

Introduction

This war memorial is located in Dane John Gardens in Canterbury. It is a large and elaborate monument that commemorates officers and men of the Bufs (East Kent Regiment) and the Imperial Yeomanry of East Kent who died during the Second Boer War of 1899-1902. The memorial was unveiled in 1904. The memorial is one of many in Canterbury; for example the Royal East Kent Yeomanry are also commemorated by a smaller monument set within a memorial garden on the High Street, which details the regiment's service during the First World War. Numerous other war memorials can also be found within Canterbury Cathedral and the city's other churches.

The memorial's design and history

The Bufs and East Kent Imperial Yeomanry memorial consists of a tall obelisk rising from a panelled base. Around three sides of this base are the names of the fallen. The remaining face of the memorial supports a pedestal with a figure of a soldier in Boer War campaign dress, standing at ease with slouch hat and bandolier. According to a 1911 publication the soldier is positioned so that he is looking towards South Africa. On this side of the obelisk, immediately behind the soldier figure, is a carved wreath and the other sides have carved regimental badges above the name plaques where the obelisk rises from the memorial base. Other decorative carvings can also be found on the memorial base and at the top of the obelisk.

The memorial is situated in Dane John Gardens near Canterbury city centre. Within the gardens the memorial is located on a stepped base and surrounded by a low fence. A plaque fixed to this fence gives information about the memorial and the date of its restoration.

The memorial was built to commemorate the Second Boer War and was unveiled in 1904 by Field Marshal the Right Honourable Earl Roberts. Following conservation works, which War Memorials Trust helped to fund, the memorial was then rededicated in 1999. The memorial was designed by William Douglas Caroe and the architect was Nathaniel Hitch. The lettering on the memorial was engraved by Eric Gill. The conservation works became necessary due to the material used to construct the memorial; this proved to be unsuitable for the memorial's outdoor location and had started to crumble in places due to weathering. The work to restore the memorial was also part funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Deaths from disease

One of the striking things about this memorial is the number of men who lost their lives because of disease rather than having been killed in action. During the Second Boer War approximately half of all casualties died from disease, particularly typhoid fever, rather than in action or from wounds sustained in action. This is particularly evident on this memorial because of the way the names of the dead are listed – they are separated by battalion and then by how they died; in action or from disease. In many of these lists, which can be seen on the panels on three sides of the memorial, the numbers of men who died from disease far outnumber those killed in



The Bufs and East Kent Yeomanry South Africa memorial, Dane John Gardens, Canterbury © WMT, 2014



Soldier figure on the memorial © WMT, 2014

action. For example, in the 3rd Battalion two men were killed in action whereas 29 died from disease. Images of the name plaques can be found in the accompanying photographs of the memorial.

This is interesting for a number of reasons. First, it highlights interesting information about the Boer War and could be used as the basis for examining conditions in the army during that war, perhaps compared to later conflicts. Death from disease became less common in wars during the 20th century and the reasons for this could be explored.

It also highlights a shift in how deaths were recorded on war memorials before and during the First World War. It was more common to record cause of death in this way prior to the First World War; often memorials from the First World War and later do not make such distinctions between casualties.

Teaching suggestions

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

- War memorial designs: with so many interesting war memorials in Canterbury, studying this one could develop into a wider project comparing different designs, analysing which ones 'work' best and examining what we can learn from different war memorials. Further information about this is given in our Kent focused 'what can we learn from war memorials?' lesson plan.
- A simpler task would be to study the design of this memorial by itself. As an elaborate monument there are many artistic and architectural design features that are of interest, and an examination of these during a site visit would be a good way of introducing younger children in particular to the idea of war memorials.
- War memorial materials: the nature of the conservation works carried out on this particular memorial can provide a way of examining what materials are suitable for creating war memorials in different locations and circumstances. This memorial can therefore be used as a local example for War Memorials Trust's 'What are war memorials made from?' and 'War memorial designs' lessons (www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org/primary/primary-lessons).
- War conditions: the way the names on this memorial are recorded could be a useful stimulus for discussion about conditions for service personnel during the Second Boer War. This could also be compared to the conditions during subsequent wars.

Useful links

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

War Memorials Online record: www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk/node/107532

War Memorials Trust's Grants Showcase : www.warmemorials.org/search-grants/?gID=337

Further information can be found at 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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