

## WAR CEMETERIES OF FLANDERS & PICARDY



Thiepval, Photo © John East

### Weekend itineraries in France (original tours 2006 & 2007)

The first itinerary examines the architectural consequences of the Great War of 1914-1918 in Belgium, that is, that is, the war cemeteries and memorials to be found along the section of the Western Front around the Ypres Salient. The original c20 Society tour was made in 2007 and coincided with the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of a campaign which has come to seem a polemical tragedy equal or greater to that of the Somme; that is, the Third Battle of Ypres – better known as the futile muddy slaughter of Passchendaele. Following earlier success at Messines, Field-Marshal Douglas Haig launched his offensive on 31<sup>st</sup> July 1917 after fifteen days of shelling the German lines. After initial gains, torrential and incessant rain combined with the artillery bombardments to turn the battlefield into a quagmire in which many men drowned. But Haig persevered. By the time the rubble that was Passchendaele village together with several miles of mud was taken in November

and the offensive was halted, 70,000 British Empire soldiers had been killed and over 170,000 wounded. The military historian John Keegan has written of “Haig’s profligacy with men. On the Somme he had sent the flower of British youth to death or mutilation; at Passchendaele he had tipped the survivors into the slough of despond”. It was after the fighting was over that Haig’s chief of staff, Lt.-Gen. Sir Launcelot Kiggell, is said to have visited the battlefield for the first time and then burst into tears, exclaiming “Good God! Did we really send men to fight in this?”

This first tour explores the work of the Imperial War Graves Commission in and around Ypres (Ieper) which, standing in its exposed Salient in the front line, remained in British hands for almost the whole war – at huge cost. French, Belgian and German war cemeteries will also be visited. Most of the casualties buried in these cemeteries were victims of a series of so-called battles or offensives which amounted to a war of attrition. The First Battle of Ypres (October-November 1914) saw the initial German assault on Ypres resisted, as did the Second Battle of Ypres (April 1915). The Third Battle of Ypres (July-November 1917) was Passchendaele. In April 1918 the Germans launched another offensive towards the Channel ports following their remarkably successful offensive on the Somme the previous month. This, the Battle of the Lys, took some of the high ground south of Ypres and threatened a British withdrawal. After this offensive ground to a halt, a series of Allied attacks drove the German armies back towards the north-east until the Armistice was declared on 11<sup>th</sup> November 1918.

The second itinerary examines the work of the I.W.G.C. in France, around Arras and Albert. The original c20 Society tour took place in 2006 and coincided with the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of the Somme, a campaign waged with such a huge loss of life to what seems so little end. The losses in particular on the first day of the battle – 1<sup>st</sup> July 1916 - retains a powerful hold on the British historical imagination and conception of the war. It was on the Somme that the great volunteer army recruited by Kitchener first saw action – and was decimated. The tour explores the section of the Western Front from Neuve Chapelle and Lens in the north past Arras and Albert to Péronne on the Somme to the south. French and German war cemeteries will also be visited. Most of the casualties buried in these cemeteries were victims of the series of offensives launched in these areas which usually resulted in small territorial gains and huge casualties; that is: at Neuve Chapelle (March 1915), the Battle of Loos (September 1915), the Battle of the Somme (July-November 1916), the Battle of Arras (April 1917), the Battle of Cambrai (November 1917) and the German offensive launched by Ludendorff in March 1918 which, unlike the earlier campaigns, succeeded in breaking through the fortified, static trench system which characterised the war. After this offensive ground to a halt, a series of Allied attacks drove the German armies back towards the north-east until the Armistice was declared on 11<sup>th</sup> November 1918.

After 1918, Britain was faced with the problem of honouring and caring for the bodies of her war dead. Perhaps ten million – including civilians – died in the First World War. Britain and her Dominions lost a million dead, France 1,700,000, Germany two million. In Britain, the Imperial War Graves Commission had been established in 1917,

principally owing to the heroic efforts of its vice-chairman, Sir Fabian Ware. Before the war cemeteries could be given permanent treatment, principles had to be established. These were that no bodies should be exhumed for reburial back home, that no distinction should be made between officers and men or by social rank, and that adherents of different religions should be given equal treatment. In consequence, the British cemeteries were given a distinct secular character (in contrast to, say, the French war cemeteries or to many war memorials back home), although this was, at first, highly controversial. The desire of Ware and the Commission to avoid overt Christian symbolism met with strong opposition, and the matter was finally settled by Parliament in 1920. A compromise was reached however in that every cemetery contains a free-standing CROSS OF SACRIFICE, designed by *Sir Reginald Blomfield*, as well as the STONE OF REMEMBRANCE or Great War Stone, an altar-like monolith designed by *Sir Edwin Lutyens*, who had a very strong influence on the appearance of the British cemeteries and whose secular approach to honouring the dead was exemplified by his Cenotaph in Whitehall (1919-20).

It is a common solecism, committed especially by film-makers, to imagine that the enormity of the losses of the Great War is represented by seas of crosses in vast cemeteries. In fact, very few of the British cemeteries contained more than a few thousand graves while the bodies are marked by standard headstones of secular character. What is terrible about the British cemeteries is not their size but their *number*: there are almost a thousand of them along the line of the Western Front in Belgium and France. To design so many cemeteries, to give each a distinctive character and to arrange for their landscaping and planting, was a colossal task. The basic design work was undertaken by four eminent men who were appointed Principal Architects for France and Belgium (for there were also architects required in Italy, the Balkans, Turkey, Palestine and elsewhere): *Lutyens*, *Sir Herbert Baker*, *Blomfield* and, a little later, *Charles Holden*. Much of the work, however, was undertaken by the team of younger Assistant Architects in France who were mostly men who had served in the war. Experts on horticulture were also employed to give the cemeteries the English garden character which is so distinctive and consoling.

Most of the cemeteries were completed by the mid-1920s, but over half of the British Empire casualties still remained uncommemorated: the Missing, those whose bodies were never found or identified. There were over half a million of these: 517,000. It was decided that the name of every missing man should be carved on one of several memorials to be built in the battle zones. The I.W.G.C. was asked to undertake this additional task in 1921 and the first Memorial to the Missing to be unveiled – in 1927 – was the Menin Gate at Ypres, designed by *Blomfield*. By this stage, however, there was a crisis as the French had become “disquieted” by both the number and the scale of the memorials the Commission proposed to erect, together with those proposed by the Australian, Canadian and United States governments. It was therefore decided to reduce the number of special memorials and to incise the names of many of the missing on memorials placed within existing cemeteries. Some of these were designed by the Principal Architects, others were the result of limited competitions open to the Assistant

Architects. The last to be unveiled – in 1932 - was Lutyens's Memorial to the Missing of the Somme at Thiepval. (The Canadians' own memorial at Vimy Ridge was unveiled in 1936 and the Australians' at Villers-Bretonneux in 1938.)

In considering British architecture between the two world wars, the achievement of the I.W.G.C. is often ignored, yet its cemeteries and memorials represent a significant and creative flowering of the Classical tradition and among them are some of the finest works by the best of the older generation of British architects, above all Edwin Lutyens and Charles Holden. It was also one of the largest programmes of public works ever carried out by a British authority, and was done so to a very high standard. Rudyard Kipling, the Commission's literary adviser, called it "The biggest single bit of work since any of the Pharaohs – and they only worked in their own country." In 1937, Fabian Ware recorded that "in France and Belgium alone there are 970 architecturally constructed cemeteries surrounded by 50 miles of walling in brick or stone, with nearly 1000 Crosses of Sacrifice and 560 Stones of Remembrance, and many chapels, record buildings and shelters; there are some 600,000 headstones resting on nearly 250 miles of concrete beam foundations. There are also eighteen larger memorials to those who have no known grave..." And it was cheap at the price: the total cost of *all* the Imperial War Graves Commission's cemeteries and memorials was £8,150,000; the Treasury's account in 1917 for the so-called Third Battle of Ypres was £22 million.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

For a fuller history of the establishment of the I.W.G.C. by Sir Fabian Ware and the development of its commemorative policies and its architectural approach, see David Crane, *Empires of the Dead: How One Man's Vision Led to the Creation of WWI's War Graves* (London, 2013), also Philip Longworth, *The Unending Vigil: A History of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission 1917-1967* (Constable, London, 1967) as well as Gavin Stamp, *The Memorial to the Missing of the Somme* (Profile, London, 2006) which contains a bibliography about war memorial architecture and much else relevant to the subject.

For other buildings in the areas visited, see Dominiek Dendooven (trans. Ian Connerty), *Menin Gate & Last Post: Ypres as Holy Ground* (Koksijde, n.d.); Rose E.B. Coombs, *Before Endeavours Fade: A Guide to the Battlefields of the First World War* (London, 1976 &c.); Michael Barker & Paul Atterbury, *The North of France: A Guide to the Art, Architecture, Landscape and Atmosphere of Artois, Picardy and Flanders* (London, 1990). For the architects, there is Eitan Karol, *Charles Holden, Architect* (Donington, forthcoming); Richard A. Fellows, *Sir Reginald Blomfield: An Edwardian Architect* (London, 1985); and, in the large literature on Lutyens, there is Tim Skelton & Gerald Gliddon, *Lutyens and the Great War* (London, 2008), Jeroen Geurst, *Cemeteries of the Great War by Sir Edwin Lutyens* (Rotterdam, 2010), and David Crellin, "Some corner of a foreign field": Lutyens, Empire and the Sites of Remembrance' in Andrew Hopkins & Gavin Stamp, eds, *Lutyens Abroad* (British School at Rome, London, 2002).

