

344-03



Design and Access Statement

War memorial inscription plaques

for:
PCC of All Hallows' Church, Gospel Oak
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1 INTRODUCTION

This Design and Access Statement concerns the application for Planning Consent by the PCC of All Hallows, Gospel Oak to install three inscribed Portland stone memorial plaques to commemorate the fallen in World War 1 listed on the base of the existing free-standing memorial, that have become too weathered to the legible

It refers to the separate Statement of Significance and Statement of Need documents, which should be read alongside to avoid duplication of information. Matters of accessibility are noted within each section.

1.1 The overall requirements

The Statement of Significance gives the historical background and significance of the church, including particular information about the existing war memorial, and our assessment of the impact of the proposals on the building and setting.

The Statement of Need details the brief for the proposals, to which this Design & Access Statement illustrates the design response.

2 THE DESIGN

2.1 Location

The existing war memorial is on the northwest corner of the church site at the junction of Savernake Road and Shirlock Road.

The church building stands in stark contrast to the surrounding residential streets, and is remote from main traffic routes. The footbridge from Parliament Hill Fields over the railway line to Savernake Road, makes the building a major landmark for people walking between the network of streets and the Heath.



From Open StreetMap

For many years, this corner of the site was separated from the surrounding pavements by a brick step and a low chain railing spanning between timber posts. In 2017, as part of the "South Court" project that improved access and amenities to the building, the paving and planting around the memorial were improved, making the space much more attractive and fully accessible, highlighting the memorial as a significant element within a more open public domain. The area has since become more attractive to people in the immediate vicinity since the closure of Savernake Road to motor traffic at the intersection with the entrance to Parliament Hill Fields



Pre-and Post-2017 (from Google Streetview)

The names of the fallen were inscribed on three sides of the stone base of the crucifix structure which have weathered away. The fourth side, facing the road intersection, has lettering that remains intact.



The centenary of the armistice raised interest in war memorials generally, giving rise to the project as described in the Statement of Need to reinstate the memorial at All Hallows to a state in which the names of the fallen could once more be read, and this area to be included in future remembrance services. This concerns three tablets to replace the illegible names on three sides of the memorial, all commemorating World War 1. There is no intention to add further phases.

2.2 Design Rationale

Three methods of commemorating the names were identified:

- a) Restoration of the inscriptions on the existing memorial base
- b) Creation of new inscriptions or script that would be applied to the existing base
- c) Creation of new inscriptions or script that could be placed in close proximity to the existing structure.

The existing inscriptions are highly weathered, but the weathered condition of the stone surface would make it too difficult to achieve a high standard of lettering that would be of suitable quality and longevity.

The creation of new script to add to the memorial could be achieved in three ways:

- i. Carving new stone tablets, cutting away the requisite depth on the existing base and setting them in.
- ii. Carving new stone tablets and mounting them over the face of the existing base, without destroying the original material
- iii. Creating other forms of inscriptions on thinner materials, that could be fixed to the surface of the memorial without altering its proportions, such as metal sheeting or glass.

The design rationale, and wish of the applicant ruled out the third option, there being an overwhelming desire to have the names carved in relief into stone that matches the same shape and size of the existing inscriptions. Applied sheet of glass panels would also be vulnerable to damage.

The question of setting new stone inscriptions onto the base was considered, however we interpreted the written guidance from the War Memorials Trust and general conservation principals to steer strongly away from altering or destroying the existing surfaces in for the sake of the setting-in of new material

In considering the option of applying the new inscriptions over the existing surface, the new stones need to have a depth of 50mm or more, and we judge that the application of them to three of the four sides of the base would be detrimental to its proportions. In addition to creating an unbalanced appearance, it would also interfere with the elegantly finished finial shapes at the top of the four corners and the flared profile at the bottom.. The method of attachment of new stones would also be challenging.

A key matter was also a generous donation being received specifically for the names to be carved in stone, what has been carried out, and the tablets are currently in storage, with occasional display as loose items within the church.

These considerations concluded in the proposal for erecting new stones onto the wall of the church immediately behind the memorial.

2.3 The design

2.3.1 Layout

Two locations were considered for the erection of the stones on the church wall.

