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Department for  
Constitutional Affairs  
Justice, rights and democracy



## War Memorials in England and Wales Guidance for Custodians



## Definitions

- Ownership of a war memorial may vary according to circumstances. Some memorials may remain in the ownership of the person, community, association, regiment or other body that erected them, or the legal successors of that person or body. In practice, however, maintenance may be carried out by another body. For simplicity, this guidance refers to the **custodian**, which is the individual or organisation that maintains a war memorial.
- Any physical object erected or dedicated to commemorate those killed as a result of armed conflict should be regarded as a **war memorial**. War memorials to those who served and returned alive as well as civilian casualties and animals should also be included. Most, but not all war memorials, relate to the First and Second World Wars.

Front cover photograph:

War Memorial, Castle Grounds, Clitheroe.

Courtesy of Clitheroe the Future ([www.clitheroethefuture.co.uk](http://www.clitheroethefuture.co.uk))

### Introduction

There are around 70,000 war memorials in the United Kingdom. Many are publicly recognised and in a good state of repair, but concern has been expressed in recent years that a lack of awareness and regard for certain war memorials has resulted in their neglect, inappropriate disposal or destruction.

Although war memorials in public places may suffer in this way, it is those which are on or in private property, not publicly accessible and not recorded, which are most likely to be lost through oversight or ignorance.

War memorials reflect not just past conflicts but also the social context in which the events and participants are remembered and so should be preserved for the benefit of future generations.

This booklet provides guidance for the many individuals and private or public organisations who have responsibility for this unique part of our national heritage.

It has been compiled in collaboration with many relevant interest groups and representative organisations from the private and public sector, including The War Memorials Trust and the UK National Inventory of War Memorials. We are grateful for their support.

We hope you find this guidance useful.

## Identification and recording

War memorials take a wide variety of forms. Most consist of an inscribed free-standing or wall-mounted commemorative structure made of stone, metal or wood. But wartime casualties have also been commemorated in many other ways such as by books, windows, lychgates, gardens and complete buildings such as community halls, hospitals, chapels and bridges.

Many types of church fittings such as altars, screens, clocks, lecterns, pulpits, reredoses, organs etc. may also be war memorials. The purpose and function of war memorials are not always recorded or displayed, so they may no longer be recognised for what they are.

To ensure that war memorials are recognised as such and cared for in the future, custodian organisations should search their own written or photographic records, together with publicly accessible records (such as local history libraries and records offices) and the database of the UK National Inventory of War Memorials (UKNIWM)<sup>1</sup> to find out whether there are any war memorials in or around their buildings or land.

If there is no pre-existing record, those responsible should keep a record of any war memorials in the custody of their organisation, and record details in a consistent fashion, including:

- location
- brief description
- photographs showing the war memorial and its location
- (where known) the war, campaign, action or unit commemorated
- the date of erection and/or dedication
- transcript of inscriptions and names so that a permanent record exists in case of future damage or loss
- (where known) the designer/ maker/ craftsperson who created the war memorial.

The UK National Inventory of War Memorials can help with the identification and recording of memorials. Custodians are recommended to keep details of any war memorials, which are not already listed on the UKNIWM database on publicly accessible records and to inform the UKNIWM.

<sup>1</sup> Since 1989 the UK National Inventory of War Memorials (based at the Imperial War Museum) has undertaken the systematic recording of the details of war memorials. To date, it has been able to record about 60,000.

### Condition survey

When the war memorials in an organisation's care have been identified and recorded, steps should be taken to ensure that they are included in the organisation's property management plan. Custodians should conduct a survey of the war memorials in their care to identify their physical condition and vulnerability to damage, in order to assess the need for:

- protecting the war memorials from deterioration (especially where outdoors)
- conserving, repairing or cleaning them
- preserving or enhancing the legibility of their inscriptions
- safeguarding them from accidental damage, vandalism or theft.

Custodians should seek the assistance of architects, conservators, stone masons or other suitably experienced or qualified people.

The War Memorials Trust<sup>2</sup> can advise custodians on conservation works and help them source suitable conservators or contractors to carry out cleaning or repair works. Cleaning war memorials should be avoided unless specialist advice has been obtained.

### Maintenance

Once the war memorials in their care have been identified, recorded and surveyed, and any immediate action taken to preserve, protect and repair them, custodians should introduce an annual inspection programme to ensure their effective upkeep and identify repair needs at an early stage and so help avoid the need for major repairs.

Maintenance inspections should normally be carried out once a year (in practice, many memorials will be the focus of attention on Remembrance Sunday).

<sup>2</sup> The War Memorials Trust is a registered charity dedicated to the conservation and protection of all UK war memorials. It works to promote the importance and relevance of war memorials to ensure they become an appreciated and understood part of our cultural heritage. The War Memorials Trust provides advisory and advocacy services, financial assistance for conservation projects and is the key referral point for all issues regarding war memorials.

## Removal and relocation

It is not always possible or appropriate to keep a war memorial in the place in which it was erected (or is now located); for instance, if the ownership of buildings and land in which it is situated changes, or the memorial needs to undergo major structural or other alterations. In these exceptional circumstances, custodians may need to consider whether the war memorial could be moved.

If the war memorial is primarily associated with a particular organisation, it may be appropriate to relocate the war memorial elsewhere within that organisation's building or land, even if it will result in removal from its original site.

If a war memorial has a particular association with a geographical area or community which would be lost if it were removed elsewhere, the custodian should consider offering the war memorial to be relocated with another local organisation (or into the care of the local authority).