*Gavin Stamp, 2014*

## Itinerary One: Ypres

**Day One:** Eurostar from LONDON ST PANCRAS to LILLE EUROPE then by car

### CANADIAN NATIONAL MEMORIAL, VIMY RIDGE

The Canadian Memorial is a conspicuous exception among the memorials erected by the I.W.G.C. in terms both of its designer and its style. To the distress of Fabian Ware, several of the constituent parts of the British Empire chose to erect their own memorials, and the Canadians decided not to use one of the Commission's own architects but turned instead to a native sculptor, *Walter Seymour Allward* (1876-1955). And the result is not a design in the usual Classical manner favoured by the Commission but a powerful essay in what can only be called Expressionism.

The Canadian Battlefields Memorial Commission was created in 1920 and Allward won a competition held the following year. The site chosen was Vimy Ridge, the strategic position overlooking the plains of Douai which had finally been taken by Canadian troops during the Battle of Arras in April 1917. The memorial took long to realise. It was one of those to which the French objected in 1926 and it was not completed for another decade. The memorial was finally unveiled in July 1936 by King Edward VIII as one of his few public duties during his short reign.

The Canadian National Memorial commemorates 66,665 Canadians who died in France and the 11,285 who have no known graves. The design is subtly asymmetrical. The two tall tapering pylons of Dalmatian stone – symbolising Canada and France - dissolve towards their summits into figures of Truth, Knowledge, Gallantry, Sympathy, Honour as well as angels, with, at the very top, Justice and Peace. Between the two pylons is the Spirit of Sacrifice while the mourning figure of Canada Bereft stands on the terrace overlooking Lille in the distance; either side of the main steps are mourners, male and female. In his book on *War Memorials* published in 1946, Arnold Whittick wrote that

“Here is a memorial which impresses and deeply moves some, yet appears to others as being somewhat melodramatic, especially in the sculptural expression; but it is important aesthetically, especially in its architectural character, as being a sincere attempt to create original forms expressive of the time and occasion without easy dependence on traditional and conventional forms. It is at least living memorial art, and it points the way to the future and to what might be achieved as expression in the second world war.”

[W.C. Von Berg recalled in 1977 that in 1922, long before the memorial was built, “On the occasion of the visit to the war cemeteries by King George V and Queen Mary [Major] Ingpen was in charge of transport arrangements and I was his assistant. Our first contact with the royal couple was one which remains vividly in my memory as the most dramatic of contrasts ever, for it took place at night on the devastated summit of Vimy Ridge where the royal train was halted, brilliantly illuminated, with their majesties seated at dinner in full splendour with liveried footmen and all! It was truly a memorable experience.”]

ARMENTIÈRES near the Belgian frontier lay just behind the British front line for most of the war and so became an important forward base and recreation centre [“*Oh Mademoiselle from Armentieres, parlez-vous?... hinkey-dinke, parlez-vous*” &c.]. It was briefly in German hands in 1914 and was again captured in April 1918 when it was badly damaged and as the Germans retreated in October many more buildings were mined and destroyed, including the original belfry. The rebuilt HÔTEL DE VILLE – like so many others in this part of France built both before and after the Great War – was designed by

*Louis-Marie Cordonnier* (1854-1940) who was also responsible for the CHURCH OF ST VAAST and the MARKET. The WAR MEMORIAL was by *Edgar Boutry*.

MEMORIAL TO THE MISSING and BERKS CEMETERY EXTENSION, PLOEGSTEERT. *Harold Chalton Bradshaw* (1893-1943) won competitions for the proposed Memorials to the Missing at Lille and Cambrai in 1925 and 1926 respectively. When, in 1926, the French began to express disquiet at the number and scale of the memorials which were to be erected on their soil, it was decided to reduce the number in France. Some were transferred to existing cemeteries, the Cambrai memorial being built at Louverval to Bradshaw's design. The memorial intended for Lille was moved just across the frontier to Ploegsteert ("Plug Street") in Belgium, Bradshaw remaining the architect. It was unveiled in 1931 by the Duke of Brabant (the future King Leopold III). Bradshaw had trained under Charles Reilly at the Liverpool School of Architecture and in 1913 became the first Rome Scholar in Architecture. He served in the Royal Engineers during the war, in which he was wounded and gassed. His academic training is reflected in the rather Beaux-Arts design of the circular memorial. The sentinel lions were by the sculptor *Gilbert Ledward*. Bradshaw also designed the Guards' Memorial in St James's Park and became the first Secretary of the Royal Fine Art Commission in 1924. There are 404 burials in the Berks Cemetery Extension and 11,447 names carved on the Memorial to the Missing.

MESSINES RIDGE BRITISH CEMETERY was designed by *Charles Holden*, as is clear from the stripped Classical manner of the shelter building. In between the two austere buildings of Portland stone runs a Doric colonnade with fluting only around the column bases (Temple of Apollo at Delos) and this modern primitivism gives the structure something of the character of Holden's contemporary work for the London Underground. The entrance to the cemetery is around a circular mound on which stands the Cross of Sacrifice. The curving wall around the mound is inscribed with 840 names, for this serves as a memorial to some of New Zealand's 'Missing' as the government of New Zealand decided not to erect one large memorial (as the Canadians, Australians and South Africans did) but to have several memorials to their Missing in different cemeteries. The Assistant Architect was *W.C. Von Berg* and the cemetery was constructed in 1924-28; it contains 1,513 graves.

After three weeks of artillery bombardment at Messines Ridge, which formed the southern wing of the Ypres Salient, mine chambers filled with a million pounds of explosives were detonated under the German lines just before dawn on 7<sup>th</sup> June 1917 – the bang could apparently be heard in England – and the crest of the ridge was taken. (Flanders is so flat that any elevation of ground was of great strategic importance.)

KEMMEL NO.1 FRENCH CEMETERY is one of four cemeteries in or near Kemmel designed by *Sir Edwin Lutyens*. Kemmel Chateau Military Cemetery, 1924-25, in the village is the largest, and La Laiterie Military Cemetery is not far outside. Further to the north is Kemmel No.1, for which *W.H. Cowlishaw* was Assistant Architect, which has 276 graves (the French graves were removed before the permanent cemetery was constructed). It is very close to KLEIN VIERSTRAAT BRITISH CEMETERY with 803 graves, for which *J.R. Truelove* was Assistant Architect, which has a particularly distinctive and unusual shelter building.

Indeed, the 130 or so cemeteries for which Lutyens was Principal Architect are remarkable for the wide range of creative and original variations on the basically straightforward theme of the lodge or shelter. They show an ability to develop and adapt the Classical language and the elements of architecture – the arch, the lintel, the column,

the pier, the wall, the seat, the roof, combined with different textures and colours of masonry – which is most directly comparable, perhaps, with the contemporary work of Plečnik. Perhaps this was partly the consequence of working creatively with the team of young architects in France.

MONT KEMMEL [Kemmelberg] along with the Mont des Cats to the south-west of Ypres forms the “Flemish Switzerland”, the only really high ground in Flanders. It was therefore of immense strategic importance. In April 1918, in the second wave of Ludendorff’s offensive, it was taken by the Germans but they failed to get further and therefore did not necessitate the withdrawal of the British from Ypres, which had been a possibility. On the top of the hill is the FRENCH MEMORIAL to the French troops who died in Belgium, unveiled in 1932 by Marshal Pétain. Originally, there was a *poilu*’s helmet on the top. Not far away, on the western slope, is an OSSUAIRE containing the bones of 5,294 unknown French soldiers who died in the German assault in 1918.

POPERINGHE NEW MILITARY CEMETERY had *Sir Reginald Blomfield* as Principal Architect and *Noël Ackroyd Rew* as Assistant Architect; it contains 677 graves. Nearby is the smaller Poperinghe Old Military Cemetery, also by Blomfield and Rew, with 444 graves.

LIJSENTHOEK MILITARY CEMETERY, south west of Poperinghe (“Pop”) is the second largest British war cemetery in Belgium, containing 9,877 graves. This is because it lay by a casualty clearing station, first established by the French at Remi Farm next door. The cemetery was designed by *Sir Reginald Blomfield*, with *A.J.S. Hutton* as Assistant Architect, and the lodge building is in Blomfield’s characteristic 17<sup>th</sup> century French Classical manner in red brick and stone. A design for a chapel at Lijssenthoek made by Blomfield in 1920 remained unexecuted.

In discussing his work for the I.W.G.C. in his autobiography, *Memoirs of an Architect* (1932), Blomfield wrote that

“What I feared was that from inexperience the young architects might indulge in elaborate sentimentalities, and I warned them that in regard to the design of buildings they could not be too simple and even austere, and that they would do well to take as their model of inspiration the manner of Vauban, the great engineer of Louis XIV, as shown in his forts and military stations. In regard to the lay-out of the grounds and planting, I advised them to follow the straightforward methods of the Formal Garden, with careful observance of the relative values of the expanses of grass in relation to the serried ranks of the white Portland headstones, all of which were to a uniform design. These suggestions were faithfully followed, and in conjunction with the skilled work of the garden staff, the Cemeteries designed by us for the Imperial War Graves Commission rank among the most memorable achievements of this century.”

BEDFORD HOUSE CEMETERY, south of Ypres, is large, containing 4532 graves. Its irregular and rambling layout reflects the fact that it is on the site of the former Rosendal Château, whose ruins and moats survive. The architect brilliantly exploited these features and, by designing circular Classical temples, evoked an English landscaped garden in the Picturesque tradition. This was *Wilfrid Clement Von Berg* (1894-1986), who was one of the I.W.G.C.’s Assistant Architects but here he worked on his own.

