

# CEMETERIES OF THE GREAT WAR

## BY SIR EDWIN LUTYENS

# LOS CEMENTERIOS DE LA GRAN GUERRA

## DE SIR EDWIN LUTYENS

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### Abstract

Already in 1917, the British architect sir Edwin Lutyens was asked to make designs for warcemeteries on the continent. In the end this resulted in almost 1000 cemeteries and monuments designed by Lutyens and other architects in Belgium, Northern France and other locations in Asia. Under leadership of the director of the British Museum, the architects have chosen for a common style, with the freedom to make individual variations for each cemetery related to the site. As a result of two opposing ideas there are two main elements on each cemetery, the War Stone designed by Lutyens and the Cross of Sacrifice by Blomfield. For the soldiers which were not found huge monuments were erected with their names on walls as their only surviving memory. The smaller cemeteries were designed by young architects who were in the army during the war. There are headstones instead of crosses for each grave due to the different religious background of the soldiers. For Lutyens the concept of a cemetery was based on the idea of green cathedral, a church in the open air, surrounded by trees as columns. For this idea he took advice from the well-known landscape architect Gertrude Jekyll. Because of the maintenance by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission still the cemeteries are still in perfect state and play an important role in the remembrance of the First World War.

### Key words

Edwin Lutyens, Fabian Ware, Frederic Kenyon, war cemeteries, World War I.

### Resumen

En 1917 se le encargó al arquitecto británico sir Edwin Lutyens que hiciera diseños para los cementerios de guerra en el continente. El resultado fue casi 1000 cementerios y monumentos diseñados por Lutyens y otros arquitectos en Bélgica, norte de Francia y varios lugares de Asia. Bajo el liderazgo del director del Museo Británico, los arquitectos optaron por un estilo común, con la libertad de hacer variaciones individuales para cada cementerio relacionado con su contexto. Como resultado de estas dos ideas opuestas, hay dos elementos principales

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en cada cementerio, la 'Piedra de Guerra' diseñada por Lutyens y la Cruz del Sacrificio de Blomfield. Para los soldados desaparecidos, se erigieron enormes monumentos con sus nombres en las paredes como único recuerdo. Los cementerios más pequeños fueron diseñados por jóvenes arquitectos que estuvieron en el ejército durante la guerra. Hay lápidas en lugar de cruces para cada tumba según las diferentes condiciones religiosas de los soldados. Para Lutyens, el concepto de cementerio se basaba en la idea de una catedral verde, una iglesia al aire libre, rodeada de árboles como columnas. Esta idea se inspiró en la conocida arquitecta paisajista Getrude Jekyll. Gracias al mantenimiento por parte de la Commonwealth War Graves Commission, los cementerios todavía están en perfecto estado y juegan un papel importante en el recuerdo de la Primera Guerra Mundial.

### Palabras clave

Edwin Lutyens, Fabian Ware, Frederic Kenyon, cementerios de guerra, Primera Guerra Mundial.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This article is an abstract of the research the author did on the design and making of the British War Cemeteries during and after the First World War. Sir Edwin Lutyens was the leading architect of a team of experienced and younger architects. Fabian Ware was the great initiator of the care for the dead soldiers. Their collaboration resulted in the impressive cemeteries and memorials which still are a mark of the war in the landscape of Flanders and France.

## 2. THE WAR FRONT

On 9 July 1917 the architects Edwin Lutyens (1869-1944) and Herbert Baker (1862-1946) embark in London, in the company of the director of the National Gallery of British Art, Charles Aitken (1869-1936) and the assistant-director of Kew Gardens, Arthur Hill (1875-1941). The gentlemen have been invited to pay a visit to the war front in France to provide advice on the design of war cemeteries and future war monuments. The party has already become acquainted with the horrors of war at a distance from the war front as a result of the first air raids on the British capital by German planes. In addition, the Channel crossing is an expedition not without danger, due to the presence of U-boats.



Image 1. The battlefield with graves near Sint-Juliaan in Flanders (source: archives of the Imperial War Museum, London).

### 3. FABIAN WARE, PRECURSOR OF THE IMPERIAL WAR GRAVES COMMISSION

The former teacher and writer Fabian Ware (1869-1949), who invites the architects in the summer of 1917 is one of the first people to take the fate of the sufferers to heart. After applying to the Red Cross shortly after the outbreak of the war, he becomes the person in charge of transport of casualties on the battlefield. However, at a very early stage he begins to gather information on the locations where casualties who could not be saved lie buried. This is fairly unusual since, until that time, the army honoured the tradition of interring soldiers in mass graves, all and sundry, with the exception of the higher ranks. Ware, however, is one of the first who comes to realize that the next of kin of common soldiers will also wish to find their dear ones who have fallen.

