died at the age of 80 in 1948⁷⁰) who steered the Commission through this period, whoever might have been his temporary mouthpiece from time to time. Of a statement, for example, issued by the Member of Parliament W Burdett-Coutts in 1920 before the key debate in the House of Commons, Crane writes 'the statement when it came...., printed at Burdett-Coutts's expense and over his name and circulated to MPs, had, like so many apparently independent documents, Ware's signature all over it'.⁷¹

From his determination in the matter of (no) repatriation, to the uniform and socially levelling design of grave markers, Ware was applying egalitarian principles acquired during

⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 41.

⁶⁶ As described in <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-32504806>>, (26 May 2015).

⁶⁷ T. A. Edwin Gibson and G. Kingsley Ward. 1989. *Courage remembered: the story behind the construction and maintenance of the Commonwealth's military cemeteries and memorials of the wars of 1914-1918 and 1939-1945*. London: H.M.S.O. , p. 44.

⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 45.

⁶⁹ Crane, *Empires of the Dead*. pp. 68-73 notes the exhumation and repatriation of the body of a grandson of the Victorian politician Gladstone in late April 1915 as a particular example of privileged classes circumventing the rule.

⁷⁰ Gibson and Ward, *Courage Remembered*. p. 48.

⁷¹ Crane, *Empires of the Dead*. p. 154

his earlier career first as a colonial civil servant and then as a campaigning newspaper editor.⁷² Paul Fussell sees the application of these ideals as an uphill battle:

After the war problems of caste greatly complicated the work of the Imperial War Graves Commission, which very early discovered that many officers' families assumed that their people would be decently segregated from Other Ranks in the cemeteries. It was with a sense of promulgating a bold innovation that the Commission finally concluded that, since the dead could now be regarded as practically "equal," the cemeteries in France should recognize no traditional social distinctions.⁷³

This egalitarian approach was a key part of the response of the Commission to the challenges of beginning and then persevering with location and registration of graves during the War and then of regularising the cemeteries and bringing them and the individual graves to a suitable and sustainable form at the end of the War.

It is appropriate to note that the question of equality of treatment was not just about rank and addressing the traditional inequalities in previous treatment of officers against that of the common soldiers. The criterion for inclusion extended to those who had been shot after court-martial, even if the wording on such graves might reveal the dead man's status to the well-informed observer⁷⁴. Those who died through illness or by accident were also looked after. John T Young, a cousin of the current author's grandfather, died of pneumonia, and thus presumably as a result of the influenza pandemic of 1918-1920, while on active service but after the Armistice of 1918 in Cologne, Germany, in March 1919. His original grave and marker are shown in Figure A2.1.⁷⁵ Figure A2.2 illustrates his current grave marker and serves to illustrate the uniform marker design. Surprisingly, given that hostilities had ceased, but again with due note of the pandemic, a further 140 soldiers buried in the same cemetery died in the same calendar month. Thus the work went on and cemeteries abroad continued to be created and used rather after the end of the fighting. All armed forces dead and civilian members of certain organisations who died as a result of the risk or action of the War were eligible for a 'war grave'. For the Commission's purposes the 1914-

⁷² Ibid, pp. 18-29

⁷³ Paul Fussell. *The Great War and modern memory*. 1975. New York: Oxford University Press, p. 197.

⁷⁴ Gibson and Ward, *Courage Remembered* pp.64-104 gives considerable detail on the circumstances under which the dead are included within the Commission's remit and in particular on p. 81f give the official line on those who were judicially executed, or 'shot at dawn'. Anyone identified as a deserter who died during their period of desertion would not be commemorated. Those found, arrested and shot would again be beneficiaries of the Commission's care, their desertion being at an end. In a gratuitous comment that seems rather out of place even in the 1980s the authors rather pompously opine that 'sad though it may be, it must never be forgotten that one man's desertion or cowardice (no matter how awful the prevailing conditions) might have caused the deaths of a score others through their not receiving a vital message or ammunition, or their being surprised by the enemy.'