Von Berg was born in Croydon and studied at the Architectural Association under Robert Atkinson. After war service, he joined the Commission in 1919. In 1977 he recalled how

“I was awaiting demobilisation and wondering rather grimly what were likely to be my prospects of re-entering my profession in England when a notice arrived in my Orderly Room stating that architects were invited to apply for positions in the Imperial War Graves Commission. Without a moment’s hesitation I saddled my horse, galloped off to a neighbouring town, was interviewed and accepted”.

Von Berg acted as Assistant Architect on many cemeteries designed by Blomfield and Holden in particular:

“Blomfield, I recall, took a meagre and superficial interest in my work and rarely had much to contribute. Lutyens, on the other hand, showed a lively concern coupled with a delicious sense of humour. I remember how once he introduced an asymmetrical feature into one of my designs saying with a chuckle ‘That’s cockeye but let’s do it’. Away from the drawing-board he was the greatest fun and at a party in the chateau at Longueness, I.W.G.C. headquarters, to everyone’s delight he climbed onto a table and danced a little jig. Holden, serious and painstaking, was a senior architect for whom I had the greatest respect. Of Baker I have no recollections since his work was almost exclusively with Gordon Leith. Generally speaking, therefore, I would say that, to the best of my memory, the Principal Architects, with the exception of Blomfield, performed their duties conscientiously and thoroughly. I never remember visiting a cemetery in the company of a Principal Architect and whether they themselves paid such visits or not I cannot say”

YPRES [*Flemish*: IEPER] is the ancient Flemish town which was occupied by the British for almost the whole of the Great War. It was briefly occupied by the Germans in their advance in October 1914, but was then re-taken by the British Expeditionary Force. In the series of flanking manoeuvres which followed the Battle of the Marne, Ypres was left in a “Salient” in the front line, surrounded on three sides. This meant that it was under constant attack and was shelled almost continually. The artillery barrage began in November 1914, when the celebrated Mediaeval Cloth Hall was set on fire. During the Second Battle of Ypres in May 1915 the Cloth Hall and the Cathedral of St Martin were destroyed and by the end of 1918 the town consisted of piles of rubble. The civilian population had been compulsorily evacuated in May 1915 and after that the ruins of Ypres – “Wipers” - were left to the British Army.

With the war over, decisions had to be taken about what to do with the destroyed city. Two debates raged at first. One, which concerned the Belgians, was whether to try and rebuild the city exactly as it was before, or whether to build a new city – the solution naturally favoured by most architects. The other debate, which at first was the more pressing, was between the British and the Belgians. For the British Empire, the remains of Ypres – where over 150,000 soldiers had died – was Holy Ground, a sacred place. The demand arose that the ruins – at least in the town centre – should be preserved as a war memorial. In 1919, Winston Churchill, as Secretary of State for War, proposed to the I.W.G.C. that the town should be purchased or otherwise acquired by the British nation.

“I should like us to acquire the whole of the ruins of Ypres... A more sacred place for the British race does not exist in the world. Around that battlefield probably more than 300,000 of our men of the British Army are buried, and if there is any open place in the whole world which is associated with our race it is that.”

Needless to say, this was a proposal which met with little favour from the long-suffering former inhabitants of the place, who were now anxious to return and start rebuilding their homes and businesses. Their voices became stronger as the future of Ypres was debated in Britain. A subsidiary proposal that the central area around the ruins of the

Cloth Hall and the Cathedral should be a “zone of silence” was opposed by the city council and in 1921 the British government finally withdrew its request to the Belgian authorities that the ruins be preserved, although work did not begin on reconstructing the Cloth Hall for another seven years. At the same time, the National Battlefields Memorials Committee concluded that the Market Square was not the appropriate place for a large British memorial, and efforts were then focussed on the proposal to build a memorial on the road out of the city centre to the east where once there had been a fortified gate.

THE MENIN GATE. In 1919, *Sir Reginald Blomfield* was invited to visit and survey Ypres to find a site for a large British war memorial. He recommended the site of the Menin Gate, the former Antwerp Gate, where the road east left the city centre, passed between the remains of the ramparts and crossed the Citadel Moat – a road along which so many British troops had passed on their way to battle. Once there had been a gateway here by the French military engineer Vauban, erected when Ypres had temporarily been annexed by Louis XIV. Blomfield proposed a “triumphal archway”. Vauban was a hero of Blomfield’s, and his design, to be executed in red brick and white stone, was inspired by the 17<sup>th</sup> century *Porte de la Citadelle* at Nancy. Triumphal arch elevations in Roman Doric faced both east and west while internally he proposed a large hall covered by an elliptical vaulted ceiling. In 1921, the National Battlefields Memorials Committee was dissolved and the I.W.G.C. undertook the task of erecting Memorials to the Missing, and as it made no sense to erect two large memorials in Ypres, the Menin Gate memorial project became a Memorial to the Missing. Eventually the walls of the Hall of Memory, together with the walls facing the ramparts behind colonnades, were inscribed with 54,896 names. Comparatively little change was made to Blomfield’s 1919 design. Originally he proposed vaulting the hall in brick, but was persuaded that this would make the interior too dark and the executed vault is of reinforced concrete. Also, the first design envisaged spiral staircases at each corner rising to the level of the ramparts, but Blomfield happily adopted the suggestion of the City Architect, *Jules Coomans*, that there should instead be two lateral staircases rising from the centre of the hall. Fortunately perhaps, Blomfield failed to persuade the city that the *Meensestraat* leading to his memorial should be widened to show it off better.

Work began on the Menin Gate in 1923; progress was slow, particularly because of problems with the foundations. It was ceremonially unveiled four years later in 1927 by Lord Plumer. For Blomfield, the oldest and the most conservative of the Commission’s architects, the Menin Gate was one of three works he wanted to be remembered by (the others being the completion of the quadrant of Regent Street and Lambeth Bridge) and “perhaps the only building I have ever designed in which I do not want anything altered.” It was the first and most important of the British Memorials to the Missing to be completed and it was to become the best known. Perhaps it is also the memorial in which a certain bombastic air is most evident, especially with the massive lion on the outward-facing eastern parapet modelled by the sculptor *William Reid Dick*. This, Blomfield wrote, is “not fierce and truculent, but patient and enduring, looking outward as a symbol of the latent strength and heroism of our race.”

No wonder, perhaps, that the memorial and what it seemed to represent angered Siegfried Sassoon, who knew well enough – unlike the architect and the politicians – what the Ypres Salient had actually been like. Soon after it had been “unveiled” with much ceremony in 1927, he wrote “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.*

But this justifiably cynical interpretation perhaps needs to be set against the reaction of the Austrian writer (and pacifist), Stefan Zweig, whose article on the Menin Gate published in the *Berliner Tageblatt* in 1928 Blomfield was pleased to quote in his *Memoirs of an Architect*:

“It is a memorial... offered not to victory but to the dead – the victims – without any distinction, to the fallen Australians, English, Hindus and Mohammedans who are immortalised to the same degree, and in the same chambers, in the same stone, by virtue of the same death. Here there is no image of the King, no mention of victories, no genuflection to generals of genius, no prattle about Archdukes and Princes: only a laconic, noble inscription – *Pro Rege Pro Patria*. In its really Roman simplicity this monument to the six and fifty thousand is more impressive than any triumphal arch or monument to victory that I have ever seen, and its impressiveness is still further increased by the sight of heaps of wreaths constantly being laid there by widows, children and friends. For a whole nation makes its pilgrimage every year to this common tomb of its unburied and non-returning soldiers.”

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

The Menin Gate was damaged during the fighting in 1940 – the principal damage being caused by the retreating British Army which blew up the bridge across the moat. The memorial was restored in 1945-48 by Blomfield's son *Austin Blomfield*.

In the evening, the 'Last Post' is played at the Menin Gate by a volunteer Belgian bugler. This ceremony has been performed every evening since 1928 except during the German occupation during the Second World War.

[Overnight stay in Ypres]

## **Day Two**

ST CHARLES-POTYZE NECROPOLE NATIONAL, Potijze outside Ypres: a French National Cemetery containing 3,784 graves as well as a mass grave containing the bones of six hundred unidentified French soldiers. The sculpture of mourning women and a Crucifix was erected in 1968.

HOOGE CRATER CEMETERY, Zillebeke, takes its name from the chateau at 't Hoge and from the crater from a mine sprung by the British in July 1915. The Principal architect was *Lutyens*; the Assistant Architect *N.A. Rev.* There are 5,878 graves.

HOOGE CHÂTEAU was briefly the headquarters of Sir John French, commander in chief of the British Army before being supplanted by Douglas Haig in 1915. It was shelled to pieces soon afterwards and restored for Baron de Vinck in 1920 by *Adolphe Puissant*.

ZANTVOORDE BRITISH CEMETERY was designed by *Charles Holden*, with *W.H. Conlshaw* as Assistant Architect. It is notable for the combination of ashlar with local (?) rubble stone as well as for Holden's usual sensitivity to site. The boundary wall running flush into the corner shelter building is a particularly happy feature – Arts and Crafts perhaps. There are 1,550 burials in the cemetery.

Holden's relationship with the work of the I.W.G.C. is intriguing. He only became the fourth Principal Architect for France and Belgium in 1920 but he had been working for the Commission for two years prior to that. (Frederic Kenyon wrote to Fabian Ware in February 1918: "As to junior architects, Blomfield asks for Berrington, Lutyens for Holden, Baker for Pearson. I think this will be best, as Holden will be more able to keep Lutyens' vagaries in check than anyone else".) He may well have had an influence on its approach to designing and laying out the cemeteries. What is now certain is that two of the three first experimental cemeteries completed in 1920 were typical of Holden in their geometrical austerity and designed by him although all three were ostensibly by Blomfield as Principal Architect. For one of these – Louvencourt – he was Assistant Architect while the other – Forceville – which was the most successful and much admired by the press – was listed in his 1926 *Who's Who in Architecture* entry.

