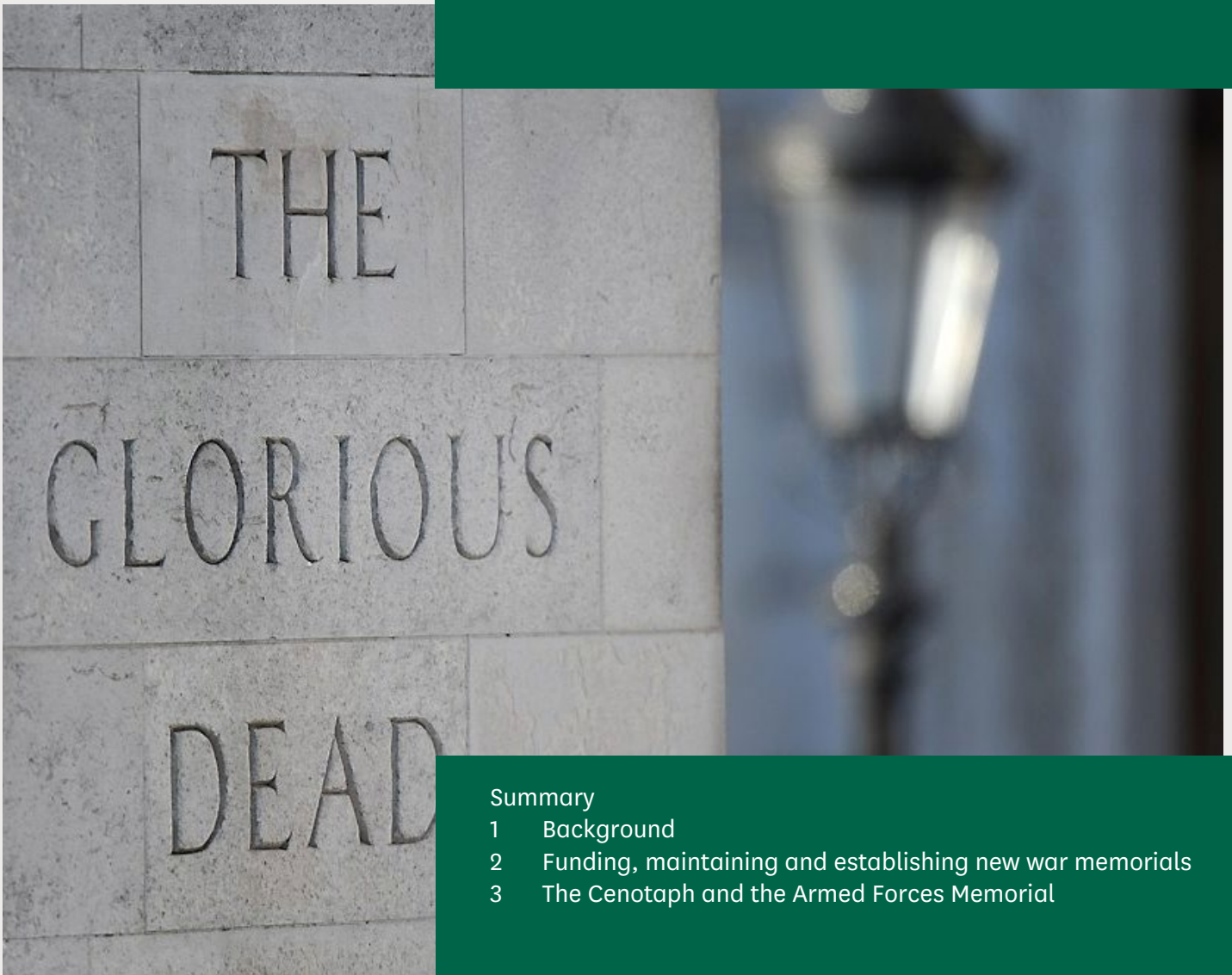


Research Briefing

12 July 2024

By Tim Robinson

Maintaining and funding war memorials



Summary

- 1 Background
- 2 Funding, maintaining and establishing new war memorials
- 3 The Cenotaph and the Armed Forces Memorial

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Summary

There are estimated to be over 100,000 war memorials in the UK, the majority being small affairs funded by local people for local people.

The cost of erecting memorials and associated projects is not usually met from public funds but from private donations or public subscription. Responsibility for the design of a memorial, its maintenance, protection and decision as to what it commemorates rests with the owner, or the organisation in which ownership is vested.

