

## Destiny memorial Ramsgate

### Introduction

The 'Destiny' memorial is one of many war memorials in Ramsgate. It is situated in Albion Gardens in a position that overlooks the coastline and is therefore quite exposed. When the memorial was unveiled in 1920 it was to commemorate all those who had contributed to the First World War (rather than only remembering those who had died). This included the contribution of animals. The memorial is therefore an interesting example of the diversity of who and what war memorials can commemorate – often, young people tend to assume memorials remember only those in the armed forces who died, and this memorial reminds us that wider contributions to the war effort can and should also be remembered.



The Destiny memorial in Ramsgate © WMT, 2014

### Design of the memorial

The memorial is a Portland stone statue of a female figure seated on a plinth. The figure was sculpted by Gilbert Bayes RA and adapted from Anakh (Destiny). The statue and plinth are surrounded by a flagged area, at the front of which are three steps leading down to the garden footpath. Set into this flagged area in a circle around the statue's base are coloured mosaic tiles. At the back of the statue is a low Portland stone wall with a curved top. The paved area around the memorial is flanked on each side by flowerbeds.



The memorial statue © WMT, 2014

As well as the main features of the memorial there are, or have in the past been, a number of carvings and inscriptions which add extra interesting detail. The top section of the wall to the back of the memorial is inscribed 'The Great War 1914-1918. To all who served – honour.' The sculptor's name and the date of the unveiling are also carved into a corner of the plinth. Furthermore, faint traces of a relief carving can just about be seen around the sides of the plinth. Originally inscribed on the plinth was the epigraph Destiny and a low-relief frieze representing all branches of the services – land, sea and air – who contributed to the war effort, as the memorial was dedicated to all who had contributed not solely to those who had lost their lives. The depictions also acknowledged the contribution of animals. Apart from faint traces that are just about evident now, these representations can no longer be made out because of the weathering of the stone which has occurred due to the memorial's elevated position facing the coastline.

### The memorial's history and conservation

The memorial was unveiled on 17th December 1920 having been presented to Ramsgate by Dame Janet Stancomb-Wills. The ceremony was attended by the local Mayor, Mr R W Philpott, the Rev E L A Hertslet and the statue's sculptor Gilbert Bayes, as well as various other members of the community. The unveiling was performed by the Mayoress.

The memorial suffered from some minor vandalism very soon after its unveiling, in 1921. This is a particularly interesting example of vandalism to a war memorial given how soon it occurred after the war and the memorial's unveiling. The memorial suffered serious damage in 1968, again due to vandalism. This time the plinth and statue were pushed over, resulting in major breaks to the statue. It was subsequently repaired but this again highlights the fact that vandalism to war memorials is not an

entirely recent problem.

The memorial has also suffered from problems due to its location. It is situated in Albion Gardens, which are in an elevated position in Ramsgate, and the memorial sits at the edge of these gardens directly facing the sea. This exposed position has caused erosion and the relief carving and inscription on the plinth have faded to the point where there is almost no trace of it left, and unfortunately few if any records of what it once looked like still exist.

This highlights the importance of ensuring records of memorials are kept so that the original design and inscriptions can, in cases like this, be maintained during repair works. War memorial designs have historically been individual community choices and it is important that those choices are, as far as possible, respected and that memorials maintain their original design. Accurate records, especially photographs, are therefore essential to making sure these important pieces of heritage are protected.

The memorial was listed in 1988, giving it extra protection. It has also received various grants towards its repair and conservation. In 2004, English Heritage gave a grant of £2300 towards work to clean the memorial, remove old paint and to repair and re-point the memorial and apply a protective Portland stone coloured lime-wash. In June 2004 War Memorials Trust gave £300 towards soft landscaping to lower and grade the soil level of the adjacent flower beds to prevent spillage on to the paving. The restored memorial was unveiled on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2004, 84 years after the original unveiling.

### Teaching suggestions

Information about and photographs of this memorial can be used in sessions with young people about:

- Vandalism to war memorials: War Memorials Trust has produced general and Kent focused lesson plans about vandalism to war memorials and the impact this has on the community around the memorial, and the Destiny memorial provides an interesting example of a memorial affected by this issue, especially in view of the fact that the vandalism occurred some time ago.
- War memorial conservation and recording: the Destiny memorial is a useful example to use because it has lost part of its design due to weathering. Because war memorial designs have always been community decisions, it is important that these decisions are respected and original intentions, where possible, kept. Accurate records of war memorial location, condition, design and inscriptions help this and pupils can help war memorial conservation by gathering information about local ones and adding it to War Memorials Online ([www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk](http://www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk)). Further war memorial projects young people can take part in are suggested at [www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org](http://www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org).
- Who is commemorated on war memorials: the Destiny memorial is an interesting example of the range of groups commemorated on war memorials because the original intention was to highlight all those who contributed to the First World War effort, including animals, rather than only local people who lost their lives.

### Useful links

The following links may provide additional helpful information about this memorial:

War Memorials Online record: [www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk/node/120568](http://www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk/node/120568)

War Memorials Trust's Grants Showcase : [www.warmemorials.org/search-grants/?qID=171](http://www.warmemorials.org/search-grants/?qID=171)

Further information can be found at [www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org/links](http://www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org/links) which may help with lessons on some of the wider issues suggested here.

For further information and resources please contact the Learning Officer at:  
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