POLYGON WOOD CEMETERY and BUTTES NEW BRITISH CEMETERY & MEMORIAL, Polygon Wood, were both by *Charles Holden* with *W.C. Von Berg* as Assistant Architect, 1924-29, and are only 150 yards apart. The two are connected by axes and vistas. Polygon Wood Cemetery is small, with only 104 graves, but an artful essay in polygonal geometry. Buttes New British Cemetery is much larger, with 1,993 graves. On the high ground, the *butte* or ridge, is an obelisk, a memorial to the 5<sup>th</sup> Australian Division. Axially opposite is another New Zealand Memorial to the Missing: a colonnaded structure with an open court terminated by pavilions similar in design to the one at Messines Ridge Cemetery.

TYNE COT CEMETERY AND MEMORIAL, Passchendaele. When it was first proposed that the Menin Gate should be a Memorial to the Missing, it was assumed that the hall would be sufficient to contain all the names but, as research and exhumations continued, it soon became clear that it was far from big enough. Another Memorial to the Missing was therefore proposed, to be built in an existing war cemetery near Passchendaele. This was Tyne Cot Cemetery, so called because it contained one of the many strong reinforced concrete blockhouses which Northumberland regiments had nicknamed 'Tyne cottages'. The architect of both cemetery and memorial was *Sir Herbert Baker*, with *John Reginald Truelove* (who would later design the Memorials to the Missing at Le Touret and Vis-en-Artois in France) as Assistant Architect.

The cemetery is intimidatingly vast – the largest of any British or Commonwealth war cemeteries – filled with 11,850 graves containing many of the home victims of Haig's 1917 offensive. In the centre, the Cross of Sacrifice is placed on top of one of the 'Tyne Cots'. In his autobiography, Baker recorded that

"I was told that the King, when he was there [in 1922], said that this blockhouse should remain. He expressed a natural sentiment, but in order to avoid the

repellent sight of a mass of concrete in the midst of hallowed peace, which we wished to emphasize, a pyramid of stepped stone was built above it, leaving a shall square of the concrete exposed in the stonework; and on this we inscribed in large bronze letters these words, suggested by Kipling, 'This was the Tynecot Blockhouse.' On the pyramid we set up on high the War Cross; thus from the higher ground at the back of the cemetery the cross can be seen against the historic battle-fields of the Salient, Ypres, and far and wide beyond."

The Memorial to the Missing is a long curving wall at the back of the cemetery, of flint and stone, terminated by domed and arched pavilions. It is as if even this endless wall turned out to be not long enough to bear all the names of the Missing, for "cloistered recesses" open off it, some behind colonnades, to contain more of the total of 34,888 names carved here.

In *Architecture and Personalities* (1944), Baker wrote that

"Tynecot, when the trees have grown, should have the appearance of a huge, well-ordered English churchyard with its yews and cedars behind the great flint wall, reminiscent of the walls of the precincts at Winchester, and its oaks and poplars bordering the cemetery framing the distant view. P.B. Clayton, of Toc H... said that Tynecot, with this reverent feeling of the English churchyard, made a deeper impression on old soldiers, who visited it, than some of the more imposing architectural monuments."

A VISITORS' CENTRE at Tyne Cot was opened by the Queen this year. Designed by the Bruges architects *Benny Govaerts & Damiaan Vanhoutte*, it is (unfortunately?) sited prominently to the left of the encircling wall.

PASSCHENDAELE NEW BRITISH CEMETERY was designed by *Charles Holden* with *W.C. Von Berg* as Assistant Architect; created in c.1923, it contains 2,093 graves. As with several of Holden's cemeteries, the drawings were prepared in his London office rather than in France by the Assistant Architect at the I.W.G.C. office at St Omer. This is one of Holden's earlier war cemeteries, with the shelter building of Portland stone designed in his most abstracted elemental manner, creating an effect which is undeniably military in character and which Philip Longworth, historian of the War Graves Commission, described as "almost cruelly severe". This was surely appropriate in a cemetery named after the village, completely obliterated in the war (and now spelt Passendale), which was the immediate but seemingly unattainable objective of the 1917 offensive.

POELKAPPELE was the furthest point reached by the Allied advance in 1917. In the centre is a MEMORIAL to GEORGES GUYNEMER, the French fighter 'ace' who fell nearby in September 1917.

HOUTHULST BELGISCHE MILITAIRE BEGRAAFPLAATS: BELGIAN MILITARY CEMETERY by Houthulst Forest – once described by Napoleon as the key to the Low Countries. Here, under distinctive and elaborate national headstones, are buried 1,855 Belgians who died in the last months of the war, together with 146 French and 81 Italian graves.

LANGEMARK DEUTSCHE SOLDATENFRIEDHOF: GERMAN MILITARY CEMETERY. Out of her total loss of almost two million, Germany left 135,000 of her dead of the Great War in Belgium, together with possibly as many as 90,000 missing. Most of these men died around Ypres. Their graves were originally scattered in 270 different places. The German counterpart to the I.W.G.C., the Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge, was established in 1919. In 1926 a construction team was

established under the Volksbund's chief architect, *Robert Tischler* (1877-1958). It was decided not to have a uniform style or manner of treatment, as with the British war graves, but to design each cemetery to blend in with the landscape and be comparatively easy to maintain. Nevertheless, the buildings and memorials by Tischler – a Munich landscape architect – have a recognisable style and are impressive designs which exploit the power of rough masonry and of simple masses. His cemeteries in Belgium were characterised by rugged masonry buildings of dark red Weser sandstone and by the planting of oak trees. Agreement had been reached with the Belgian government in 1925 for the Official German Burial Service in Belgium to organise the exhumation and reburial of Germany's war dead in a series of cemeteries. After the Second World War, agreement was again reached with the Belgian government for the Federal Republic of Germany to maintain the war graves in Belgium again. Between 1956 and 1958 the bodies in 128 cemeteries in Belgium were exhumed and reburied in three enlarged collecting cemeteries, at Langemark, Vladslo and Menen, leaving two smaller German cemeteries at Hoogdele and Zeebrugge. At the same time, these three cemeteries were restored and altered by Tischler, their original architect, shortly before he died in 1958. This work was finally completed in 1970-72.

Langemark, originally called Langemarck-Nord, is the most important of the German war cemeteries in Belgium and now contains the remains of 44,292 soldiers. A cemetery was first made here in 1915 and the permanent cemetery was inaugurated in 1932. The powerful and rugged lodge building, with its wrought-iron gates, was designed by Tischler. Inside, one chamber bears the names of missing soldiers on oak panels; the other has a map carved on a wall showing of all the original German cemeteries in Belgium. Today, the entrance leads immediately to the *Kameradengrab*, a mass grave, containing 24,917 bodies. The names of 17,342 dead known to be among them are cast on free-standing bronze *stele* placed along the perimeter. At the far end, terminating the axis from the entrance, are four bronze sculptures of mourning soldiers by *Emil Krieger* dating from 1956 (moved to their present position in 1984). Elsewhere, 10,143 bodies lie under lettered squares of granite placed on the ground, which replaced the original wooden crosses.

The northern boundary of the cemetery was originally formed by three reinforced-concrete bunkers of the defensive Langemark Line. These were connected by blocks of stone and concrete bearing regimental and other symbols. Beyond this line is the former "poppy field" which is now an extension to the cemetery containing the graves of a further 9,475 men moved here in the 1950s.

A high proportion of the casualties buried here were student volunteers. Exempted from military service while they pursued their studies at university or high school, they – together with their teachers – volunteered in huge numbers in 1914, inspired by that wave of enthusiastic patriotism which affected all the fighting powers at the beginning of the Great War. Inadequately trained, they were mown down by rapid rifle fire by the professionals of the British Expeditionary Force in the First Battle of Ypres – the abortive assault on Ypres in October-November 1914 which resulted in 50,000 German casualties to 24,000 British. This *Kindermord bei Ypern* – "Massacre of the Innocents" – would have tragic consequences, for among the young volunteers who survived the slaughter at Langemark in 1914 were the future novelist Ernst Jünger and a would-be Austrian artist serving with a Bavarian division called Adolf Hitler.

Langemark is a powerful, sombre place. John Keegan once wrote that a visit to this German war cemetery is necessary to understand the subsequent terrible history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

"It was Hitler's presence at and survival of Ypres which makes Langemark a place as significant in history as the Bastille or Sarajevo. For it is, in a real sense,

the birthplace of the Second World War. Hitler, in volunteering to serve the Kaiser, demonstrated his acceptance of the central 19<sup>th</sup>-century belief that to be a citizen a man must be a soldier. It was that belief which created the armies of millions that the war slaughtered in millions. Hitler, to whom the war remained 'the supreme experience', never reconciled himself to the pointlessness of his comrades' deaths at Langemark or to the narrowness of the margin by which Germany had been denied victory in 1918. The whole of his struggle for and seizure of power was dedicated to paying back the victors, five, ten and a hundredfold, for the sufferings of his dead comrades and those millions of German mothers to whom the telegrams came." [Daily Telegraph 11.11.1988]

A sunken VISITOR CENTRE was opened last year at Langemark, designed, like the one at Tyne Cot, by *Benny Govaerts & Damiaan Vanhoutte*.

At the crossroads north of SINT JULIAAN is the CANADIAN MEMORIAL of 1921 by the sculptor *F.C. Clemeshaw*, marking the first use of poison gas in an attack, against Canadian troops, on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1915. There were two thousand casualties.