In 2000, the government financially supported the construction of the Armed Forces Memorial, inscribed with the names of all those who have died while on duty since 1948. The government also contributed to the costs of the opening ceremony of the Bomber Command memorial in London in 2012.

In 2014, the government announced a £5 million fund to conserve and protect war memorials as part of the centenary of the First World War. Part of this funding included the creation of a new website dedicated to providing information on [UK war memorials](#).

More recently, the Conservative government announced funding for a Muslim memorial to honour Muslims who died fighting in the two world wars and awarded a grant to fund a memorial to honour those serving in the armed forces from the LGBT community.

Members of Parliament may receive correspondence from constituents asking about the maintenance of memorials in their area or abroad. Constituents may also seek advice as to funding and building a new memorial. This note collates some useful resources for Members' staff on war memorials.

1 Background

There are estimated to be over 100,000 war memorials in the UK,¹ the majority being small affairs established by local people for local people. The War Memorials Trust defines a war memorial as:

Any physical object created, erected or installed to commemorate those involved in or affected by a conflict or war should be considered a war memorial. Memorials to civilians and animals should be included.²

[UK War Memorials](#) is a new, Government funded website providing information on UK war memorials.

The long-standing policy of successive governments is that the cost of erecting memorials and associated projects is not usually met from public funds but from private donations or public subscription. Therefore responsibility for the design of a memorial, its maintenance, protection and decision as to what it commemorates rests with the owner, or the organisation in which ownership is vested.

Exceptions have been made, for example with the establishment of a new Armed Forces Memorial dedicated in 2007. This was created with the purpose of honouring all those who have died in service since 1948 and is located at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire.

The government unveiled a new ‘one-stop shop’ in February 2015 for information on all UK war memorials along with where to go for advice and funding.

The following organisations provide useful and detailed material about memorials and remembrance:

- [War Memorials Trust](#)
- [The Royal British Legion](#)
- [Commonwealth War Graves Commission](#)
- [The Imperial War Museum](#)

The War Memorials Trust has a wide range of leaflets covering [Frequently Asked Questions](#) about memorials which may be of assistance to constituents. This includes help and guidance on adding names to a memorial, funding new memorials, relocating memorials and maintaining them.

¹ [War Memorials Trust](#)

² “[Definition of a war memorial](#)” (PDF), War Memorial Trust (accessed 27 June 2024)

The Imperial War Museum's [War Memorial Register](#) provides a searchable database with information on locations of memorials and lists of names commemorated on memorials.

The government does fund the Commonwealth War Graves Commission which is responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of graves of Commonwealth personnel, and some civilians killed during the First and Second World Wars.

2 Funding, maintaining and establishing new war memorials

The Government is not responsible for either the funding or maintenance of war memorials.

The funding, erection and maintenance of war memorials is not usually met from public funds. Rather, it is met from private donations or public subscription.

This has been the policy of successive governments and was reaffirmed in October 2013:

It has been a long standing policy of successive Governments that the cost of erecting memorials and associated projects is not usually met from public funds, but from private donations or public subscription. Responsibility for the design, location, maintenance, protection and any decision about what a memorial commemorates rests with the owner, or the organisation in which ownership is vested.³

The Ministry of Defence provides the following explanation for why it cannot fund new war memorials:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) does not have responsibility for either the funding or maintenance of war memorials. The MOD receives many requests from individuals, ex-Servicemen's groups and charitable organisations seeking assistance with various projects. It would not be possible to be seen to support one project rather than another. The vast majority have worthy goals and can make an equally compelling case for support. It would be divisive and open to criticism from unsuccessful applicants, if the Government were to pick and choose which projects to support.⁴

The Ministry of Defence does however say that it will provide appropriate representation at any dedication ceremony for new memorials once funding has been raised and the memorial erected.

As outlined above, the government does fund the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

The Government also funded a new website, unveiled in February 2015 by the Imperial War Museum, which provides a 'one stop shop' on UK war memorials.⁵ It was funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport from the fines levied on the banking industry for manipulating the LIBOR rate. Originally designed to create "an authoritative, fully-searchable, and free to access, national register of all recorded First World War memorials in the

³ [HC Deb 16 December 2013 c477W](#)

⁴ Veterans UK (National Archives), [Veterans issues – Remembrance](#) (accessed 24 June 2024)

⁵ Department for Culture, Media and Sport, [Details of £5 million fund to repair, protect, and conserve First World War memorials revealed](#), 1 July 2014

UK”, the [War Memorials Register](#) now includes memorials commemorating members of the armed forces, civilians and animals from all conflicts, and those who died in service.

