

News statement

Killamarsh war memorials and a misspelt name



War Memorials Trust

War Memorials Trust is aware of the issues around the misspelling of a name and has provided advice/comment to different parties.

Our records show a local group contacted us nearly a decade ago seeking advice on the creation of a new war memorial www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk/memorial/215273. We tried to contact them at the time to discuss this but received no response.

Had we been able to advise we would have highlighted that there is an original memorial at the church, dedicated on 7th June 1919, www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk/memorial/248922. Therefore, we would have questioned why a new one was sought. From the original correspondence it seems that the group felt the stained glass window did not match their expectations of what a memorial should be, although stained glass windows account for around 4% of the nation's war memorials.

War Memorials Trust would always express caution about creating new war memorials when existing ones are already established and were chosen by the contemporary family and friends of the fallen. We are particularly cautious because the charity exists to help repair and conserve war memorials. These are often vulnerable because after World War I communities did not think about 'ownership' or 'maintenance' as they could not imagine a time when the local community would not ensure these were well-cared for. Rarely were endowments created or formal ownership established. Sadly, often today new war memorials are erected with the same omissions – they can be created but no clear ownership nor endowment is provided to protect them in the long-term or to manage issues such as subsequent errors being identified.

If the parish council did not participate in the new war memorial project they may not take responsibility for it, as it would be expected to remain with the group that created it unless formal arrangements have been made. It may be the case that the parish council retains an involvement with the original memorial. Whilst the 1923 Local Authorities Powers Act enables local authorities such as a parish council to maintain war memorials whether vested in them or not, it does not oblige them to.

Unfortunately, the War Memorials Online record only states that there is a list of names inside the church without providing a list or photograph of these. In this case War Memorials Trust would encourage a cross-check of these names to identify if the misspelling is consistent i.e. if the list was copied or a new list was used. This would help understand the process used by the group that erected the new war memorial.

In terms of addressing the misspelt name, ideally efforts should be made to identify the group that created the war memorial and confirm what arrangements they put in place for the long-term maintenance of the memorial. If ownership can be identified through that process then addressing the correction can be discussed with them. War Memorials Trust understands that, under their charitable guidelines the Royal British Legion is unable to spend its funds on war memorials, so it would seem unlikely that they would be a custodian. Members of the group who created the war memorial may have been involved with the RBL which may be why people perceive them as potential custodians.

War Memorials Trust would not support the addition of the name spelt correctly at the bottom as that would duplicate the individual being remembered.