Back to YPRES. The rebuilding of the destroyed city was a controversial matter after 1918. Apart from the attempts by the British to keep it as a memorial ruin, the Belgians themselves debated about the appropriateness of reconstructing the city on its original street plan and rebuilding the important public buildings as exact replicas – the course advocated by the Burgomaster, René Colaert, and the City Architect, *Jules Coomans*. The Belgian modernist, Huib Hoste, organised a survey among architects at home and abroad and, needless to say, Berlage, De Klerk, Dudok, van Doesburg and other Dutch modernists were strongly opposed to replicas. Piet Mondrian, however, replied that "Whilst I am in favour of all that is new, it seems to me that in this particular case aesthetic, cultural-historical, national and international considerations all argue in favour of an exact reconstruction..."

The traditionalists, of course, won and Coomans also succeeded in imposing his policy of rebuilding the city with "unity of style". In consequence, the centre of Ypres was reconstructed as an old Flemish city and later buildings, notably those with plastered Neo-Classical facades, were not re-created (the same thing happened in Bruges which, of course, was not destroyed). Work on rebuilding the CLOTH HALL and its BELFRY only began in 1928 when most of the rebuilding of the 3,780 destroyed houses was complete. The rebuilding was under the direction of *Coomans* and then of *P.A. Pauwels*. It was finally finished in 1966; when Coomans died in 1937 only the belfry and the western half of the building had been completed. [There is now a Salient 1914-1918 War Museum in the Stadhuis, the reconstructed Renaissance building at the east end of the Cloth Hall]. The 13<sup>th</sup>-century CATHEDRAL OF ST MARTIN was also entirely rebuilt after 1921 – and given the spire which had been planned before 1914. It now contains a number of memorials associated with the Great War.

Of particular British interest, there is ST GEORGE'S MEMORIAL CHURCH in Elverdinghestraat designed by *Sir Reginald Blomfield* and built 1927-29 in response to an appeal made in 1924 by Field-Marshal Earl of Ypres, formerly Sir John French, the British commander-in-chief in 1914, for a church which would both serve as a memorial to the quarter-million British dead in Flanders and to serve the large British community in Ypres. [Indeed, the conspicuous presence of the British in the city caused problems and their high-handed behaviour – acting as if they owned the place – created resentment, particularly among the Flemish Nationalists. When the Menin Gate was opened in 1927, the "commandeering" of the Town Hall for the ceremony without prior

consultation with the city council was objected to and both the Nationalists and Socialists feared the event would be a glorification of militarism.]

Then there are the British war cemeteries in the city: the RAMPARTS CEMETERY near the Lille Gate, the YPRES RESERVOIR CEMETERY at the Western Gate, and the YPRES TOWN CEMETERY & EXTENSION close to the Menin Gate – all by *Sir Reginald Blomfield* - as well as several cemeteries just outside the city. Of the last, the Assistant Architect, Von Berg, wrote (in 1977) “I remember regarding the great man as rather a fraud since on my asking him for his suggestions for the design of the entrance gates he, after a few vain scribbles, gave up in despair and told me to get on with the job myself!”

[Just beyond the cemetery is LIGYWIJK or the Ligny Garden Suburb, built in 1921 on English lines to replace working-class districts in the old city centre.]

To NIEUPOORT (*Flemish*: Nieuwpoort) and the English Channel via VEURNE (Furnes) – the headquarters of the Belgian army during the war. There are few war cemeteries along this section of the Western Front. In the “Race to the Sea” in 1914, the Belgian Army, having retreated from Antwerp, defended the line along the river Yser in the Battle of the Yser. In October 1914, King Albert of the Belgians ordered that the sluices at the mouth of the Yser at Nieuport should be opened to let in the sea and flood the low-lying area inland. This created an impassable barrier ten miles long between Ramskapelle and Dixmude. Nieuport itself was held by the British in July 1917 against a strong German assault.

MEMORIAL TO THE MISSING at NIEUPOORT, where the 600-mile long Western Front reached the sea, is a small memorial designed by the Scots architect *William Bryce Binnie*, who was Deputy Director of Works of the I.W.G.C. It was completed in 1928. The three flanking lions were by that great sculptor *Charles Sergeant Jagger* (a fourth was later made to grace Lutyens’s British Embassy at Washington D.C.).

Rather more impressive is the adjacent MONUMENT TO KING ALBERT which was erected in 1937-38 above the canal sluices at the mouth of the Yser at the initiative of associations of Belgian veterans of the Great War. A circular colonnade of special textured brick square piers surrounds a bronze equestrian statue of the King of the Belgians, who had died in 1934 and who had been the active symbol of Belgian resistance and continuing independence during the Great War. The architect was *Julian De Ridder*, the sculptor *Karel Aubroeck*. The monument was severely damaged during the Second World War and restored in 1973-74.

DIKSMUIDE: the principal landmark is the tall IJZERTOREN or Ysertower to the west of the town, which is both a war memorial and a symbol of Flemish nationalism – the focus of pilgrimages. The original Expressionist structure designed by *Han Groenewegen* was begun in 1928 and inaugurated in 1930 when the bodies of ‘Yzerheroes’ – some of the Flemish-speaking Belgians who died defending the little piece of Belgium that remained in 1914 – were buried in the crypt. The base bore the inscription *No More War* in four languages while the summit, in the form of a cross, bore the symbols or monograms of the Flemish Catholic Student Movement: A-V-V – *All for Flanders* – and V-V-K – *Flanders for Christ*. This provocative architectural statement was a response to the shabby treatment of Flemish-speaking soldiers during the war by the French-speaking officer class and government. Some 80% of the Belgian army were Flemings yet they were given orders in French and had French inscriptions on their gravestones (in 1925 headstones with the Flemish symbol designed by the half-Irish Flemish nationalist

artist *Joe English* (1882-1918) were placed in war cemeteries were removed and destroyed by the military authorities). This caused intense resentment – creating a division between Flemings and Walloons which has since worsened to the point where, today, it seems possible that Belgium might break in two.

This tower also created resentment among the French-speaking (possibly exacerbated by the sympathy of some right-wing Flemish nationalists for the Nazi European vision during the Second World War) and it was blown up by persons unknown in 1946.

That was a self-defeating gesture, for an even bigger IJzertoren was then raised next to the ruins of the old one – which was made into a Gateway of Peace in 1950. The new tower – very similar to the old one and bearing the same legends – was built in 1952-65 and is 84 metres tall, containing 22 floors which serve as a museum. There is also a Chapel with stained glass made by *Eugeen Yjoors* after designs by *Joe English* (who was re-buried in the original crypt) as well as a large mural by *Hendrik Luyten*.

DIXMUDE (Diksmuide) was badly damaged by shelling during the German advance in October-November 1914. 930 houses were destroyed and the town was undermined by massive German fortifications and tunnels. Dixmude remained in German hands until September 1918 when it was liberated by Belgian troops. It was then reconstructed by *Joseph Vierin* and, as in Ypres, the town centre was not rebuilt strictly authentically but fancifully, with stuccoed 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>-century houses replaced by gabled brick buildings in the Style Flamand. The TOWN HALL by *Vierin* and *V. Vaermeyck* bears no resemblance to what stood here before 1914. Only the nearby HOTEL CASINO by *Huib Hoste* was a rebellion against this approach.

VLADSLO DEUTSCHE SOLDATENFRIEDHOF: GERMAN MILITARY CEMETERY was one of the three enlarged collecting cemeteries to which bodies exhumed from many smaller cemeteries in Belgium were moved in 1956. It now contains the remains of 25,664 German war dead. The red brick lodge building was designed by *Robert Tischler* at the end of his long career as chief architect to the Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge. Vladslo Cemetery is, however, most important as the home of one of the most poignant and universally significant works of art of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the far side of the cemetery, beyond the vast carpet of flat granite gravestones – each marking the resting place of eight men – are two bowed, kneeling granite figures on plinths, one male, one female. These are the *Trauernden Elternpaars* – the Mourning Parents – sculpted by *Käthe Kollwitz* (1867-1945). They were originally placed in the German cemetery at Eessen-Roggeveld (since removed) some three miles to the south-east where they overlooked the grave of her younger son Peter, killed near Diksmuide in October 1914 at the age of 18. They, and he, were moved to Vladslo in 1956.

The figures are abstracted and formalised portraits of Kollwitz and her husband Karl. She began to plan a memorial to her beloved son soon after his death and soon arrived at the concept of grieving parents. But nothing could be done until 1925 when the Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge began to organise the war cemeteries in Belgium. She began work on the figures that year. The following year, 1926, she and her husband visited Roggevelde. In a letter, she described how,

“the cemetery is close to the highway... The entrance is nothing but an opening in the hedge that surrounds the entire field. It was blocked by barbed wire...

What an impression: cross upon cross. Some of the graves originally had largish wooden crosses which the weather had ruined, and these had fallen over; but on most of the graves there were low, yellow wooden crosses. A small metal plaque in the centre gives the name and number. So we found our grave... We cut three tiny roses from a flowering wild briar and placed them on the ground beside the

cross. all that is left of him lies there in a row-grave... We considered where my figures might be placed... What we both thought best was to have the figures just across from the entrance, along the hedge... Then the kneeling figures would have the whole cemetery before them... Fortunately no decorative figures have been placed in the cemetery, none at all. The general effect is of simple planes and solitude. Except for two small farms there is no house in the vicinity; it is situated in the midst of fields. Everything is quiet, but the larks sing gladly”.