The first graves are marked with simple wooden crosses. These vary in size, because in some cases the next of kin cross the Channel to bring a finely wrought cross for their dead relative. manages to persuade the Red Cross to charge his mobile unit with the task of marking, registering and maintaining the graves from that moment on. Meanwhile the army command has decided that a well-maintained cemetery is good for the morale of the soldiers. In

1915, the Ministry takes over this responsibility and the accompanying manpower from the Red Cross. Ware can now further extend his work as head of the Graves Registration Commission.

The DGRE is in charge of reburying the dead who lie in scattered graves on the battlefield. This is done in new cemeteries to centralize the graves. Now that people experience the need to ensure that the transfer of management is conducted properly, an organization that will assume responsibility for the maintenance of the cemeteries after the war must be formed. To this end, the Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC) is set up on 21 May 1917, to be renamed the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) in 196). The commission is authorized to acquire grounds for the construction of cemeteries and monuments, and to raise funds for their maintenance.

#### 4. THE FIRST IDEA OF VARIATIONS TO A CENTRAL THEME

Lutyens is looking for a symbolism not unrelated to religion, such as the universal form of a sphere, the ball, for example, which would soon have become a military symbol. The War Stone offers a non-normative, universal architectural expression of an imperishable mass which perpetuates commemoration in all eternity. In addition Lutyens is trying to find a parallel religious symbolism, an altar as a place of religious actions and the offer of sacrifices.

In addition to the accurate paraphrase of the War Stone as the central monument, scope is offered for all kinds of variations in buildings, greenery and religious symbols, dependent on the different locations. It is this very combination of a permanent theme under varying conditions that is to become a leitmotiv for the architecture of the cemeteries.

#### 5. THE CATHEDRAL AS AN IDEAL CEMETERY

Probably the very first sketch by Lutyens for a cemetery in France is for the design of a cemetery near a military hospital in Trouville. In the sketch, not dated but probably created just after the memorandum in September, the idea retreats from the cathedral under the firmament to a more conceivable form on the scale of a cemetery. The sketch proposes an ideal cemetery in the form of the base area of a cathedral containing a field of graves banded by trees in the places where the columns of a cathedral would be. Although the cathedral cemetery is never executed in this form, it demonstrates Lutyens'





Image 2. Trouville War Hospital Cemetery, Trouville, France (drawing by Christiane Wirth).

ideal image. The image of the cathedral as a religious or sacred space as the guideline for his designs for cemeteries and monuments, is literally elaborated in this design.

Lutyens retains the image of the cathedral as the ultimate architectural religious space right up to his death. Although he will ultimately fail to actually give the image substantiation as a structure, the picture always returns in different shapes and fragments. For the cemeteries, it is the reduced form of the base area of a cathedral, chapel or church in the open air that dominates the design. By placing the altar, in the form of the War Stone, on the east side, and the use of apse figures along with the position of the trees around the cemetery, the idea of the sacred, religious space in the open air is pursued within the scope of the site as much as possible.

## 6. THE REPORT

With an eye to the first meeting of the IWGC on 20 November 1917, Ware thanks his advisors for their different individual recommendations, but disappointed by the discord among them because they cannot agree on a joint theme, he appoints the authoritative director of the British Museum, Sir



Image 3. H.A.C. Cemetery, Écoust-Saint-Mein, France (photo by the author).

Frederic Kenyon (1863-1952), to choose from the different proposals made by the advisors and other involved parties.

Although at the moment that Kenyon is appointed it has already been decided that there will be no distinction made between soldiers and officers graves, his report, which is finished by 21 January 1918, discusses extensively the considerations on which this decision is based. A second decision, which has already been taken and has far-reaching consequences, is that the graves will be maintained in perpetuity.

According to Kenyon, the principle of equality ensures that cemeteries do not become untidy due to the installation of individual monuments. The uniformity of the graves is precisely a symbol of their military character. On the battlefield, the collective rises above the individual and the fellowship in battle must be the basis of the memorial. The extensions to the civilian cemeteries with military graves, where the two principles can be seen side by side, prove that a uniform treatment of the graves is highly preferable to a collection of different individual graves. Kenyon thinks that they should strive for dignity and inspiration.