The War Memorials Trust is a charity working for the protection and conservation of war memorials in the UK. The Trust provides advice and information to anyone as well as running grant schemes for the repair and conservation of war memorials. The War Memorials Trust website contains a wealth of information about memorial conservation, preservation and maintenance including [helpsheets](#) and [FAQ](#) for example on how to add or change the name on a memorial, fundraising and ownership.

2.1 Sources of funds and grants

The War Memorials Trust works to protect and conserve war memorials in the UK. It administers a number of different grant schemes.

The War Memorials Trust also provides a guide to [Fundraising \(PDF\)](#) as well as a range of [advice](#) on conservation, preservation and maintenance. In addition, the following list provide further information on sources of funding:

- The Department for Culture, Media and Sport provides a [Memorial Grant Scheme](#).
- [English Heritage](#)
- The [Heritage Lottery Fund](#) provides grants and advice on further sources of funding.

2.1 Maintenance of memorials: legislation

The Veterans UK website provides the following explanation of the responsibilities of local authorities and memorials:

A large number of war memorials which had been erected by private subscription were subsequently handed over to parish councils, urban councils and boroughs to maintain. In order to ensure that every form of local council had the ability to raise appropriate funds to preserve these war memorials, the War Memorials (Local Authorities' Powers) Act 1923 was passed. Under the terms of this Act, as amended by section 133 of the Local Government Act 1948, the Parish Councils Act 1957 and the Local Government Act 1972, responsibility for the overall control of war memorials was vested with local authorities, who were empowered to incur reasonable expenditure for the maintenance, repair and protection of war memorials within their control. The Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 and the Local Government and Planning (Scotland) Act 1982 also apply for war memorials in Scotland. Those powers also extend to the alteration of a memorial to enable the fallen of any subsequent war to that for which it was originally intended, to be commemorated.

Whilst the above Acts empowered local authorities to care for war memorials, they did not compel them to do so. Responsibility for the provisions of the War Memorials (Local Authorities' Powers) Act 1923 rests with the Home Office.

Responsibility for the maintenance, repair and protection of individual war memorials lies with the owner, or the body in which ownership is vested.⁶

The exact wording of these Acts is provided in a War Memorials Trust factsheet: [Parliamentary Acts related to war memorials \(PDF\)](#).

The War Memorials Trust has also compiled a list of ‘War Memorials Officers’ within local authorities who are responsible for memorials (the Trust says they are rarely called this as memorials is just one part of their job, but the Trust uses the phrase to identify the person who deals with war memorials). A list is provided on the Trust’s website: [Your Local Planning Authority](#).

The Trust also has a guide on [establishing ownership](#) (PDF) of a memorial.

2.2 New memorials

As outlined above, the government, except on rare occasions, does not provide public funds for new memorials, whilst The War Memorials Trust focuses its attention on the conservation and repair of existing war memorials. The War Memorials Trust does however, provide a guide for those contemplating erecting a new memorial - [New War Memorials \(PDF\)](#)- and also useful guides on [Fundraising \(PDF\)](#) and [Planning in England and Wales \(PDF\)](#). Further guides can be found on its [website](#).

Muslim memorial

On the 6 March 2024, then Chancellor, Jeremy Hunt announced £1 million of funding for a memorial at the National Arboretum to honour Muslims that died in the two world wars. The Chancellor said:

As we mourn the tragic loss of life in Israel and Gaza, the Prime Minister reminded us last week of the need to fight extremism and heal divisions, so I start today by remembering the Muslims who died in two world wars in the service of freedom and democracy. We need a memorial to honour them, so following representations from my right hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Sir Sajid Javid) and others, I have decided to allocate £1 million towards the cost of building one. Whatever your faith, colour or class, this country will never forget the sacrifices made for our future.⁷

The National Memorial Arboretum has pledged to reinforce its commitment to being an open and inclusive environment, freely open to all. The NMA website states:

Among the almost 400 memorials at the Arboretum are tributes to Sikh soldiers who served during the First World War, members of the Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen and Women, and those who work in the Royal Army