Kollwitz modelled the figures at half life-size and they were then carved in Belgian granite by the sculptors *August Rhades* and *Fritz Diederich*. They were completed in 1931, when they were exhibited at the National Gallery in Berlin, and were installed at Roggeveld the following year. In her diary for 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1932, she described how,

“The first impression of the cemetery was strange, because it has been changed since I last saw it. It has been levelled. And it seems smaller because the unknown soldiers have all been buried in pairs... The small tin crosses have been replaced by somewhat larger wooden crosses. The rows run with perfect regularity, but the space between the crosses is not always equal. A small stone bridge leads across the highway. The stone wall is higher on the highway side. Inside it is lower, convenient for sitting. The wall is made of laid stones between which varieties of moss are growing. Now the cemetery seems more monotonous than it did. Only three crosses are planted with roses. On Peter’s grave they are in bloom, red ones. It is nice that the whole area is now planted to grass. The space in front, which has been reserved for the figures, is smaller than I thought. It too is lawn.

“In the right corner of the cemetery the granite stones are still lying packed up. The workers from the graves’ committee were there. The stone pedestals, already cut, were lying in readiness, and the provisional wooden pedestals. The dummies were being set up. First the woman, then the man. Long discussions about how much space to leave between; finally everything was settled. So that the whole will combine and the parents will have crosses in front and all around them like a flock...

“The British and Belgian cemeteries seem brighter, in a certain sense more cheerful and cosy, more familiar than the German cemeteries. I prefer the German ones. The war was not a pleasant affair; it isn’t seemly to prettify with flowers the mass deaths of all these young men. A war cemetery ought to be sombre...

“The following day the figures were set up. The workers were already waiting, the blocks were in place. It took long hard work before the figure of the woman was raised. It turned out that the figure had to be raised somewhat to get the proper forward view, because the gently rising terrain emphasised the lean of the figures. Then the man. The great trouble with him, which at first upset me terribly, was that his line of vision is not high enough. He is not looking over the whole cemetery; instead he is staring down, brooding. The hours of work were very tiring. When we left I was sad rather than happy.

“Friday morning it rained and I packed. In the afternoon it cleared... we drove out there once more – for the last time. And the depression of the day before was lifted. I was able to see it all in the right light. We said goodbye.” [Hans Kollwitz, ed., *The Diary and Letters of Käthe Kollwitz*, trans R. & C. Winston (Evanston, 1988)]

As it happened, Lutyens’s Memorial to the Missing of the Somme at Thiepval was unveiled - with rather more fanfare – only week or so later. Both, surely, are among the greatest of the artistic responses to the European catastrophe of the Great War – one

vast and sublime, the other small and intimate - and Kollwitz's Mourning Parents rank along with Jagger's figures on the Artillery Memorial in London and Rayner Hoff's work at the Anzac Memorial in Sydney as the finest examples of 20<sup>th</sup> century war memorial sculpture.

In his *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* (1995), Jay Winter writes that

“What gives Kollwitz's mourning an added dimension was her sense of guilt, of remorse over the responsibility the older generation had for the slaughter of the young. This feeling arose from her initial reaction to Peter's decision to volunteer. Her attitude was apprehensive but positive. Her vision was internationalist and hostile to the philistine arrogance of official Germany. But, as she said time and again, she believed in a higher duty than mere personal self-interest, and had felt before 1914 that ‘back of the individual life... stood the Fatherland’. She knew that her son had volunteered with a ‘pure heart’, filled with patriotism, ‘love for an idea, a commandment’, but still she had wept bitterly at his departure.

“To find, as she did later in the war, that his idealism was misplaced, that his sacrifice was for nothing, was terribly painful for many reasons. First, it created a distance between her and her son. ‘Is it a break of faith with you, Peter’, she wrote in October 1916, ‘if I can now see only madness in the war?’ He had died believing; how could his mother not honour that belief? But to feel that the war was an exercise in futility led to the even more damaging admission that her son and his whole generation had been ‘betrayed’. This recognition was agonizing, but she did not flinch from giving it artistic form. This is one reason why it took so long for her to complete the monument, and why she and her husband are on their knees before her son's grave. They are there to beg his forgiveness, to ask him to accept their failure to find a better way, their failure to prevent the madness of war from cutting his life short.”

A year later, Hitler became Chancellor of Germany. The art of this heroic woman and artist, a socialist and pacifist, was unacceptable to the Nazi regime and she soon feared that “they would remove my figures from the cemetery in Belgium”. In 1936 her work was removed from art galleries, she was interrogated by the Gestapo and threatened with being sent to a concentration camp; the following year she enjoyed the distinction of being included in the Degenerate Art exhibition in Munich. Kollwitz died in 1945. In 1993-95, a cast of her *Pietà* was installed in the former national war memorial in Berlin, the old Guard House in the Unter den Linden by Schinkel, to replace the eternal flame when it was made into a memorial to the victims of war and totalitarianism. But perhaps it is not that work in Berlin but the grieving figures now kneeling in the cemetery at Vladslo that speak the more powerfully of the desolation created by war.

Return to LILLE (*Flemish*: RIJSSEL) and Eurostar to LONDON ST PANCRAS

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to Tim Skelton, who, with Gerald Gliddon is to publish a complete survey of Lutyens's war memorials and cemeteries, for advice.

*Gavin Stamp*  
*September 2007*

## Itinerary Two: Arras

**Day one:** Eurostar from LONDON ST PANCRAS to LILLE EUROPE then by car

### NEUVE CHAPELLE: INDIAN ARMY MEMORIAL

A memorial to 4,843 missing Indian soldiers designed by *Sir Herbert Baker*, using traditional Indian motifs familiar from his Secretariat buildings in New Delhi as well as Lutyens's Viceroy's House. Baker wrote in his autobiography, *Architecture and Personalities* (1944), "Because of my interest in Indian art and history I specially welcomed the commission to design the Indian Memorial at Neuve Chapelle, which enshrines the names of the soldiers who fell on the battle-fields there and on other fields. It consists of a circular space of green turf with stone paths surrounded by a high stone wall, solid at one end where the names are inscribed, and pierced elsewhere and carved with symbols like the railings of Buddha's Shrine at Budh Guaya and those surrounding the great Sanchi topes – low domes preserving sacred relics of Buddha. In the centre, opposite the names, is an Asoka Column raised on high and guarded either side by sculptured tigers. The entrance is through a small domed chattri with pierced stone grilles or jaalis – a familiar feature of Indian buildings; another similar chattri opposite forms a Shelter. Outside there is – or was? – mown turf, overhung with weeping willows, sloping down to moats in which grew wild iris and water-lilies. The shrine had a sense of reverence and eternal peace. Robert Lorimer, the Scottish architect, who designed the Italian War Cemeteries, wrote to me that this cemetery impressed him more than any other he had seen in France. I quote his verdict because it shows how strong is the appeal of the simple cloistered form of war memorial on the battle-fields."

The sculptors at Neuve Chapelle were *Charles Wheeler* and *Joseph Armitage*. The memorial was unveiled in 1927 in the presence of Rudyard Kipling. It was damaged in 1940. Sir Fabian Ware wrote to Baker in 1944 that "I am sorry to say that the Indian Memorial at Neuve Chapelle has been less fortunate than Tyne Cot. It has been rather seriously damaged, about thirty feet of walling having been knocked down..." The previous year Baker had written to Ware that, "I think this second war has taught us not to overdo monumental architecture in the cemeteries". Ware replied that, "We have received no evidence to suggest that the Germans treat the cemeteries with anything but respect."

### LE TOURET MILITARY CEMETERY & MEMORIAL TO THE MISSING

Following the crisis of 1926 because of French unhappiness over the number and scale of the memorials proposed to be erected in France, it was decided that some of the Missing should be commemorated on memorials to be placed in cemeteries already completed. After sites had been allotted to the Principal Architects, the design of other memorials was to be chosen by competition open to the Assistant Architects. The competitions for the proposed memorials to the missing in the cemeteries at both Le Touret and Vis-en-Artois were held in 1928 and both won by *John Reginald Truelove* (1886-1942). Truelove left the I.W.G.C. in 1924 and practised in Nottingham in 1929. He later designed the Municipal Buildings at Stoke Newington (1935-37).

The Le Touret memorial was unveiled in 1930. The open arcades are terminated by cornice-less pylons reminiscent of the work of Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue at the Nebraska State Capitol. It commemorates 13,479 Missing who died in the battles around here in 1914-15, and there are 915 burials in the cemetery.

### BÉTHUNE

An industrial town, once fortified by *Vauban*, Béthune remained in Allied hands for the whole of the Great War but it was badly damaged in April-May 1918 when the German

offensive came to within three miles of the town. The CHURCH OF ST VAAST was rebuilt by *Cordonnier* after the war; the HÔTEL DE VILLE dates from 1928, the PALAIS DE JUSTICE from the 1930s.

#### DUD CORNER CEMETERY & LOOS MEMORIAL TO THE MISSING

Dud Corner Cemetery was so named because of the large number of dud shells fired on the spot in the Battle of Loos, 1915. The memorial in the cemetery commemorates 20,693 Missing on the walls beside and behind the colonnades terminated by domed pavilions; most died in the Battle of Loos. It was designed by *Sir Herbert Baker* and the sculptor was again *Charles Wheeler*. The memorial was unveiled in 1930 in the presence of Kipling, whose son is listed on its walls. The cemetery contains 1,785 burials.

#### NÉCROPOLE NATIONALE DE NOTRE-DAME DE LORETTE

The largest of the French national memorials and cemeteries, constructed 1921-27 and designed by *Louis-Marie Cordonnier* and his son *Jacques Cordonnier*, the architects of the basilica at Lisieux. There are 40,057 bodies in this desperate place, half of them in marked graves and half unidentified and placed in an ossuary beneath the tall lantern TOWER (1921-25) or in the crypt of the BASILICA or chapel. This, designed in a feeble Byzanto-Romanesque style and consecrated in 1927, is decorated with mosaics by *Pierre Gaudin*, *André-Louis Pierre* and others, and there is sculpture by *Robert Coin*. Six windows (some by *Henry Payne*) were given by the British in thanks for France granting land for war cemeteries.