With the elucidation of the form of the headstones, Kenyon again emphasizes the military character. The rows of headstones refer to a military alignment. However, the individual graves must also meet the wishes of the relatives who want to focus their emotions on one person and not on a whole army. To ensure a certain variation in the uniformity of the headstones and to evoke the feeling of the regiment, Kenyon advises putting the badge of the regiment concerned on every headstone.

## 7. A COMPROMISE AS THE CENTRAL THEME

An important and inevitable compromise that Kenyon proposes is that there should also be a cross in addition to the War Stone in all cemeteries. He thereby resolves the discussion between the two opponents and also satisfies the Church of England. He defends his choice with the argument that Lutyens' proposal may count on a lot of acclaim, but many, perhaps a large majority, miss a Christian element in the War Stone, particularly the notion of self-sacrifice that is symbolized by the cross. Kenyon proposes using both symbols. The combination must be characteristic of British cemeteries.

What remains is an intrinsic conflict between two symbols that contradict one another. The War Stone is intended as a value-free symbol with the possibility of one's own associations. The cross precisely establishes values that only partly conform to the feelings of the relatives and sometimes disagree with them.

Lutyens gets his own way to a large extent. He has no objections to the cross as one of the religious symbols next to the War Stone, as indicated earlier in the letter to Ware. The cross even reinforces the idea of a cathedral, chapel or church in the open air. The vertical cross in harmonic contrast to the horizontal War Stone furthermore produces a beautiful highlight in the landscape.

## 8. THE VARIATION IN THE DESIGNS INCREASES

Kenyon proposes having the designs done by young architects who were in the army during the war, under the supervision of a few experienced architects who would each be responsible for an area and who would design the larger cemeteries with more than two hundred and fifty graves. Within the boundaries of the basic principles, which guarantee cohesion, there is



Image 4. Thiepval Anglo-French Cemetery & Memorial, France (photo by the author).

sufficient space for the young architects to showcase their talents. The proposal turns out to open the way to great variety of designs within the desired corporate identity.

## 9. THE DESIGN OF THE CROSS OF SACRIFICE

Blomfield's cross receives the name Cross of Sacrifice, in which the Christian idea of self-sacrifice of the British soldiers is incorporated. Its symbolism therefore essentially differs from the War Stone. After all, an altar could provoke the suggestion that the soldiers were sacrificed against their will.

## 10. MONUMENTS

After the Armistice, the search for casualties commences. The battlefields are systematically combed. The search is made difficult because the landscape has been destroyed, degenerating into a muddy lunar landscape because the water management has been disturbed. The bodies are difficult to locate because there is often not much left over or they have been sucked into the mud.

Finally, it is decided to place twelve combined monuments in the most important places along the former war front in France and Belgium. Every principal architect receives a commission for a monument. The first monument is entrusted to Reginald Blomfield, who designs a monumental gate in the ramparts of Ypres, the Menin Gate. The interior walls of the gate provide space for 57,000 names of the missing.

Lutyens has to adapt the designs for two monuments. His immensely high gate for the monument in Arras is replaced by a long cloister with names, next to the existing cemetery. The design for a three-dimensional triumphal arch in Saint-Quentin is removed almost unchanged to the hilltop at Thiepval, to commemorate both the British and French casualties and the missing from the Battle of the Somme. As his last work, Lutyens takes over the design for the Australian monument in Villers-Bretonneux.

## 11. SEEKING A CORPORATE IDENTITY

Directly at the first meeting in the summer of 1917 an effort is made to establish common principles for the cemeteries without having to compromise the freedom of design of the various architects. The uniformity is finally recorded in the basic principles determined in 1918. The similar white headstones, laid out in rows, emphasize the military significance of the cemetery and the equality of the victims in the army. The desired east-orientation of the soldiers' graves reinforces this character because the soldiers are buried in the same way as they fell, namely, facing the enemy.

The green grass with flower borders gives the cemeteries a typically English character and distinguishes them clearly from the military cemeteries of other countries such as Belgium, France and Germany. The trees and the wall or hedge around the cemeteries transform them into enclosed English gardens abroad, a place where the surviving relatives can find peace in trusted surroundings. The cemeteries dovetail with the old tradition of walled gardens that offer scope for rest and deliberation.