⁶ Veterans UK website (National Archives) [Veterans issues – remembrance](#) (accessed 24 June 2024)

⁷ [HC Deb 6 March 2024 c837](#)

Chaplains Department. In recent years there have been many expressions of interest from many diverse groups and communities interested in sponsoring a memorial at the site, including people wishing to recognise the contribution of Armed Forces personnel from the Caribbean and those of Muslim faith.⁸

LGBT memorial

In April 2024, the Government awarded the LGBT+ military charity, Fighting with Pride a grant of £350,000 to commemorate all those in the LGBT+ community who served in the UK armed services, including those who were affected by the previous ban on LGBT+ people serving.⁹ The memorial was one of a number of recommendations from the [LGBT Veterans Independent Review \(PDF\)](#) led by Lord Etherton. The review stated:

There should be a public memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum to all LGBT people who have served and continue to serve in the military, possibly including a specific reference to those who suffered the consequences of the Ban on serving homosexuals prior to January 2000. The unveiling or dedication should be at a ceremony to which are invited, among others, all LGBT veterans who served under, and suffered from, the Ban.¹⁰

⁸ National Memorial Arboretum, [Arboretum pledges to remove barriers to participation in remembrance](#) (accessed 24 June 2024)

⁹ Fighting with Pride, "[LGBT Charity Fighting With Pride to lead creation of LGBT Armed Forces Community Memorial](#)", 25 April 2024

¹⁰ LGBT Veterans Independent Review, [Recommendations, Memorialisation R17](#), May 2023

3 The Cenotaph and the Armed Forces Memorial

The Cenotaph is the UK's primary national war memorial and is the focus of Remembrance Day events each November. The names of those who have died since the end of World War Two, while on duty, are inscribed upon the Armed Forces Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum.

3.1 The Cenotaph

The Cenotaph, situated on Whitehall in London, is the UK's primary national war memorial. It is the focus of Remembrance Day events, held on Remembrance Sunday, the closest Sunday to 11 November (Armistice Day) each year.

The Cenotaph began as a temporary structure erected for a parade marking the end of the First World War, but popular opinion called for a permanent structure. Unusually, the cost of its erection was met by funds voted for by Parliament.

The Cenotaph commemorates those who lost their lives in the First and Second World Wars. It is inscribed "The Glorious Dead" and originally had the dates 1914 and 1919 on it. In 1980 the service of remembrance extended this to include the commemoration of those killed in subsequent conflicts. It now includes the dates 1939 and 1945.

However, the cenotaph does not commemorate Service personnel who have lost their lives in situations other than in conflict nor does it list the names of those who have died.

3.2 The Armed Forces Memorial

The Armed Forces Memorial is based at the [National Memorial Arboretum](#) in Staffordshire. It honours those members of the Armed Forces (Regular and Reserve) who were killed on duty while performing functions attributable to the special circumstances and requirements of the armed forces (for example, in training or an exercise), or as a result of terrorist action, and those who died while deployed on designated operations, since the end of World War Two. Members of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary and the Merchant Navy

who died in conflict zones while in direct support of the armed forces are also included.

The need for an Armed Forces Memorial arose because of a government decision in 2000 that there was insufficient recognition of the members of the armed forces killed on duty since the Second World War. The Armed Forces Memorial Trust, an independent registered charity, was established to oversee the design and construction of the memorial. The Trustees of the Armed Forces Memorial Trust decide who to include on the Memorial.

The Memorial was completed in 2007. Funding came from public donations, sale of the Trafalgar coin and a lottery grant. In a departure from a longstanding policy on the funding of war memorials, the costs of constructing the memorial were also underwritten by the Ministry of Defence.

Over [16,000 individuals](#) have been inscribed on its stone walls and there is space for an additional 15,000 names. The start date is 1 January 1948, which follows on directly from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission which commemorates those who died up to 31 December 1947.

More information about the Armed Forces Memorial, including a full list of the operations undertaken by the Armed Forces, is available on the [Armed Forces Memorial](#) section of the National Memorial Arboretum website. A searchable roll of honour can be found on the [gov.uk website](#).

The [memorial constructed at Camp Bastion](#) in Afghanistan inscribed with the names of all those who died on operations in Afghanistan was repatriated back to the National Memorial Arboretum in 2014 and was unveiled by Prince Harry in June 2015.

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