The statue of General Maistre nearby was by the sculptor *Paul Blondat*.

A pilgrimage chapel dedicated to Notre-Dame de Lorette was first built on the hill here in 1727. The area saw very heavy fighting between the French and Germans in 1914-15 before the British took over this section of the Western Front in March 1916.

#### CANADIAN NATIONAL MEMORIAL, VIMY RIDGE

The Canadian Battlefields Memorial Commission was created in 1920 and a competition for a national memorial at Vimy Ridge, taken in 1917 by the Canadians who suffered terrible losses, was won by the sculptor *Walter S. Allward*. Built in 1926-36, this extraordinary, Expressionist creation is very different from all the British Empire memorials directly commissioned by the I.W.G.C.

#### NEUVILLE-ST. VAAST DEUTSCHE SOLDATENFRIEDHOF

Sometimes known as 'La Maison Blanche', this is the largest German war cemetery in France. 44,833 bodies are buried here, with 8,040 of them in a mass grave. The cemetery was created by the French military authorities in 1919-23 to accommodate the bodies of German soldiers buried in the surrounding area. In 1928, its care was taken over by the Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge, the German counterpart to the I.W.G.C. established in 1919. Work on creating a more permanent and landscaped cemetery began in 1936 but was halted by the outbreak of another world war. In 1959 German youth volunteers were allowed to care for the cemetery and it was finally constructed and landscaped in 1974-83, when the original wooden crosses were replaced by metal ones. Belgium was more accommodating than France towards respecting Germany's dead after the Great War, and there the Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge was allowed to construct war cemeteries with masonry walls and lodges. These were designed by the organisation's architect, *Robert Tischler*. The most impressive and moving are those at Langemarck and Vladslo near Ypres.

## VIS-EN-ARTOIS BRITISH CEMETERY & MEMORIAL TO THE MISSING

As at Le Touret, this memorial was won in competition by *J.R. Truelove* in 1928 and unveiled in 1930. This one, however, is more like Lutyens in style, with the twin tall Cenotaph-like pylons between the curving colonnades. The sculptor was *Ernest Gillick*. The cemetery contains 2,339 burials and the memorial commemorates 9,903 missing British soldiers who died in the final advance in this area in 1918.

## ARRAS

### FAUBOURG D'AMIENS CEMETERY & MEMORIAL TO THE MISSING

A large Memorial to the Missing was originally proposed for Arras. Designed by *Sir Edwin Lutyens*, this was to be a tall, thin arch, 124 feet high, whose sides were to consist of a vertical series of diminishing blocks, each pierced by an arched tunnel but arranged on alternate axes and containing bells which would swing and toll with the wind. It was a concept whose ethereal form was to commemorate missing airmen and one in which Lutyens developed the complex arch theme that would be realised at Thiepval. In 1926 the French authorities objected to this and to other proposed memorials. The following year Lutyens produced a new and more modest scheme consisting of a memorial running along one side of the Faubourg d'Amiens Cemetery to the west of Arras. This was unveiled in 1932 by Lord Trenchard. The names of 35,928 Missing who disappeared in the several campaigns in the Arras area in 1917 are listed on walls behind a colonnade broken by aedicules, and this colonnade also breaks back to enclose a free-standing pylon supporting a winged globe carved by *William Reid Dick*. On this are listed all the missing of the Royal Flying Corps, the Royal Naval Air Service and their successor, the Royal Air Force, who died on the Western Front. The cemetery contains 2,648 burials.

ARRAS was briefly occupied by the Germans in the first months of the war in 1914 but remained in Allied hands thereafter. It passed from French to British occupation in the Spring of 1916 and gave its name to the battles of April and May 1917.

Arras, the capital of Artois, is an ancient town and was fortified by *Vauban*. There is a wealth of 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century architecture, particularly in the two arcaded squares: the GRANDE PLACE and the PETITE PLACE. But many of these houses are restorations as the town was very badly damaged by German bombardment. The HÔTEL DE VILLE is a complete reconstruction of the destroyed original, completed in 1934 by *Pierre Pacquet*. The CATHEDRAL OF ST VAAST, damaged in the war, is an austere French rationalist building originally designed by *Pierre Contant d'Ivry*, begun in 1775 and completed in 1833. Robespierre was born in Arras and practised as a lawyer here until the Revolution beckoned; his house is preserved as a museum.

[Overnight stay in Arras]

## Day Two

### GRÉVILLERS BRITISH CEMETERY, BAPAUME

Unlike the Australians, the Canadians and South Africans, the government of New Zealand decided not to commemorate the country's missing on one large memorial but to erect a series of smaller memorials in different cemeteries. That in the war cemetery at Grévillers commemorates 455 New Zealanders who disappeared near here in 1917 and 1918. This memorial, together with the cemetery, was designed by *Lutyens* with *G.H. Goldsmith* as Assistant Architect. The cemetery contains 2,086 burials.

## WARLENCOURT BRITISH CEMETERY

Constructed 1923-24 and designed by *Lutyens* with *Major George Hartley Goldsmith* as Assistant Architect. Goldsmith (1886-1967) had worked for Lutyens before the war; he designed the Memorial to the Missing at La Ferté on the Marne and later worked for the Midland Bank. This cemetery, with 3,437 burials, is close to the Butte de Warlencourt, the scene of fierce fighting towards the end of the Somme campaign in 1916.

## SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL MEMORIAL, DELVILLE WOOD, LONGUEVAL

'Devil's Wood' was the scene of desperate fighting during the Somme campaign in July 1916 when most of what was left of it was eventually taken by the South African Brigade of the 9<sup>th</sup> Division. Delville Wood was therefore the obvious place for the South African government to erect its war memorial and *Herbert Baker* the inevitable architect as he had lived and worked in South Africa. The memorial commemorates all the ten thousand South African dead of the Great War (not just the missing) and was unveiled in 1926. There is much literary and national symbolism in the memorial, typical of the architect, who later recalled that "I had already designed the cemetery which was just outside Delville Wood, and was thus fortunately able to lay out the plan for the South African Memorial in unity and harmony with it. The colonnade of the shelter at the far end of the cemetery faced towards the Wood, and a broad grass path containing the altar-stone and the cross ran between the graves up to the edge of the Wood. On the same axis prolonged we formed a wider avenue through a clearing in the Wood up to a high flint-and-stone semicircular wall; it was terminated at either end with shelter buildings modelled after the summer-house built by an early Dutch Governor on the Groote Schuur estate, which Cecil Rhodes had found in decay and restored; and it is now a familiar object to all South Africans on the slopes of Table Mountain... In the centre of the wall, and of the avenue and pathway of the cemetery, an archway was built crowned with a flat dome on which is set a bronze group of two men in the pride of youth holding hands in comradeship above a war-horse. The idea was suggested to me by Macaulay's poem of the Battle of Lake Regillus; telling how the Great Twin Brethren appeared from the skies to fight in the ranks of Rome. Might it not seem miraculous, as the coming of the mythical Brethren did to the Romans, that the Dutch and English, such recent enemies, should have come overseas to fight for the British Commonwealth against a common foe?"

The bronze group was by *Alfred Turner*; other sculpture by *Joseph Armitage*. The Delville Wood Cemetery is large and contains 5,493 burials.

The long axis is now terminated beyond the memorial by a fortress-like MUSEUM which externally is a replica of the Castle of Good Hope in Cape Town and was built by the South African government in 1984-86.

## PÉRONNE

### HISTORIAL DE LA GRANDE GUERRE

The Historial de la Grande Guerre is a new museum dedicated to understanding the Great War in a wider context and a different way, seeing it from the point of view of each of the protagonists in the fighting in this part of the Western Front: the French, the British and the Germans. It was proposed in 1986 by the General Council of the Somme and it opened in 1992. The new part of the building, designed by *Henri-Edouard Ciriani*, is inside what remains of the CHATEAU of Péronne.

Péronne, "once a quaint town with many timbered houses", was bombarded by the Prussians in 1871. It found itself behind the German front line in 1914; the French failed to take it during the Battle of the Somme in 1916, and it was largely destroyed during the

German retreat to the Hindenburg line the following year. In 1918 it was recaptured by the Germans and retaken (by the Australians) in September 1918.

#### VILLERS-BRETONNEUX MILITARY CEMETERY & AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL MEMORIAL, FOUILLOY

Villers-Bretonneux is where Australian troops halted Ludendorf's offensive towards Amiens in March 1918, so it was chosen as the location of the Australian national war memorial. The site chosen was at the top of the convex slope on which Villers-Bretonneux Military Cemetery was being laid out. This was completed in 1930 and was designed by *Lutyens* (with *Goldsmith* as Assistant Architect) who placed two exquisite lodges with interpenetrating orders at the bottom of the slope by the road. A competition for the memorial was held in 1925 and assessed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott. The winner was the Australian architect *William Lucas*, who proposed a tall open lookout tower with four giant internal columns of polished trachyte supporting the observation platform. The design was eventually approved by President Clémenceau of France in 1929 but work was suspended the following year for economic reasons. Lucas's project was disliked by Sir Fabian Ware, by Colonel J.S. Murdoch, chief architect to the Commonwealth of Australia, and by General Sir Talbot Hobbs, who had chosen the site. Hobbs lobbied against it and asked *Lutyens* to prepare a more modest design. Lucas strenuously protested, but in vain. Lutyens was given permission to proceed in 1935 but Hobbs then rejected his design, insisting on a central observation tower. Lutyens then came up with a tower with a partly external staircase to gain access to the covered observation platform. This is flanked by lateral walls which end in pavilions which have both stone flags and aedicules standing free in space within arches – a Mannerist idea which can be traced back to some of Lutyens's earliest Classical work. Work began in 1936 and it was unveiled by King George VI in 1938 – the last memorial to be completed. Two years later it was damaged in the German invasion of France. The memorial commemorates 10,866 missing Australian soldiers. The cemetery contains 2,120 burials.