The installation of two religious symbols, the War Stone and the Cross of Sacrifice, adds complexity to the identity of the cemetery. These symbols form the impetus to most discussion in the determination of the basic starting points. The Cross is an unequivocal Christian symbol, represents soldiers' sacrifice for their country just as Jesus offered himself on the cross for humanity. The sword on the Cross emphasizes the military nature of the War while it also evokes an association with a religious conflict, a crusade, which





Image 5, 6, 7, 8. Quarry Cemetery, Warlincourt Halte British Cemetery, Railway Dugouts Burial Ground and Hooge Crater Cemetery (photo's by the author).

the First World War certainly was not. In contrast, the War Stone is a deliberately chosen ambiguous symbol that provides the opportunity for free association but is not completely free of associations, as Lutyens indicates. The form refers to the altar that is used in various faiths. Altars have a function in religious gatherings and are traditionally places of sacrifice. The form calls to mind a sarcophagus, a stone coffin, as found in old cemeteries or in cathedrals. Lutyens certainly did not intend this association but it cannot be denied. The position on the east side, as prescribed by Lutyens, gives a religious tint to military significance of the grave orientation, although it was not always applied by the other architects. In medieval churches, the altar is always on the east side, facing Jerusalem. Lutyens regularly adds a rectangular or semicircular apse-like space to this rectangular basic form in order to produce the idea of a church in the open air.

## 12. VILLAGE GRAVEYARD OR DIVINE CATHEDRAL

Despite the strictly prescribed basic elements, the varying character of the cemeteries is striking. The two extremes are the English village graveyard,

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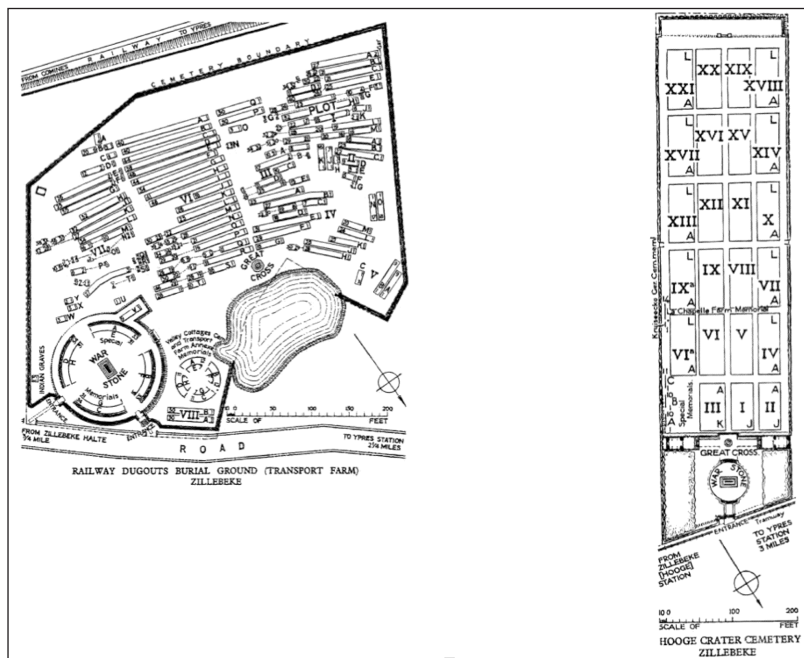


Image 9: plans of Railway Dugouts Burial Ground and Hooge Crater Cemetery (source: Commonwealth War Graves Commission).

which the architect Baker prefers, and the open-air cathedral favoured by Lutyens. Added elements such as the entrance gateway and the trees generate the difference in ambience. Baker regards the entrance building as a gate, as is the case with a village graveyard. He refers to a traditional lychgate, a roofed porch at the entrance to the cemetery, where the deceased is temporarily laid out as a component of the funeral ceremony. Baker opts for weeping willows as an expression of grief. In Lutyens' plans, the gateways are derived from triumphal arches. The structure of his cemeteries occasionally resembles a monumental urban composition, but most cemeteries refer to the idea of a church in the open air, an area with religious symbols encompassed by trees. He regards the trees as architectonic elements, preferring Lombardy poplar, cypress, yew and pillar-shaped variants of oak and beech. In short, Baker favoured a traditional graveyard while Lutyens advocated the combination of a church and a graveyard in a new concept.



### 13. VARYING SITUATIONS

Due to the varying form of the cemetery grounds, the lie of the land and the dissimilar approaches, the basic situation is always slightly different and the working of the basic principles must necessarily fluctuate. For example, cemeteries may be formal in their layout and evoke the notion of a chapel or open-air church, as Lutyens intended.