- On the north-facing flank of the staircase tower, set vertically
- On the west-facing wall, set horizontally, centered behind the existing memorial structure



Location on north flank



Location on west wall

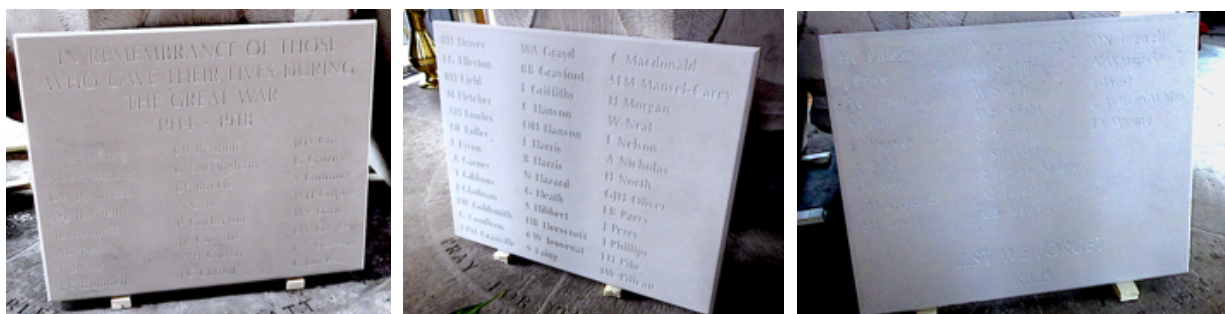
In considering the possible layouts, we concluded that the west wall carried key advantages:

- i. The setting of the tablets side-by-side would make them easier to read by more people of differing height than the vertical configuration.
- ii. The setting on the west wall relates better to the existing memorial and cross, whereas on the flank wall, they would look 'tucked away' by comparison. The setting will also be more suited to occasions when remembrance services take place outside.
- iii. The setting on the west wall places the stones in a lighter position, often with direct sunlight, making carved inscriptions easier to read.

2.3.2 Size and design

The tablets will replicate exactly the existing inscriptions on the original memorial base. Each one is 685mm wide by 585mm high. Their scale is similar to the existing noticeboards to each side of the west door.

The plaques are inscribed with 13 lines of names in three columns. The lettering is formed in 'v'-profiled incisions with a light serif, based on survey of the existing memorial. The lettering for the names is approximately 35mm high, and 50mm for the title lines.