If it is not practical or feasible to relocate the war memorial and it is not possible for it to remain in its current location, the custodian may need to consider removing the memorial completely – but such action should be considered only as a matter of last resort.

Where it is proposed to relocate or dispose of the war memorial to a new owner or location, custodians should give at least six weeks' notice to The War Memorials Trust, who may be able to help in finding a suitable new location if required.

Once a war memorial has been relocated, custodians should advise the UK National Inventory of War Memorials and produce a new up-to-date record of the war memorial and establish who has responsibility for its future upkeep.

### Statutory protection

Statutory protection is given to those war memorials which are, or form part of, a listed building, scheduled monument or conservation area, so any work to those memorials may need consent.

Custodians should obtain information from the local planning authority on whether a structure is listed or scheduled. The local authority will be able to advise on the need for listed building consent; in the case of a scheduled monument, application should be made to the local office of English Heritage or Cadw (the Welsh Assembly Government's historic environment service) in Wales.

The Church of England, the Church in Wales and churches of other denominations have their own procedures relating to churches, including war memorials, which govern matters such as authority for alterations, recording of contents etc.

War memorials which are located in Church of England or Church in Wales churches or churchyards are subject to the faculty jurisdiction system, which ensures that churches, their contents and churchyards are properly cared for. A faculty (permission from the Church authorities) is required for works or other changes.

The Church of England, the Church in Wales and some other denominations are generally exempt from the need for listed building consent, but removal or alteration of a war memorial from a churchyard which is listed in its own right will require Listed Building Consent in addition to any other consent. Such war memorials may remain in the ownership of the person, community, association, regiment or other body that erected them, or the heirs or legal successors of that person or body.

## Funding

Originally, responsibility for maintaining, preserving and repairing war memorials would have been expected to fall on whichever individual or organisation established the war memorial. However, responsibility may be difficult to trace or may since have moved on to another organisation or individual, so custodians may choose to meet the maintenance or repair costs themselves. In many cases, these can be expected to be modest.

Custodians are also recommended to consult their local authority. Under the War Memorials (Local Authorities' Powers) Act 1923 and its later amendments, local authorities have the power, though not a duty to maintain, repair and protect war memorials in their district.

Parochial Church Councils have the power, subject to faculty permission, to repair any war memorial in a church or churchyard but may look to others, such as the owners of the war memorial or the local authority, to assume responsibility for the memorial's upkeep.

Grants may be available to assist with costs, and custodians should consult The War Memorials Trust for funding advice. In partnership with English Heritage, the Trust provides grants for the repair and conservation of war memorials in England, and for projects in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

In Wales, Cadw can provide grants for the repair of the historic fabric of memorials, which are judged to be outstanding or for works to those situated within conservation areas, where the works proposed would significantly enhance the appearance of the conservation area in question.

Funding is also available from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport for the amount of VAT incurred by charities and religious groups exempted from registering as charities for the construction, renovation and maintenance of eligible memorials. Details of the scheme can be found at the website [www.memorialgrant.org.uk](http://www.memorialgrant.org.uk).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission has a remit to look after war graves, both at home and abroad, but their responsibilities do not extend to war memorials, unless they are the Commission's own war memorials and cared for by them.

### Access

Custodians of war memorials which are not currently accessible to the public are recommended to consider implementing appropriate access arrangements. These should be convenient to both them and any member of the public who may have an interest in the war memorial.

### Omissions or errors on war memorials

War memorials are an important historical record and, as such, their inscriptions should be accurate. When errors are known to have occurred, custodians may choose to implement measures to rectify this.

It is common for war memorials to include the names of those who fell not only in the two world wars, but in subsequent conflicts. Custodians may therefore include on the memorial additional names. Decisions on such matters are made by the memorial owner, subject to the need for external permission, for instance in the form of Listed Building Consent or a faculty in the case of the Church, where necessary.

Under the War Memorials (Local Authorities' Powers) Act 1923, local authorities also have the power, though not a duty, to correct errors in a war memorial's inscription and to add new names to make a war memorial serve for wars or conflicts subsequent to that for which it was erected. The addition of names to memorials can, however, be controversial and owners are recommended to advertise the intention to add an additional name and to receive representations before coming to a final decision. Consideration should also be given to ensure that any additions do not cause damage to the existing fabric of the memorial.

The War Memorials Trust provides grants to assist with the addition of new names and the correction of errors on war memorials.

## Useful contacts

### **The War Memorials Trust**

4 Lower Belgrave Street

London SW1W 0LA

T: 020 7881 0862

F: 020 7259 0296

E: [info@warmemorials.org](mailto:info@warmemorials.org)

[www.warmemorials.org](http://www.warmemorials.org)

### **UK National Inventory of War Memorials**

Imperial War Museum

Lambeth Road

London SE1 6HZ

T: 020 7207 9863 / 9851

E: [memorials@iwm.org.uk](mailto:memorials@iwm.org.uk)

[www.ukniwm.org.uk](http://www.ukniwm.org.uk)

### **Cadw**

Welsh Assembly Government

Plas Carew

Unit 5/7 Cefn Coed

Parc Nantgarw

Cardiff

CF15 7QQ

T: 01443 33 6000

F: 01443 33 6001

E: [cadw@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:cadw@wales.gsi.gov.uk)

[www.cadw.wales.gov.uk](http://www.cadw.wales.gov.uk)

This guidance is also published at: [www.dca.gov.uk/corbur/burifr.htm](http://www.dca.gov.uk/corbur/burifr.htm)

To order more free copies of this booklet or alternative formats, contact:  
Burials Team, DCA, tel 0207 210 0036 or email: [coroners@dca.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:coroners@dca.gsi.gov.uk)

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