Other cemeteries have a much less secluded character because they lie on a slope and provide a view out across the landscape

The history of the cemetery itself also determines the various layout possibilities. At one cemetery, the graves may lie in disarray as a consequence of the way they were hastily realized in the war. At another, the cemetery may be perfectly ordered with all graves strictly in line because the field of graves was constructed later, when the architects had a say in the matter. The Railway Dugouts Burial Ground and Hooze Crater Cemetery in Zillebeke are excellent examples of these layouts. The former displays a more park-like layout, while the latter pursues a formal and austere arranged military and religious atmosphere.

### 14. CLASSICISM AS THE COMMON STYLE

The buildings at the cemeteries also contribute to the diverse interpretations. They are designed by various architects in conjunction with various assistant architects. The buildings display different renderings of the common style, which can best be described as 'abstract classicism'. The choice of classicism is not unusual. In the tradition of cemeteries and monuments, besides the Gothic style, classicism has been the style most applied in this context down through the centuries.

### 15. THE CEMETERY BUILDINGS

Besides their monumental significance, the buildings at the cemeteries have a specific function. Depending on the size of the cemetery, extra functions are allocated to such buildings. At a small cemetery, the function is primarily one of storage for the garden tools. In a square building, this place of storage can be combined with a sitting alcove on the outside that conceals the utilitarian function of the construction.



Image 10. Headstones on Wytschaete Military Cemetery (photo by the author).

In the buildings actually realized at the cemeteries, various forms of triumphal arches occur as gateways and as large shelters. Lutyens can vary in the expression of the buildings by playing with the position of the arches within the same form language. The size of the assignment allows him the opportunity to try out all kinds of variants. By positioning the openings opposite one another, he creates a Tuscan loggia, as at Anneux British Cemetery.

## 16. HEADSTONES

The headstones are placed at the head of the graves. The headstones are generally lined up in rows and cast in a concrete beam under the ground. A small flower bed has been realized at the front of the headstone, and the rest of the grave is covered with grass so that the visitor actually walks over the graves.

From the many designs that are submitted, a stone with a rounded top edge is chosen, probably to ensure good water run-off. Nevertheless, the porous Portland stone must be cleaned regularly, certainly if the headstones are situated near trees. Although the headstones are uniform for all faiths and army ranks, the form of the top part deviates a little in the case of non-British military victims. The headstones of German prisoners of war culminate in a point.

## 17. INSCRIPTIONS

In contrast to the French and German graves, which only bear the names of the soldiers, the inscriptions on the British graves provide relatively much information on the background of the deceased. This variation in information encourages visitors to view the rows of graves in order to learn more about the backgrounds of the different individuals. This variation harmonizes with the idea of diversity and breaches the uniformity of the headstones.

For the British units, the elaborate emblems of the various regiments are engraved at the top of the headstones.

The initials and the surname of the soldier are engraved under the emblem. The full first name occurs only very occasionally. Subsequently, the unit in which the soldier served is also mentioned. This may be a battalion or a special brigade or unit. If known, the date of death is also shown underneath and, at the request of the family (and initially on a paid basis), the age of the soldier can be added.

Most headstones are given a religious symbol in the form of a cross or Star of David. Islamitic, Hindustani and Chinese graves also have their own texts on the headstones.

Finally, at the request of the surviving relatives, there is also the possibility to place a short text, an epitaph, at the bottom of the stone.

## 18. THE UNIDENTIFIED

Unidentified bodies are marked with the text 'A SOLDIER OF THE GREAT WAR, KNOWN UNTO GOD', which was chosen by Kipling. There are no fewer than 180,000 graves with this statement. The names of these victims are shown on one of the Memorials to the Missing, between the names of the victims whose bodies were never recovered.

## 19. ORDERING THE MAIN FEATURES

Each cemetery is a unique combination of the main elements. The 967 cemeteries in total and the 140 by Lutyens indicate that, despite the limited number of basic elements, the possibilities for variation seem endless. Correspondences can be discovered between cemeteries with respect to certain aspects, such as the position of the War Stone in relation to the graves or the

design of the entrance building for example, whereas other components may differ considerably, such as the position of the entrance. Analysis on the basis of these aspects and a comparison of cemeteries in terms of components offer insight into the underlying themes and the unicity of each variant.

Besides having a symbolic meaning, the Cross of Sacrifice also has a signal function and is mostly the cemetery's point of orientation when viewed from a distance. The visibility of the Cross from the road is of great importance unless there is another point of orientation. This is less of a problem in a flat landscape because the Cross is visible in any spot in the cemetery. However, in cemeteries that lie higher than the road, the Cross is often placed near the roadside in order to announce the cemetery, as it were... In the larger cemeteries, the War Stone is the most important memorial. Its position in the cemetery is fixed in terms of orientation because Lutyens determined the east side as a precondition of the layout.

