

Evaluating the site and location of a war memorial



War Memorials Trust

The Trust is sometimes contacted about freestanding war memorials which are in locations that are not fully accessible or difficult in some way. The aim of this helpsheet is to provide some suggestions to tackle these difficulties.

The Trust believes that the relocation of a freestanding memorial should be considered only as last resort after other options have been fully explored. The first reason for this is that damage can be caused by taking apart the structure and in some cases, the memorials have suffered subsequent structural problems because they were not reconstructed properly. The second reason is that some war memorial locations were chosen for specific reasons by those that erected them and the Trust believes that choice should be respected.

Not enough space to hold services/ next to a busy road

If a memorial was built 90 years ago, the layout around it will probably have changed. It may be that instead of a being in the middle of a village green, the memorial is now surrounded by a busy road or a narrow pavement. These may present difficulties when trying to hold services at the memorial as people gather around or lay wreaths.

If this is the case, it is worth asking if the police/council can temporarily close the road for services. It may be that a service can be held nearby at another open space and then attendees parade past the memorial to pay their respects.

Ground is muddy or slippery

Some memorials are located on grass with no hard landscaping for people to stand on. Rain can make such areas slippery or dangerous. It is worth considering whether adding gravel or paving the area would create a safer environment.

No disabled access

Some memorials are not accessible to elderly or disabled people for a variety of reasons and it could be beneficial to modify the hard landscaping. You could add a handrail to a steep set of stairs, drop pavement kerbs and add a ramp. If the war memorial is listed, you may need listed building consent from the local planning authority to carry out the works. Contact your local authority Conservation Officer for further advice.

Relocation

If you have tried these suggestions and the memorial remains inaccessible, the Trust can offer advice about relocation. Please see the helpsheet Relocation of war memorials.

War Memorials Trust 42a Buckingham Palace Road London SW1W 0RE

Telephone: 020 7233 7356/ 0300 123 0764 Fax: 020 7834 0202/ 0300 123 0765

Email: conservation@warmemorials.org Website: www.warmemorials.org

Registered Charity Commission Number: 1062255

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The Trust cannot support relocation if the war memorial is:

- Not where you would like it to be – Memorial sites were chosen for a reason by communities of the time and have important historical associations which should be respected. It may be that the location is not in a town centre or inconvenient, but that does not justify relocation.
- Accessible but only by appointment – this is quite common with some company memorials and where churches or other buildings are not open all the time.

The Trust feels that, as long as access can be organised for remembrance services, research or visits, appointments are acceptable.

Grants

Through the Small Grants Scheme, War Memorials Trust can help fund some modifications to war memorials where the location prevents the memorial fulfilling its commemorative purpose on the grounds of health and safety or to comply with disability legislation. Details of any concern must be demonstrated alongside evidence of action already taken to overcome the problem. To make an enquiry about whether your plans are eligible, please download the 'Expression of interest' form at www.warmemorials.org/grants or request the form by contacting the Conservation Team on 0207 233 7356 / 0300 123 0764 or conservation@warmemorials.org.

Please note that this helpsheet is intended to offer informal advice and is a distillation of experience. The information contained in this helpsheet is not exhaustive and other sources of information are available.