

Guernsey Weekly Press, Saturday 25th September 1926

Dedication of Guernsey's War Memorial Unveiled by Lieut.-Governor Island Homage to our Gallant Dead Memorable Ceremony

The Island monument to keep for ever green the memory of 910 Guernseymen who fell in the World War was unveiled on Sunday afternoon by H.E. the Lieut.-Governor.

The ceremony, enacted in brilliant sunshine before thousands of islanders, was simple, yet sincere, deeply impressive, despite a bright dash of colour, and at times quietly emotional.

In an inspiring address the Bailiff paid tribute to the men who had fought on every front, "and among them were those whose service and death we commemorate to-day, and whose memory we perpetuate on the monument cut from the quarries of their own island."

"We shall justify the supreme sacrifice that made," said the Lieut.-Governor, "if we in fact and not in words take our share in the building of a superstructure worthy of the foundations they have laid." Combined choirs of the Church of England and Nonconformity united in singing at the service, and the memorial was dedicated by the Dean.

The Royal Court en corps, prominent officials, the British Legion, and a contingent of French ex-servicemen attended. The laying of many beautiful wreaths marked the close of the memorable proceedings.

THE GREAT WAR

1914-1918

THIS MEMORIAL COMMEMORATES
THOSE WHO AT THE CALL OF
KING AND COUNTRY LEFT ALL
THAT WAS DEAR TO THEM, ENDURED
HARDNESS, FACED DANGER
AND FINALLY PASSED OUT
OF THE SIGHT OF MEN
AND THE PATH OF DUTY
AND SELF SACRIFICE.
GIVING UP THEIR OWN LIVES
THAT OTHERS MIGHT LIVE
IN FREEDOM
LET THOSE WHO COME AFTER
SEE TO IT THAT THEIR NAMES
BE NOT FORGOTTEN

So runs the inscription on the central bronze tablet describing the Island Memorial in the heart of St Peter-Port for all who pass by to salute in silent tribute.

A Memorable Day

A day that must live in the mind as one of the momentous and memorable in Guernsey's history is Sunday, September 19, 1926. The Island War Memorial set up on the site of the old plantation at the top of Smith Street – an area commanding access to six streets of St Peter Port – to perpetuate honoured remembrance of our gallant dead in the world war of 1914-18 was unveiled by His Excellency, Major-General Sir Charles Sackville-West, K.B.E., C.B., C.M.G., in the presence of thousands of islanders.

The sun beamed gloriously on the solemn proceedings of a ceremony the simplicity of which accentuated its impressiveness. The supreme feeling of satisfaction is that the whole of the unveiling ceremony was conducted with precision, calm dignity, and with a gathering representative of the island's worthiest sons and daughters.

There were many classes, but in this great act all were as one, bound together in the common bond of proud memory of those who had given their all.

The Assembly

Though the great moment was timed for 4 o'clock every neighbouring street and point of vantage began from 2 o'clock to be an anchorage for pilgrims from all parts, admirably marshalled by the whole of the States Police Force, excepting one Sergeant away on leave, under Inspector E.A. Green. This was also a day unique in the annals of our men in blue, practically all of who had previously worn khaki, as their bemedalled breasts testified, and the occasion was seized to get a pictorial record of the event.

The press of people in Smith-street soon assumed an alarming aspect, but to the credit of all and the police in particular with sundry acts of courtesy here and there and a judicious eye for the little ones in front the utmost good feeling prevailed throughout.

About an hour before being due in their places the Guard of Honour of the 1st Bn. Royal Guernsey Light Infantry, with regimental colour, under the command of Major J.H. Falla, formed up facing the memorial. On the opposite side were the Band of the Royal Guernsey Militia, with the Fifes, Drums and Buglers of the R.G.L.I on the left, and the choirs of the Town Church and St. Pauls U.M. Church massed at the bottom of St James street.

Old Comrades

A strong muster of the British Legion came down to Ann's-place to halt across the top of Hirzel-street, and behind them a large number of the nearest relatives of those commemorated. A contingent of volunteers from the Royal Guernsey Artillery and Engineers also paraded to form a cordon, and our gallant Allies who made Verdun the supreme epic of the war were there also en corps, in unobtrusive homage to Guernsey's own heroes.

One could not help noticing interesting little coteries. Thus, in one window were vis-à-vis Sir Edward Ozanne, K.B.E, ex-Bailiff of Guernsey, and that fine old Guernsey soldier, Colonel C.J. Durand, whose memory of stirring days goes back to the days of the Indian mutiny.

Relatives of our honoured dead were not forgotten in the allocation of a due share of accommodation and they always took precedence to the general public. The front of St Paul's Church was densely packed, chiefly by school children, and wherever possible spectators were there, but the ideal position was from the windows of the Prince of Wales' Hotel, where through the courtesy of Mr J.L. Travers many excellent photographs were obtained.