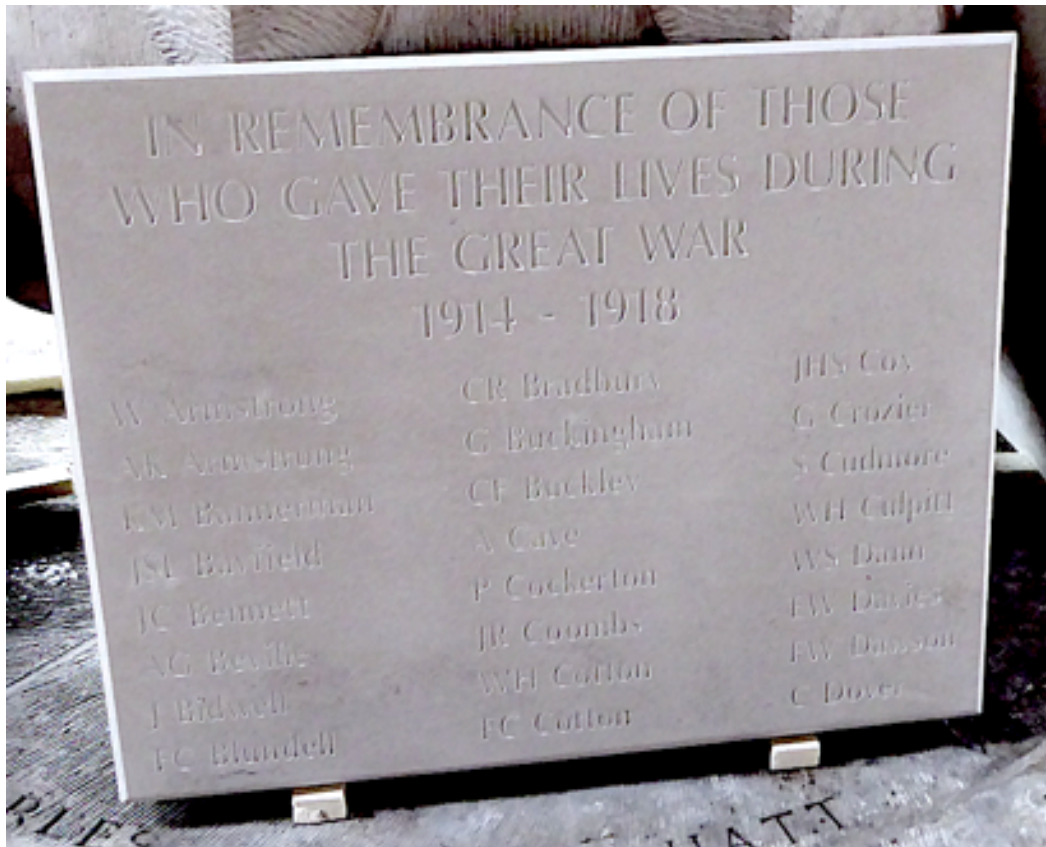


Pictures of the tablets together (larger depictions overleaf)

The height of the lettering will make it easily legible from the viewing distance of 1.7m, dictated by the planting bed in front of the wall. Standard guides suggest that such lettering is readable from as far as 15m. The deep incision of the lettering should make it legible under most light conditions, however under flat lighting conditions, it's likely to be difficult for people with poorer eyesight. This could be expected to be mitigated over time as general weathering causes a darkening on the upward facing incised surfaces, making the lettering darker. The option to paint-in the lettering is available, however there is a concern that this would result in it appearing more like 'signage' than inscribed tablets. A careful judgement would need to be made on the colour and tone.

2.3.3 Materials

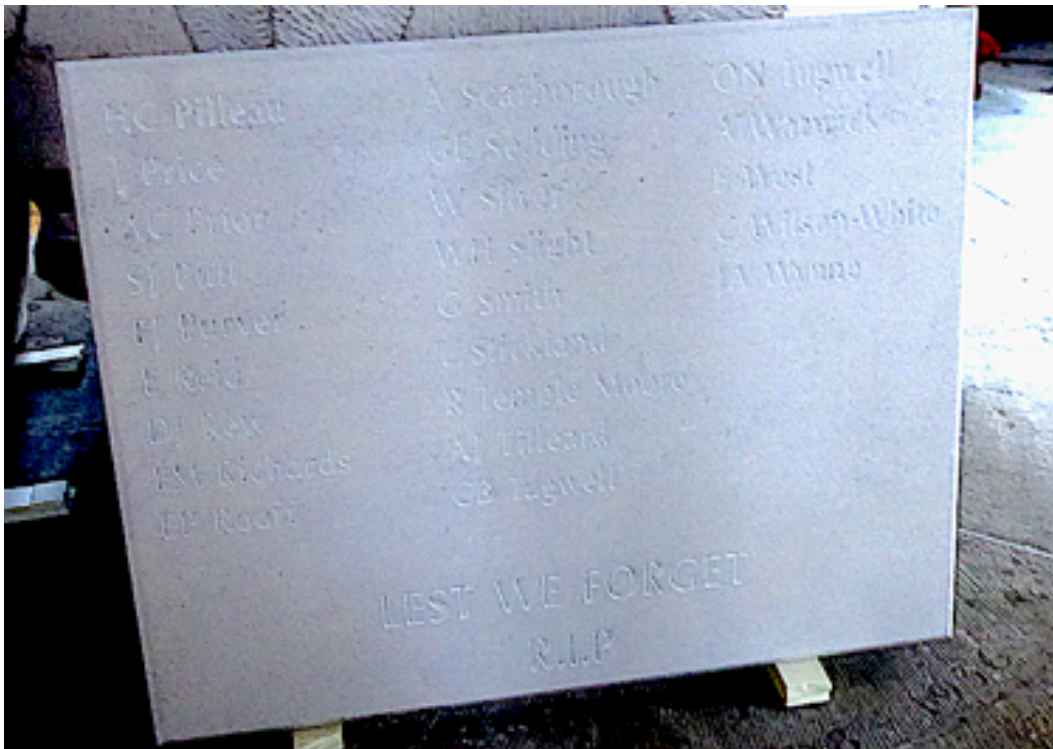
The selection of Portland stone is intended to relate the tablets directly to the original memorial. The church building is faced in Ancaster stone, which displays a pleasing variety of warm colour tones. The Portland stone's natural off-white colour will stand out gently from the background, but not be dominant. They will be mounted on stainless steel brackets secured into the mortar joints of the wall, and held off the surface of the irregular stone, allowing for air circulation behind.



Left-hand tablet



Centre tablet



Right-hand tablet

Note that the three tablets as photographed are all equally legible as the depiction of the centre one, the differences being a matter of the direction and strength of the light.