## 20. THE POSITION OF THE BUILDINGS

The buildings consist of pergolas, gateway elements, sheltered alcoves, several shelters, double shelters, gateways and galleries. Depending on the size of the cemeteries, the buildings are used to reinforce the composition of the cemetery. Gateway buildings emphasize the entrance, the double shelters the position of the War Stone, the single shelters form a resting place in the cemetery. The choice of the type of building to be erected depends on the positions of the War Stone and the Cross of Sacrifice and the size of the cemetery.

## 21. THE ORGANIZATIONAL SYSTEM

In the layout of the various main elements of the cemeteries, Lutyens makes use of his experience in the design of buildings, gardens and towns. The ground plan of the cathedral can form a source of inspiration. In general, diverse principles are combined. In the heart of Paris, between the Louvre and the Arc de Triomphe, urban planning, landscape architecture and buildings also fuse into a single spatially coherent whole. A palace, a garden, a square with an obelisk and two temples, a lane and a triumphal arch are brought together in a unified composition. This set-up functioned as a model for the major cemeteries.

The way Lutyens combines these sources of inspiration is fascinating, and the ease with which leaps in size and scale occur is also surprising. On

Lutyens' drawing board, the compositions of towns, gardens and cathedrals seem to differ only slightly. It is not unusual for the cemeteries evoke the idea of a building, a garden and a town at the same time. Many times, however, Lutyens is forced to adapt his ideal scheme to the given situations. The position of the existing graves and the slopes of the ground are often a coercive factor. His experience as a designer of many Arts and Crafts country houses and gardens keeps him from dogmatically implementing a classicistic approach. By shifting the main elements to form different combinations, each cemetery becomes a unique design, with differing relationships between the leading features. The position of the headstones, the War Stone and the Cross of Sacrifice is consistently different, as is the visitor's approach at every location. With the addition of shelters to the bigger cemeteries, occasionally combined with a gateway building, the possibility of variation is extended even further.

## 22. THE LOCATIONS IN THE LANDSCAPE

The cemeteries are situated in various types of landscapes along the front, which stretches from the Belgian coast to the Champagne district near Reims. Several cemeteries lie in the dunes along the coast, such as those at Étaples and Coxyde. The cemeteries around Ypres lie in the relatively wet clay of Flanders at the foot of the Flemish Hills, accommodating the fortifications of the German army. A little to the south, the cemeteries are a part of the densely populated mining area south-west of Lille. Even further southward, the gently sloping calcareous hills of Artois and Picardy are dissected by the broad Somme valley, narrower tributary valleys and other streams running toward the sea, as well as well-worn routes. Toward Reims, the cemeteries are situated in a wooded hilly landscape with many vineyards and sandstone soil.

## 23. DIFFERENCES IN HEIGHT

Although many cemeteries seem to lie on flat ground, they often have a gentle slope. The levelling of the ground is a costly business and may involve even higher costs if retaining walls are needed. After the construction of the experimental cemeteries, the decision not to apply more expensive retaining walls is soon made. Accordingly, the cemeteries are installed on the original

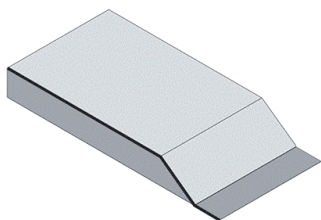


Image 11. Steps on Hangard Communal Cemetery Extension and on Vaulx Hill Cemetery (drawing by Christiane Wirth, photo by the author).

terrain. The slope of the ground is generally visible in the wall around the cemetery. In contrast to the graves, the War Stone and the Cross of Sacrifice must be placed on a horizontal plane. Terraces to accommodate these are installed at many cemeteries.

## 24. THE PLAY OF STEPS AND BANDS

Right from his first garden designs, Lutyens seeks a uniform treatment of stairway steps, wall coping ledges, and bands that frame the paths and flower borders.

At the cemeteries, the dimensions of the War Stone plateau steps determines almost all the steps, wall coping, and bands in the grass. This principle is adopted by most architects, so that it makes a substantial contribution to the style of the cemeteries. Due to the uniformity of the stone bands, it is possible to establish a strong link between the various components of the design and the differences in height of the location. The height of the band is generally the size of the step. This size of five inches corresponds to the height of two layers of brick with the thickness of two edge joints.

## 25. MARKING OUT A TERRITORY

The moment of entering a cemetery is like going into a special territory that is entirely different from its surroundings in terms of significance.