⁷⁵ The Commonwealth War Graves Commission website <<http://cwgc.org>> (31 May 2015) allows a search by name or grave location, among other criteria.

1918 War lasted from 4 August 1914 to its official end on 31 August 1921.⁷⁶ The Commission's Charter was clear that its responsibility for upkeep of war graves would continue in perpetuity, and this permanence was underwritten at the Imperial Conference of 1918. In noting this Gibson and Ward comment that 'in the past, headstones and memorials that had any degree of permanence had been rare and reserved for a few exalted beings; the Commission was dealing with vast numbers of men, most of them ordinary private soldiers.'⁷⁷

As the War approached its end, the Commission's challenge was to produce designs of cemeteries and graves which would provide an acceptable and enduring resting place for all, subject to the criteria of equality and uniformity already noted and against a notional budget of £10 per grave⁷⁸. Families were charged for the limited customisation permitted, the addition of a small number of lines of inscribed text at the bottom of the grave marker, sometimes but not always selected from the 'booklet of suggestions drawn from the Bible and from the classics of English literature' sent to next of kin of the identified dead.⁷⁹ A consortium of architects was engaged to produce designs for both the cemeteries and their stonework, and the immensity of the task meant that no single architect was given the entire commission or can take the credit for the whole of the finished scheme. The immense monuments to the missing of various key battlefields (for example Thiepval, Tyne Cot and the Menin Gate) were each designed by different men. But there were overarching principles once again established and applied. Each cemetery above a certain size would contain certain elements which would serve to unify the whole network of sites and provide for each a focus for any particular act of remembrance in that place. The 'Stone of Remembrance' and 'Cross of Sacrifice' (the latter found in all but the smallest cemeteries) are based on designs by the architects Blomfield and Lutyens respectively; the 'Stone' including inscribed text selected by Rudyard Kipling: 'Their name liveth for evermore'⁸⁰. Fussell refers to Kipling's 'weighty public rhetoric'⁸¹ and notes that his also was the selection of 'Known unto God' as the inscription repeated on the graves of the unidentified dead.

The Commission provided for everyone – officers and men, identified and unidentified and missing – to be commemorated somewhere. As well as suitably inscribed grave markers even for those who could not be identified except perhaps by rank and regiment there were the monuments to the missing. Everyone's name was to be inscribed somewhere. And, over time, perhaps this universal approach was the key to dealing with the

⁷⁶ Gibson and Ward, *Courage Remembered*. p. 64.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p. 66.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, p. 55.

⁷⁹ Modris Eksteins, 'Memory and the Great War', in Hew Strachan (ed) *The Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War*, 2014. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 321.

⁸⁰ From Ecclesiasticus 44.14, in the King James (Authorised) Version. One of the more frequently cited chapters of the Apocrypha, which opens 'Let us now praise famous men, and our fathers that begat us.'

⁸¹ Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*. p. 70.

challenge of grief and loss, once the precepts of uniform treatment and the common design of grave marker had been set, together with only as much exhumation and re-burial as was necessary to establish the seemly arrangement of graves and bring together those bodies found scattered singly or in the smallest of groups.

Freedom finally to set these precepts came only after what can be seen as the dénouement of the story, the set-piece debate in the House of Commons sitting as a committee to consider the funding of the Commission⁸². An amendment to the funding was proposed – a £5 reduction – as a device for bringing into the open the principal concerns being expressed by those members both of parliament and the public who disagreed with the Commission's principal rules. Proposing the amendment, (and showing a certain regional parochialism) Sir James Remnant made the following pleas:

First, that the relations of the dead should have the right, within properly defined limits, as to size, taste, design, expense, and even of material to be used, to erect what headstones they like as representative of the personality of the individual, and as a personal tribute of affection to their own dead. The second request perhaps is more difficult of accomplishment or to grant. Still, it is a natural request. It is that where it is possible the body itself might be brought home to rest in England.⁸³

This was meeting the principal ambitions of the Commission head on. In the course of the next three-and-a-half hours speakers both supporting and opposing the Commission brought evidence in the form of quoted letters from bereaved families, including from Kipling himself (in support, unsurprisingly). A number of other issues were raised, including the nature of possible memorials to the missing. This was before the final form of these and their respective architects had been chosen, which is why Winston Churchill, the then Secretary for War noted the different options under consideration:

It will certainly be possible to meet the wish which my hon. Friend has just expressed in regard to the memorials of those whose bodies have not been found. The Commission are considering an alternative proceeding— either the one suggested by my hon. Friend of putting up a general memorial in the cemeteries nearest the scene of the fighting on which the names of those who were missing in those operations could be recorded, or, alternatively, choosing a memorial for the regiment with which they fought and inscribing on that general memorial of the regiment the names of all who, wherever they fell, have not had their bodies recovered. I

⁸² Hansard *Debates of the House of Commons*, 4 May 1920 vol 128 cc1929-72, accessed via < <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1920/may/04> > (27 May 2015)

⁸³ *Ibid*, c1930

would not prejudge the result of that examination, but in one way or the other that aspect of the case must be fully met.⁸⁴

Churchill in these closing remarks drew attention to a number of practicalities involved in completing the work of the Commission within a reasonable number of years. Thus standardisation of grave markers would facilitate the achievement of orderly cemeteries before the generation who had an interest in visiting them had passed on. The debate heard how the 'slab' format of grave marker would be more durable and allow a better quantity and range of inscriptions than a cross. A further range of potential objections were similarly dealt with. Churchill enthused about the longevity of the proposed arrangements, suggesting that the Stones of Remembrance whose design had evidently been publicised would survive for thousands of years into the future, in effect giving the dead a memorial more durable and long-lasting than any that a family might devise.⁸⁵

We may assume that this oratory was intended for a wider audience than the House of Commons, and none of those who began the debate opposing the Commission's plans resiled from that position. They did however accept Churchill's final challenge which was to accept that the Commission had caught the mood of the country, on balance, correctly:

I trust and hope that without asking for too much or too great a refinement in a task of such magnitude and such difficulty, the House, as a whole, will support the policy and the scheme which the Commission have so patiently and laboriously evolved. I have a feeling, after having listened to this Debate, that they have judged and rightly interpreted public opinion. I am sure that they have judged rightly in interpreting the soldierly opinion, and I believe that they have judged rightly in interpreting what is called democratic opinion. If it be true that they have interpreted the prevailing general sense and wish of the community, I do trust that they may be authorised to go on with their scheme free from any sense of uncertainty, and that those who cannot agree with it, and do not like it, may feel that they themselves have been called upon to make only one further sacrifice amongst the many great ones they have made already.⁸⁶

The amendment was not forced to a division but was defeated, and so this debate had the effect of giving the green light to the major themes of the Commission's plans and to Ware's principles of uniformity. Cemeteries and monuments to the missing were not to be the whole story. In the course of time, in some cases quite spontaneously and certainly without the intervention or acquiescence of the Imperial War Graves Commission the British Nation and its allies dealt further with grief and loss in the erection of memorials at home, including the

⁸⁴ Ibid, c1965.

⁸⁵ Ibid, c1971.

⁸⁶ Ibid, c1972.

unplanned success (and permanence) of the Whitehall Cenotaph and the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior. The institution of the two-minutes' silence on Remembrance Day was also added to the mix.

These principles then, born as they were out of a mixture of pragmatism and egalitarianism, were the means by which the Commission sought to respond to the nation's grief and loss. The extent of their success would vary considerably across the nation and from one family to another. In the inter-war years, there was some dissatisfaction expressed at the commercialisation of cemeteries and memorials.⁸⁷ However, nearly one hundred years after these events the immaculate cemeteries we encounter on the Western Front battlefields are the fruit both of the Commission's principles and of peace in Western Europe since 1945.

⁸⁷ Eksteins, 'Memory', p. 323



Figure A2.1: Scanned postcard photograph of the grave of John Taylor Young (1896-1919), Cologne Southern Cemetery



Figure A2.2: Photograph of the current grave marker of John Taylor Young, Cologne Southern Cemetery (The War Graves Photographic Project)

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