All Ready

The members of the Royal Court Crown Officers, in their robes, and members of the Memorial Committee occupied seats within the walls of the Memorial, where the guiding hand of the Hon. Treasurer, Mr Gervase F. Peek, ever intent on bringing a big job to a successful issue, was always in evidence.

His Excellency the Lieut.-Governor accompanied by the Bailiff, arrived with his suite from the Court House at 3.45, proceeded by H.M.'s Sheriff, Mr H. J. Blampied and straightaway proceeded to inspect the Guard of honour representative, by the way, of the oldest fighting force of the British Empire.

United Chorus

One noticed that the ceremony had made of the Town Church and St Paul's choir a uniformity in dress, and it was decidedly original to see United Methodists gowned and surpliced. The combined choirs were under the direction of Mr John David. Poignant memories were recalled during the fervent singing of that inspiring hymn "O God, our help in ages past". "Time, like an ever-rolling stream, Bears all its sons away; They fly forgotten...."

Simple Service

The clergy showed their association with the services markedly in the case of our D.S.O. Dean, the Rev. E.H. Jones, and the Rev. H.C. Collins. The latter served as Chaplain in France and was with the 1st R.G.L.I. when the world rang with their feat of arms at Cambrai.

The Lesson was from Wisdom iii., 1-6 read by the Rev E.H. Jones (Primitive Methodist) President of the Guernsey Free Church Council. Prayers suitable to the occasion followed, then Sir Havilland de Sausmarez, Bailiff, who presided, addressed the multitude in an emotional voice which the loud speakers vibrated afar.

Sir Havilland de Sausmarez's address

We are assembled here to-day to perform one of the most solemn acts which this Island has ever seen. We are here to assist at the unveiling of a Memorial to 910 Guernseymen who died in or because of the Great War for King and Country and, let us to-day in particular remember, for our own beloved Island of Guernsey we are here to take part in the dedication of that memorial to the glory of God and in proud and loving remembrance of our dead.

Who are these dead and whence came they in answer to their country's call. By birth or education all were Guernseymen and so I will call them, whatever their parentage. Read the list inscribed on the bronze tablets of this Memorial and you will find many an Island name to testify to the persistence of the old Normal stock which has always been ready to adventure life and limb. You will read English names, many of which from their long association with Guernsey have become household words. These testify to the long union of the Island with England, and the new names, not so familiar, English, Scotch and Irish of lads brought up in Guernsey, tell us of the unity of purpose which animated all King George's subjects in the tragic but great days of 1914-18.

Nor must we omit to notice names of our French allies, bred in Guernsey, who served in their own or the British Army in defence of freedom.

In times of peace Guernsey had sent her sons to distant countries. They came, some singly some with armies of their new homes to share in the battle, and so we find on our memorial the names of men who served in the regiments of Canada, of Australia, of New Zealand. Guernseymen still, whose

names in death are intermingled with those of their brethren who had stayed at home, all answering the same call to put themselves in the ranks of the manhood of the Empire.

So on the roll we find names of men serving at the outbreak of war in the Royal Guernsey Militia whose Artillery formed the Ninth Divisional Ammunition Column, whilst the Infantry supplied two double companies to the Royal Irish Regiment and the Royal Irish Fusiliers.

Then later our own regiment was formed and their battle honours testify to their service, Ypres, Passchendale, Cambrai, Lys, Estaires, Hazebrouck.

And if it is seemly for us to boast of the prowess of all these sons of Guernsey let it be pardoned to us today when we are met to do homage to those of them that fell.

And yet that is not all. Hardly a ship in the Royal Navy was without a Guernseyman in her crew, and others fought in the ranks of many regiments, British and Overseas, on every front, and not without praise. And amongst them were those whose service and death we commemorate today, and whose memory we perpetuate on the monument cut from the quarries of their own island.

So their memorial stands here in this central spot to be seen of all as they wend their ways from country to town, or ply their business in the streets, and as we pass we can ponder on their sacrifice and the cause for which they died.

Twelve years have passed since the great conflict began, eight since it ceased, and yet I would fain hope that each one of these fallen was dear to some one in this assembly and that his loss is personally mourned to-day. But that is not all: whether individually or as a body we owe it to those who died, aye, and to those who fought and suffered and yet returned, so to shape our lives that we may help others as these helped us, and as we may dedicate this memorial to the glory of God and to their memory, may we dedicate ourselves to these service of our fellows that in the peace these our men have helped to win we may each make it easier for others to pass through the difficulties and dangers which surround us, now more and greater than in times past, and as their arms brought peace in the field so with the blessing of God we may help by service and unselfishness to bring peace at home.