Throughout history, monastery gardens have often been a source of inspiration for gardens and cemeteries. As a space for contemplation, the enclosed garden, the *hortus conclusus*, the *secret garden*, is perfectly in tune with the idea of commemorating the dead.

The majority of the cemeteries are bordered by a low wall or hedge. In many places the architects opt for a half-length wall combined with a hedge of the same height.

## 26. THE SEATS

More often than not the bereaved have had a long journey when they visit the grave of their relative. The architects were perfectly aware of this, as appears from Baker's description of his meeting on a cold and drizzly day with a mother visiting her son's grave in a remote cemetery. Apart from constructing the graves themselves, every effort has been made to create places for peace and quiet and contemplation, in the form of seats. Many of these places have been derived from garden designs in which seats have been placed at the end of a visibility axis or at a viewpoint. Often the buildings intended as places to shelter, have a look at the register or to pray if desired, have a place to sit. Visitors walking round the cemetery are usually offered a succession of places to rest, where the location of each of these places emphasizes special perspectives during the walk.

## 27. THE MATERIAL

Although Lutyens' first designs show his distinct preference for the combination of brick with columns, mouldings, plinths and roofs of white stone, widely different materials are found in the realized cemeteries. The basic material used in the cemeteries, however, is white stone. The headstones are made of white Portland, of Hopton Wood. The Cross of Sacrifice, the War Stone and the other elements requiring white stone are made of different kinds of white limestone that are found in quarries in Belgium and France, and which are practically identical in colour. Consequently, due to the similarity of the material a strong uniformity in terms of colour and



texture is found in the main elements of each cemetery. Apart from the local red brick, Lutyens frequently uses indigenous grey-brown cobblestone, usually Basse Normandie, for the combination with white stone.

The amount of white stone used in the different buildings varies: in some, white stone is used to emphasize the basic form by using mouldings around openings and along the contours of the buildings. In other cases the buildings are completely made of stone to suggest a absence of material. The abstraction of the form is emphasized as the incidence of light intensifies the expressiveness. As a result, buildings with a similar structure are entirely different on account of the variant use of material.

## 28. REGISTER

Some of the ever-recurring elements are the cupboard with the register, the land tablets and the name plates. The register is kept in a metal cupboard in the wall near the entrance or in a shelter, together with the visitors book. The register incorporates a brief description of the history of the cemetery and a list of the victims with their nationality. In the visitors book visitors can make mention of their visit and, if desired, the reason or an impression of their visit.

## 29. GREENERY

After his visit to Gertrude Jekyll, Lutyens proposes planting the cemeteries with different varieties of evergreen trees and shrubs, the evergreens and other trees and shrubs that match the climate, the architecture and the location. He warns for too sombre an aspect and advocates flowering plants and shrubs, for example, the English rose and French lily. In his design for the tree cathedral the field of graves is surrounded by double rows of lime trees, like an urban avenue. The graves are laid close together, without paths.

History teaches us that the greenery plan of Jekyll and Lutyens is not implemented anywhere and the idea of a profuse flower garden is never realized. What is adopted is the profuse application of roses and to a lesser extent iris. The roses are not placed in groups as Jekyll proposed but are evenly distributed over the field of graves. The roses stand between the headstones in long borders. In principle, the roses are placed alternately between two headstones, so that there is always a rose next to each headstone. In order

not to obscure the text from view, the planting in front of the headstones is kept lower. To break the monotony, each plot has in principle a different colour of roses and at every few rows of headstones, borders are planted at the back, the back borders. The planting can be higher here because the view of the text on the headstones is not obscured. Back borders are initially rather the rule than the exception. Their number is gradually reduced because of the maintenance. At the heads of the rows there is uniform planting, such as box trees or lavender, to accompany the main paths. In general, the planting is more abundant in the most visited cemeteries, such as Baker's Tyne Cot Cemetery near Ypres.

### 30. THE GREENERY OVER TIME

The quantity of the greenery is gradually reduced from the first designs as a result of savings on maintenance. Whoever looks at old photos of the cemeteries notices that the fields of graves were more densely planted and that there were often small trees and roses on stems between the graves. In the odd cemetery something of the atmosphere can still be experienced

Assistant architect Truelove aptly gives the inherent nature of what is desired by Lutyens on the approval form for Barlin Communal Cemetery Extension: "Sir Edwin Lutyens required the idea of a 'green church', that is War Stone and Cross surrounded by trees". This image is fortunately still present at many cemeteries, in all kinds of variations.