#### CORBIE COMMUNAL CEMETERY EXTENSION

The cemetery here was begun in May 1916 in preparation for the Somme offensive. The permanent cemetery, with 1,163 burials, was built in 1921-22. The first design was made by *Lutyens*, but what was built was the work of *Charles Holden*, with *W.H. Cowlishaw* as Assistant Architect. Holden had been an Assistant Architect but was made one of the Principal Architects for France and Belgium in 1920. The relationship between Holden and Lutyens is complex and the former's severe, elemental style – almost a primitive Classicism – may well have had an influence both on the latter and on the work of the Commission. Lutyens's nearby British Cemetery at La Neuville is very similar in style and Holden seems to have been responsible for two of the three experimental cemeteries completed in 1920 (Forceville and Louvencourt) for which Sir Reginald Blomfield was ostensibly the architect. Holden once wrote to the I.W.G.C. that he was "in favour of eliminating everything that is of only temporary interest". The elemental form of the lodge buildings at Corbie clearly relates to his contemporary work for the London Passenger Transport Board on the Northern Line Extension.

#### ALBERT

Albert was originally called Ancre, after the eponymous tributary of the Somme on which it stands; it was renamed in 1617. The town was just behind the lines after 1914 and, after the British replaced the French along this section of the Western Front in the late summer of 1915, it became an important communications and administrative centre for

the Somme offensive planned by Douglas Haig in 1916. Albert was conspicuous for the 'Leaning Virgin' – the statue on the top of the tower of the Basilica of Notre Dame-de-Brebières which was hit by a shell in January 1915 and then leaned at a precarious angle. The superstition arose that the war would end when the Virgin fell. She did so in March 1918 when, after the town was taken in the German offensive, what remained of the basilica was destroyed by British shelling. At the end of the war, Albert consisted of little more than piles of rubble.

The reconstructed town is interesting. The BASILICA OF NOTRE DAME-DE-BREBIÈRES was originally designed by *Edmond Dutoit* in 1884 in a Byzanto-Romanesque style. It was faithfully reconstructed in the 1920s by the architect's son, *Louis Dutoit*, who gave the interior various altars and furnishings with an Art Déco character. There are also Art Déco fittings inside the HÔTEL DE VILLE of 1931. Also worth seeing are the WAR MEMORIAL and the RAILWAY STATION.

#### FRICOURT NEW MILITARY CEMETERY

A small, poignant cemetery in the middle of a field, with only 210 burials. As this was less than 250 burials, this was entirely the work of one of the Assistant Architects, *Arthur James Scott Hutton* (1891-19??), who later worked for the Public Works Department in Kenya.

#### FRICOURT DEUTSCHE SOLDATENFRIEDHOF

Created by the French in 1920, taken over by the Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge in 1929, and reconstructed in 1977. There are 17,026 Germans buried here, mostly casualties of the Battle of the Somme, with 11,970 of them in a mass grave.

#### POZIÈRES BRITISH CEMETERY & MEMORIAL TO THE MISSING, OVILLERS-LA-BOISSELLE

This Memorial to the Missing, placed along one side of a cemetery containing 2,735 burials, was completed in 1930. It commemorates 14,690 soldiers who disappeared in the later stages of the Somme campaign and in the fighting of 1918. It was designed by *William Harrison Cowlishaw* (1870-1957), who was one of the Commission's Assistant Architects. Cowlishaw is best known for the Cloisters at Letchworth, a very eccentric Arts and Crafts building; he was close to Charles Holden, whom he later assisted on the London University project.

#### SERRE ROAD CEMETERY NO.2, BEAUMONT-HAMEL

One of the many cemeteries along the line of the 1916 Somme offensive, Serre Road No.2 was designed by *Lutyens* as Principal architect with *Noël Ackroyd Rew* (1880-19??) as Assistant Architect. The pavilions flanking the Cross of Sacrifice are certainly in the Lutyens manner. The cemetery contains 3,365 burials.

#### 36<sup>TH</sup> (ULSTER) DIVISION MEMORIAL, THIEPVAL

This memorial is a replica of Helen's Tower at Clondeboye, County Down, a Victorian folly-tower designed in a traditional manner by *William Burn* for the Marquis of Dufferin & Ava, below which the Ulster Division drilled before being sent out to France. It stands here at Thiepval because the Ulster Division distinguished itself on the first day of the Battle of the Somme in the assault on the strongly fortified German lines at Thiepval, overlooking the Ancre. Of the ten thousand Ulstermen who went over the top on July 1<sup>st</sup> 1916 – which happened to be the anniversary of the Battle of the Boyne - over half were killed. Four VCs were won that day by the Ulster Division.

## THE MEMORIAL TO THE MISSING OF THE SOMME, THIEPVAL

The Memorial to the Missing of the Somme was the largest of these memorials built by the I.W.G.C. and the last to be unveiled – by Edward, Prince of Wales, in 1932.

Designed by *Sir Edwin Lutyens*, it is arguably his finest and most intellectually distinguished executed creation and certainly one of the greatest works of 20<sup>th</sup> century British architecture anywhere. It was built at Thiepval as this heavily and elaborately fortified stronghold saw some of the most ferocious and bloody fighting during the Battle of the Somme and the entrenched Germans held out here against repeated assaults for almost three months. The site was chosen in 1926 but work did not begin for two years owing to difficult and protracted negotiations with the French authorities. Lutyens had originally proposed a very similar design for a memorial to be built at St Quentin but this was one of those objected to by the French, necessitating a reduction in the number of British memorials in France. For the St Quentin project Lutyens had worked out his concept of a tower of arches, a hierarchy of arched passages through a ziggurat-pile of rectilinear masses, building up to a central tower. At Thiepval, this inspired development of the triumphal arch idea, with two sets of three tunnels penetrating the mass along cross axes, created 48 internal wall panels on which could be incised the names of 73,367 British soldiers who disappeared in Douglas Haig's bloody, prodigal and incompetent offensive (the total British casualties by the time he called off the offensive in November 1916 were 419,654, the French 204,253, the German some 450,000).

To the west of the memorial, as the ground slopes towards the Ancre, is a cemetery containing the bodies of 300 unidentified British and 300 unidentified French soldiers, the realisation of an idea by Fabian Ware to help mollify the French. And on the top of the tower, below the flag poles which fly the Union flag and the *Tricolore*, it states 'Aux Armes Française et Britannique l'Empire Britannique Reconnait'. Furthermore, at a height of 140 feet above the podium, the memorial is a little lower than the Arc de Triomphe in Paris.

From the beginning, there were problems with the (French) bricks and with water penetration. The memorial has been refaced twice, in 1952-55 and in c.1972-75. Most unfortunately, on the advice of *Sir Edward Maufe*, the forecourt walls to the east of the memorial were lowered in 1964 and the circular wall which surrounded the *rond point* in front removed and replaced by hedge. These elements ought to be reinstated.

A VISITOR CENTRE was proposed in 1998. Designed by *Nicolas Ziesel* and *Dominique Vity* of *KOZ Architectes* of Paris, this is a discreet, flat-roofed structure half sunk in the ground which opened in 2004.

I have analysed the design and discussed the history and context of Lutyens's memorial in detail in my book *The Memorial of the Missing of the Somme* (2006) so no more information need be given here. Two illuminating quotations may be added in conclusion, however. The first is by the late Roderick Gradidge, who wrote in his 1976 essay 'Edwin Lutyens: The Last High Victorian', that,

"Most buildings from outside seem to impinge on space and from the inside to enclose space, but at Thiepval, because of the relationship of the arches in three dimensions, space seems to flow through and around the building with a special rhythm which is given a further *rubato* by the relationship of wall planes, sometimes setting back on one elevation, sometimes on the other, but rarely on both elevations at the same time – a trick incidentally also used by Lutyens to great effect on the Cenotaph. The result is that the mind has difficulty in deciding exactly what type of building Thiepval really is. The triumphal arch becomes a memorial cenotaph in one view, in another it is a solid memorial tower, its base pierced by arches in all directions. In fact it is all these forms, all interlocked in one building. For the first time in two thousand years an architect has found

something new to do with the triumphal arch, and he was in a position to do this because he was brought up within the tradition of the Gothic Revival with a Gothic Revival sense of form.”

The second is from *The Missing of the Somme* by Geoff Dyer, first published in 1994.

“I remember John Berger in a lecture suggesting that ours has been the century of departure, of migration, of exodus – of disappearance. ‘The century of people helplessly seeing others, who were close to them, disappear over the horizon.’ If this is so, then the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing casts a shadow into the future, a shadow which extends beyond the dead of the Holocaust, to the Gulag, to the ‘disappeared’ of South America, and of Tiananmen.

“There had been military disasters before the Battle of the Somme, but these – the Charge of the Light Brigade, for example – served only as indictments of individual strategy, not of the larger purpose of which they were a part. For the first time in history the Great War resulted in a sense of the utter waste and futility of war. If the twentieth century has drifted slowly towards an acute sense of waste as a moral and political issue, then the origins of the ecology of compassion (represented by the peace movement, most obviously, are to be found in the once-devastated landscape of the Somme.

“That is why so much of the meaning of our century is concentrated here. Thiepval is not simply a site of commemoration but of prophesy, of birth as well as of death: a memorial to the future, to what the century had in store for those who were left, whom age would weary.”

Leave LILLE EUROPE at around 21.00 to return to LONDON ST PANCRAS

*Gavin Stamp*  
*September 2006*

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