Invited by the Bailiff to unveil the memorial His Excellency delivered clearly and deliberately the following address:-

His Excellency's Speech

Before I unveil this Memorial, which the island of Guernsey has erected to the memory of those 910 men who left these shores during the Great War, to uphold the principle of Justice, and who made the supreme sacrifice, I will as you to let me remind you of the saying of two great men; one dead, and the other living, who have put into words what I know many of us must feel.

In 1863 during the American Civil War between the North and South, shortly after the Battle of Gettysburg, A Lincoln journeyed from Washington to take part in the consecration and dedication of the cemetery wherein lay the bodies of those fallen in the battle, and, in a short address which has become historic, he uttered the following words:-

“In a larger sense we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, the brave men have consecrated it far above our power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did. It is for us to be dedicated to the unfinished work which they who fought have thus far so nobly advanced”.

In June this year, Mr Baldwin, in a speech at Harrow, said:-

“There is one question that will hammer at all our hearts for many years to come. We have heard it often. The question the dead themselves might ask ‘Have we died in vain’? The answer we can give will depend upon what superstructure we can build upon the foundations that have been cemented in their blood.”

It seems to me that in these two speeches we have our duty put quite clearly before us.

We shall best dedicate this Memorial by dedicating ourselves to be worthy of our dead. We shall best justify the supreme sacrifice they made if we, in fact, and not in words, take our share in the building of a superstructure worthy of the foundations they have laid.

Unveiled

The General, in full dress, as representative of His Majesty the King in the Bailiwick of Guernsey, then advanced to the base of the memorial, and with Mr G.F. Peek giving the signal His Excellency released the veil the Union Jack dropped gracefully to uncover the stately bronze figure of St. George. The Guard presented arms, the Colour dipped in salute, while the Band played a General Salute.

Dedication by the Dean

Facing the monument the Very Rev. the Dean of Guernsey dedicated it in these words:-

“In the faith of Christ we dedicate this Memorial to the glory of God, and in proud and loving memory of the men of Guernsey who have their lives for God, King and Country, in the Great War. In the names of the Father, and the son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

O Heavenly Father, who by the death of Thy Son Jesus Christ, hast overcome death, and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life, mercifully accept our service and graciously receive at our hands this Memorial of our brethren, who have laid down their lives for us. Grant that we, ever remembering their glorious sacrifice, may so live in this life, that we fail not finally to attain unto life eternal, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Supreme Sacrifice

One minute’s solemn silence was observed by the whole assembly on prearranged signals, and the deeply impressive ceremony continued as the choirs’ intonation of “O Valiant Hearts” sent a peculiar thrill of emotion through the vast throng. The singing was perfect. The hymn “The Supreme Sacrifice” calls for fine understanding of stress and poise, especially in the last line. It was understood supremely and created all the effect within its choral compass.

All thoughts reverted anew to the thousand men of deathless glory in their last long sleep as from the garden of Old Government House Hotel “The Last post” sounded clear and sonorous, followed after a reverent pause by the “Reveille” pealed out in all its beauty by the Buglers of the D.C.L.I.

Tributes from One and All

A chaste wreath of laurels on behalf of the Island of Guernsey was laid at the base of the memorial by Dame Annie de Sausmarez, G.B.E. while a magnificent emblem of remembrance on the part of the British Legion was deposited by the Hon. Lady Sackville-West. One might say that Lady Sackville-West represented indirectly her great country of America. She was so reverent in her presentation of the wreath that it was one of the touching acts of the ceremony.

Lt.-Col T.W.M. de Guerin, K.A.D.C., in bright scarlet full dress of the Royal Guernsey Light Infantry (Militia), placed one from the Royal Guernsey Militia and Baron de Coudenhove, Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur, another on behalf of Les Anciens Combattants Francais.

A striking example of the florist's art was the symbolic gun laid on behalf of the R.G.A. by Lt-Col. R.W. Randall, while the 1st R.G.L.I at present in camp at Beaucamp also added their tribute.

There were many sorrowing but proud mothers who paid a visit of love to the Memorial base; the first of these was Lady Ozanne, with a lovely wreath and a touching tribute to the dead whose memory never fades away.

The wreath of the Royal Engineers Old Comrades Association was placed in position by the youngest member of that Association, in the place of Sir John Capper, who wired that morning, regretting his inability to attend.

On behalf of the Oddfellows, Island of Guernsey District, the C.S., P.G. Martel placed a wreath inscribed "In memory of 80 fallen Brethren".

Among the wreaths from the R.A.O.B. G.C. "In remembrance of the fallen brethren". It was carried from the Grand Lodge offices in a procession of the chief officers of the four minor lodges and the Grand Primo.