### 31. INDIVIDUAL AND PUBLIC COMMEMORATION

During the war, the grieving process of the relatives in the UK and in the other parts of the empire is made difficult by the great distance from the victims, the ban on repatriation and often the lack of a grave. The ban on transporting all the victims in the beginning of the war to the homeland is related to the high costs, and to logistical and hygiene problems. The ban is during and after the war justified to the relatives with the argument that the fallen would have chosen to be buried with their comrades in arms and that repatriation would hinder equal treatment of the victims regardless of rank, race or wealth. Furthermore, the separate commemoration of missing and retrieved victims is considered undesirable. The relatives however have a strong urge to set up their own monuments. In an attempt to make concessions to the relatives, the

construction of the cemeteries is speeded up as much as possible and the very highest demands are made upon the architecture. Proponents of repatriation consider that burying the fallen in a military cemetery wrongly suggests that they are still part of the army. They also find that there is too little room for the different religions of the victims.

The commemoration of the dead is not only a personal matter but, due to its massiveness, a public issue stimulated by the government. The individual graves and the names on the collective monuments make the personal grief visible and influence public sentiment. The monuments appear to be able to express both public and private commemoration. The first monument, the Cenotaph, was initially set up to celebrate the victory but was quickly seen as a place to commemorate the victims. The empty tomb in London far away from the battlefield is quickly recognized by the relatives as a place where they can express their grief. With the lack of graves on the home front, the empty tomb is a material point of contact for remembrance. The first collective monument on the former front, the Menin Gate, has dual significance. The monument commemorates both the hostilities and the missing that resulted from them.

The form chosen is based on tried and tested religious systems. The central idea is based on the Christian belief that the soldiers sacrificed themselves for their country and that suffering is necessary in order to come to a better world. The idea of permanence in the form of the War Stone, as proposed by Lutyens, was added to this. The idea of a massacre that appears here and there is avoided as much as possible because it is not viewed as appropriate for the grieving process. The idiom of the commemorative symbols is the trusted religious or classical, in the form of a cross, altar, triumphal arch and temple. The objective is to make contact with the supernatural by symbolism or by sublime art, as Lutyens envisages. On the other hand, the enormous scope of the commemoration is a new given.

## 32. CONCLUSION

With the 100-year commemoration of the Great War or First World War and the 75-year commemoration of the Second World War in the offing, the question arises of the significance of the cemeteries in the present era. Their significance has changed over the years. The last soldiers of 1914-18 have died, just as most of the relatives who knew the victims.

Public commemoration nevertheless continues unabated, in terms of the number of visitors to the cemeteries. Every evening amid great public interest the Last Post is still blown at the Menin Gate in Ypres. Although the commemoration is kept alive due to these types of rituals and the establishment of museums and information centres, it is the cemeteries themselves that constitute the most penetrating remembrance of the war.

The significance of the cemeteries eighty years after their completion lies in countless considerations, which differ depending on the background of the observer. The cemeteries were initially laid out for the relatives. Fairly soon thereafter, monuments were added for the commemoration of a whole nation. Immediately after the war, the surviving relatives could take organized trips to the cemeteries, which were laid out in the devastated landscape among the destroyed cities. The war landscape itself had its own attraction. Even during the war, tourists who did not come for the graves were interested in the remains of the violence of the war. Michelin introduced and published travel guides right after the war, showing pictures and maps of the rubble and ruins. Due to the reconstruction of the cities and the restoration of the landscape to cultivation by the farmers, the traces of the war have almost been erased with the passage of time. The starting points for the remembrance of military events are becoming obscure. The war remains visible due to the cemeteries and monuments that arose on the former battlefield. The network of cemeteries is a blueprint of the battlefield.

The cemeteries have gradually gained a much wider significance for a much larger crowd than just the relatives. The cemeteries motivate contemplation about war and peace. The large number of cemeteries, the dead being treated as individuals, the stylish unpretentiousness of the cemeteries and the unceasing careful maintenance awaken respect and interest. Repatriation of the victims would have made the war much quicker to forget. Many distant relatives still visit the cemeteries. The cemeteries have furthermore obtained an educational significance for succeeding generations, who are almost tangibly confronted with the inconceivable numbers of victims. Due to this confrontation, the history of the First World War still seems to attract large groups of visitors. That history is furthermore also used to attract tourists to the former battlefields. Finally, there is a growing group of architecture fans who, besides the military history, also have an interest in the architectural significance of the cemeteries.

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