

The War Memorial at St Wilfrid's church, Cotton

Statement of Design and Access

The War Memorial at St Wilfrid's church, Cotton, was erected in 1920, in memory of former pupils of Cotton College who died in the Great War. It was unveiled and blessed at Whitsuntide 1920 by Rt. Rev. Mgr. James Dey. The memorial is in the shape of a crucifix in oak on a base of white Portland stone, resting on three steps of York stone arranged in the form of a cross. It was designed by Elphage Pippet (an old Cottonian), for Hardman & Co of Birmingham - the firm that had worked so closely with Pugin when St Wilfrid's church was built 70 or so years before. The actual building work was carried out by Boulton & Sons of Cheltenham – a company that no longer exists. It cost £510, which was raised by subscription, particularly from the clergy. The memorial is situated outside the east end of the church, under the beautiful east window.

Originally there would have been four panels bearing the names of the fallen:

Joseph Arnold; William Arnold; John Aspinall; Robert Bickerdike; Robert Blake; Vincent Butler; Benjamin Cain; Harold Cain; Cyril Campbell; Albert Dale; Stephen Dale; Shirley Day; Charles Davis; Edwin Dean; Oscar Drinkwater; William Gore; Clement Haskew; Charles Howell; John Iles; Reginald Ives; Leo Kelly; Thomas Luby; James McClafferty; Austin McDonald; John Molloy; Stuart Moore; James Murray; Vincent O'Brien; Frank Rogers; Bartholomew Scanlon; Adair Thompson; Dr F.J. de Verteuil; Oswald Ward; George White; Harold Wilke; Bernard Woodall

After World War Two the panels were changed to include the names of those who had died between 1939 -1945:

John Byatt; Peter Clibbery; Christopher Cox; Gerald Featherstone; Peter Firkins; Philip Firkins; Terence Flynn; Wilfrid Flynn; Bernard Gately; William Goodyear; John Hayes; Philip Hermolle; Mark Knowles; Armel O'Connor; Paul Solon; Robert Walker- Lutz; Edwin Wilkinson.

At a later date again, the name of *Wilfrid J Allen* was added. Although not an Old Cottonian, his family lived in the village and had long been loyal employees of the College.

Reasons for this application

Since 1920, an annual Service of Remembrance has been held, each November, at the War Memorial. It has continued even though St Wilfrid's church was closed for use in 2010. It is usually attended by about 40-50 adults from the local community, together with staff and pupils of The Faber School at Cotton and pupils from Painsley Catholic College. They have contributed so much to the dignity of the occasion, by their presence, participation and demeanour

However, the future of the church is uncertain. The War Memorial, therefore, is now in a very isolated place and its future is also very uncertain. It is located behind security gates and is generally

inaccessible to visitors, unless prior permission has been obtained and the on-site security people notified. Even the annual service is difficult to organise as the area adjacent to the memorial is untended throughout the year. The memorial itself is in need of cleaning and restoration which, again, is almost impossible as there is no power or mains water available on site. There is some rot at the base of the cross. The stones at the base show signs of movement. The stonework generally needs renovation and the lettering needs re-marking. A few former parishioners do endeavour to prepare the ground around the memorial each year, but it becomes very overgrown and is usually very soft and muddy underfoot. It is almost impossible for visitors with disabilities to come anywhere near to the memorial

Proposal

Parishioners of St Wilfrid's, together with the St Wilfrid's and Parkers' Association (Cotton College 'Old Boys'), have obtained permission from the Archdiocese to relocate the memorial to a more accessible position in the heart of the village, to land already owned by the Archdiocese. This would enable access for the local community and anyone who wanted to visit the memorial at any time without having to obtain permission first. The memorial could also be properly looked after and maintained. It is proposed that the memorial be positioned on the grass area at the far end of the Faber School's new car park, behind the cemetery.

Access

This re-location would give easy access at all times and would provide a hard standing area for the annual service. Pedestrian access - which would not interfere with the present arrangements for car parking - would be available through the new pedestrian gate across from the Faber, or a gate could be set into the top wall of the cemetery, to give easy access from the cemetery. It would also be far better for the annual Service of Remembrance for everyone, especially the children from the Faber. The car park includes spaces for disability vehicles. This re-location will place the memorial in the heart of the community. It will provide complete access for pedestrian visitors, including those with disabilities, via the path to the car park. Permission has already been given by the Governors of the Faber School for the access and for an annual Service of Remembrance each November. As the memorial will be adjacent to the car park, there will be plenty of hard standing area for all.

As this is the one hundredth anniversary of the First War, this would seem a favourable and appropriate time. A working party of former parishioners has been established, working with the St Wilfrid's and Parker's Association. They have canvassed local opinion – including the family of William Allen, who live in the village - and found widespread support. As well as the permission granted by the Archdiocese, they have obtained written approval for the scheme from Cotton Parish Council and from the Governors of The Faber School.

Finance

The work will be carried out by a professional contractor. Additional professional expertise will also be needed to have the lettering on the memorial restored. Some funds for this are already available. Financial assistance may also be given by the St Wilfrid's and Parkers Association and from donations.

Re-location

The work will involve the following:

The oak cross to be lifted out of the socket in the plinth and set aside for repair and re-siting;

The plinth to be lifted with appropriate slings to prevent damage and set aside for re-use;

The three sets of steps to be carefully taken up, numbered and cleaned;

To excavate and level an area of ground 10m x 5m adjacent to the new car park at the Faber School, as indicated on the architect's plan; shutter and form a 4 sq.m.150mm reinforced concrete slab and re-use excavated soil to provide more level ground around the slab;

Re-positioning of the school's storage container, and other minor landscaping work at the site;

The stone blocks to be re-bedded on the new concrete slab, on a lime mortar mix;

The middle section to be concreted to provide a solid base for the plinth;

the plinth to be lifted in two sections, cleaned and bedded onto a lime mortar mix;

all the joints to the steps and plinth to be neatly pointed with a lime mortar mix;

the oak cross to be taken from storage and structural repairs carried out and preservative applied;

the ornate oak carving work to the cross and Christ, and the lead work to the canopy, to be inspected and the repair work agreed on site;

an edged border of gravel will be laid around the Memorial with a width of 50cm;

When all the above have been completed satisfactorily, the lettering will be restored by a local monumental mason.

In subsequent years, the Memorial will be tidied and kept in good order by volunteers from the local area.