As the relatives were about to lay the first of some eighty wreaths the crowd were allowed to surge up close to the memorial, this after the British Legion, headed by a band, marched past before dispersing. So ended a memorable ceremony.

The Committees

The members of the general Committee and the various sub-Committees were as follows:-

General Committee – Sir Havilland de Sausmarez, The Very Rev. The Dean of Guernsey, the Rev. F.W.S. le Lievre, M.A., The Rev. E.L. Frossard, M.A., The Rev. T.G. Hickey, D.D., Mr P.F. Dorey, Mr H. le Cheminant, Mr Ernest Collas, Mr A.A. Veal, Lady E. Chapmell Ozanne, Mrs A.M. Mackay, Mrs G.W. Le Page, Mrs Arthur Dorey, Mr Willian Mauger, M J.E. Dorey, Mr J.C. Sauvary, Mr J. Roussel, Mr J.W. Collas, Mr D.C. Le Pelley, Mr N.Q. Le Pelley, Mr Osmond P. Gallienne, Mr Frederic R. Langlois, Mr Stephen Rabey, Mr A.W. Bell, Mr W.H. Guilbert, Major Roper, Miss P. Carey, Miss E. Collings.
Hon. Tresurer-Secretary: Mr Gervase F. Peek.

Names Sub-Committee – Mr Ernest Collas, Major Roper, Miss P. Carey, Miss E. Collings.

Building Sub-Committee – Mr H.G. Le Cheminant, Mr A.A. Veal, Mr Philemon Dorey, The Hon. Treasurer-Secretary.

Unveiling Sub-Committee – Sir Havilland de Sausmarez, The Hon. Treasurer-Secretary, the Rev. E.L. Frossard, Lady E. Chepmell Ozanne {possibly Chapmell as two different spellings}, Mr H.G. Le Cheminant.

After Thoughts

The Guernsey Militia Brigade Band under bandmaster S.F.J. Small. Played remarkably well, and particularly clean-cut, rhythmic and appealing was Sergt. T. Ozard's cornet rendering of "Land of Hope and Glory".

The international aspect of the gathering was borne out by various phases. Thus the splash of colour of M. Le Baron de Coudenhove, bemedalled, and with his honours; the playing of "La Marseillaise", and the fine wreath with the inscription, "La Colonie Francaise et ses Anciens Combattants".

Three or four Militiamen fainted in the ranks, and one woman utterly collapsed in the great surge of people at the top of Smith Street. It was very hot indeed.

The loud speakers were an innovation and carried the voice to all parts. They rather overdid it in the morning, when the loud speaker in New Street quite embarrasses the preacher in St James' Church. Representations were made by the verger, and the trials ceased during the service.

By the way, it was a great day for Mr H.G. Le Cheminant. He has consistently championed the Smith Street site, and had first the mortification of seeing the States unanimously vote against it, and then the joy of watching them unanimously vote in favour of it.

It can be said that nor serious dissentient voice can be heard about the site, or the Memorial. It has not necessitated the felling nor the lopping of the trees, and the figure of St. George is handsomely framed architecturally by the rising proportions of St. Paul's Church. There are positions in which the figure of the Saint harmonises in fine Association with the Eastern windows of that Church.

At Sundown

In the evening references to the war Memorial unveiling was made in the various Churches, notably at the Salvation Army meeting at Clifton Hall.

At St. James' Church, the Rev A. E. Dalrymple, B.A., made an eloquent discourse on the subject of Endurance – "He endured as seeing Him who is invisible". Mr Dalrymple spoke of those who had lost their lives in the Great War, and described the epitaph of the 12,000 Canadians who withstood the three German Army Corps as perfect – "They endured". Again the French before Verdun achieved everything with their living up to their motto: "They shall not pass".

The organist in his pre-service recital played "Death of Ase" (Grieg), "Lament – A Roll-Call in Flanders" (C. Jenkins) and the Dead March in "Samson" (Handel) as a concluding voluntary.

The distinguished visitors within the enclosure were shown to their seats by Messrs. A.W. Hodder and H.G. Le Cheminant and Mr Gervase F. Peek, the designer of the Memorial and Hon. Treasurer of the Fund, had a busy time, generally acting as D.C. of the civic arrangements.

A perfect evening, with a golden moon lighting all Smith Street, made the precincts of the War Memorial the common meeting place of thousands. The police were on duty, guarding the base.

General Secretary's Thanks

The Secretary-Treasurer of the War Memorial Committee, Mr G.F. Peek, requests us to express his sincere thanks to all who have in any way assisted in bringing the work to a successful conclusion.

Transcribed by Helen Glencross

November 2013