



ADVICE ON MAINTENANCE OF WAR MEMORIALS

**This leaflet can help you to preserve a war
memorial and identify repair needs.**

Introduction

War memorials are a unique aspect of our national heritage. They stand at the heart of almost every community and it is estimated that there are more than 70,000 throughout the country. Because they are such familiar features of our towns and villages, war memorials are often taken for granted and the condition of many of them has deteriorated as a result of neglect and weathering. Many of the problems currently facing war memorials can be avoided by a careful and regular maintenance programme.

This publication provides guidance on the maintenance of war memorials for custodians, local authorities and local people interested in the preservation of this unique legacy.



Preservation through statutory protection

Freestanding war memorials are best preserved when statutory protection is in place. This can be achieved through the listing of war memorials, i.e. through inclusion in the statutory record of structures deemed to be of national, architectural and historical importance. Listing gives a memorial statutory protection against unauthorised demolition, alteration or extension. It is an integral part of the planning system for managing changes to our historic environment.

For more information on how to get a war memorial considered for listing, contact the Conservation Officer at the War Memorials Trust (see page 7).

A war memorial may enjoy other forms of statutory protection, for example by being a scheduled monument or within a conservation area.

Conservation maintenance plan

A Conservation Maintenance Plan is a tool to help custodians in the effective upkeep of war memorials. A Conservation Maintenance Plan will help preserve war memorials and identify, at an early stage, repair needs.

An appropriate Conservation Maintenance Plan is central in preventing the decay of our war memorial heritage.

1 Record

The first step in the correct maintenance of a war memorial is to accurately record its appearance and describe its condition. This should consist of written and photographic evidence showing all features of the war memorial with particular attention being given to recording inscriptions and names commemorated.

The key factors affecting the war memorial need to be identified. These should include responsibility over the site and the war memorial and statutory protections and their implications for the memorial. If you have any details on the war memorial's history (e.g. date of construction and dedication, designer, sculptor or builder), original photographs and records (e.g. original newspaper cuttings), these should be kept with the maintenance plan for future reference, along with documents relating to previous maintenance and repair work.

It will also be useful to include details of important dates (e.g. Remembrance Day) where the local community is likely to access the memorial and relevant contacts (e.g. Royal British Legion's local branch, the Conservation Officer at your Local Authority and the War Memorials Trust).



2 Monitor

The war memorial should be inspected regularly, at least once a year. You may wish to employ a suitable contractor to do this for you, as they will be able to assess the memorial's condition and advise on a specific programme of works.

The following list is devised to assist in the monitoring process:

Condition of the structure:

- Is there any physical or structural damage?
- Is the material badly weathered?
- Are any features missing?
- Does the memorial need cleaning?

Inscriptions and names:

- Are they legible?
- Are any letters missing?
- Are the letters badly weathered?
- Are names/plaques missing or damaged?

Access:

- Is the memorial accessible to the public?
- Is disabled access provided?
- Does the paving need cleaning?
- Does the paving need repairing?
- Does the paving or surrounding area need weeding?

Surroundings:

- Is the site generally well maintained?
- Are there any damaged or dangerous structures or trees in the vicinity?

Security:

- Has the war memorial been vandalised?
- Have any features been damaged or stolen?
- Is there a need to maintain or repair gates, fences and boundary walls?
- Is the site secure?

If you identify any problems, you should arrange for a conservator or suitable contractor to carry out any necessary repairs before the condition of the war memorial deteriorates further. This will prove cost effective in the long term as it may reduce the need for costly remedial works in the future.



3 Maintain

Any maintenance works should be performed by a properly trained and appropriately monitored person. You may wish to employ a suitable contractor to do this for you.

Most war memorials are made of stone with bronze, brass, iron and wood being common additions. Inscriptions may be either incised or attached to the surface, and may be gilded, painted or filled with lead. The presence of all these materials show the complexity of war memorials and maintenance works must take this into consideration.

The following list provides some general advice on maintenance treatments which should (and should not) be followed:

Stone:

Do wash with water and soft bristle brushes but no more than once a year

Don't use copper, brass, bronze or ferrous (iron or steel) brushes

Don't use chemicals, bleach or detergents

Don't use abrasive methods (this includes sandblasting or refacing stonework)

Don't use high-pressure water jets

Don't use masonry paints



Bronze:

Do use wooden scrapers to remove bird droppings

Do clean with water (not under pressure) and a mild detergent using a lint-free cloth or natural bristle brush, but no more than once a year

Do arrange for a bronze specialist/ conservator to inspect the bronze and apply microcrystalline wax every 2-3 years

Don't use chemical products (especially acid and alkali-based products and ammonia solutions)

Don't use copper, brass bronze or ferrous brushes

Don't use paints

Don't use abrasive methods



Iron:

Do inspect joints and areas of flaking paintwork as the build up of water on iron structures can be detrimental as it encourages corrosion

Don't use paints to match original as re-painting should only be performed by a qualified professional

Joints:

Do check if joints are open and arrange to have re-pointing carried out by a suitably experienced professional

Don't re-point without professional help. The wrong choice of mortar can lead to damage

Organic growths:

Do monitor the extent of organic growth. If you find unsightly algal slimes which cover inscriptions contact a qualified professional to clean the surface

Do remove/control excessive vegetation. However, most lichens and mosses can be left on memorials provided they do not obscure inscriptions and carved details

Don't apply chemical/biocide products on the surface

Don't plant trees too near the memorial

Don't place flower pots directly on the base of the memorial

4 Repair

A Conservation Maintenance Plan should help in identifying key problems. However, professional specialist advice should always be sought before proceeding with repairs. Relevant expertise must be employed to correctly assess the memorial's condition and establish appropriate conservation solutions. Repairs must be tailored to each war memorial, as inappropriate treatments will not only prove ineffective but may also cause irreversible damage.

War Memorials Trust can advise you on conservation works and help you find a conservator or a suitable contractor to carry out repair works. Contact the Conservation Officer at War Memorials Trust for more information.

The contact details are:

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