

The Meaning of the

Part Two

Town War Memorial

Marilyn Stephenson-Knight

THE TOWN WAR MEMORIAL, standing outside Maison Dieu House, was intended both to remember those we had lost and educate those who were to come. Seeking not to glorify war, but to emphasise spirituality and self-sacrifice, its design denotes Youth rising beyond the difficulties of life.

But the material Memorial is incomplete. It's just a few blocks of granite and some shaped bronze. The vital other component of the Memorial is intangible; it is the mind of the person who sees it. Without that the Memorial has no meaning. The Town Council discovered this just after the unveiling. They had debated the design for months, and to them the symbolism of the bronze figure was clear. But to the people of Dover it was not, so the Council erected a notice of explanation.

This is the story of the Intangible Town Memorial - the part of the Memorial that lives inside our heads. Before the material Memorial can be created there has to be an Intangible Memorial. That has a many-branched history thousands of years long. But here, we'll concentrate merely on the immediate roots in Dover!

In January 1915 came the first public mention of a Great War memorial. The Dover Express asked for notification of all casualties, to ensure a full list for an eventual memorial. The death announcements from families who contributed could be seen in themselves as, week by week, forming a personalised memorial, which also included news of those still serving. Later, in June 1917, Father Grady of St Paul's, Maison Dieu

Road, would dedicate a war shrine, and he too spoke of a time when Dover would look back on the war. His concern was that memories would fade, and the shrine would then remind us of "the saddest days of our lives".

The first recognised Great War memorial in Dover was a motor boat. Named the "Henry Gartside-Tipping", it was donated in June 1916 to Missions for Seamen by the Lieutenant-Commander's family. Embarking from Dover, he had been killed off Zeebrugge the year before; at 67 he had been the oldest naval officer serving. A huge crowd attended the ceremony on the beach near the Clock Tower, along with a choir, a drum-and-fife band, and a host of VIPs.

During the war a number of memorial services were held in Dover. In view of the situation a commonly used hymn was "Oh God our Help in Ages Past". The services were often funereal - in November 1916 St Mary's, Biggin Street, used part of the order for the burial of the dead. Naming the fallen, the vicar commended them to "God's merciful and loving keeping".

Seven months later, when the war shrine was dedicated at St Paul's Father Grady advanced this, stating that by praying for their eternal rest we can try to repay the dead for their sacrifice. The shrine was in the form of a large crucifix, which, he added, was appropriate, because Jesus' death was the "supreme and model sacrifice". Those who died fighting "for freedom and justice" imitated, because they died for us. Thus was implied that because of the nature of their service and death, the



Dover War Memorial

war dead had entered a more glorious plain. Several church services also cited other transcendents for which the dead had sacrificed themselves - their country, the King, the Empire, freedom, and justice. The war shrine at St Mary's carried the legend "For God, King, and Country".

Just as those fighting were often remembered in prayers, shrines too were not solely for the dead. In January 1917, one was erected for serving soldiers at Nightingale Road. This was the Knowlton of Dover, for nearly all the male residents were eligible to fight. Those still in combat were also considered of higher ideals - prayers for the safety of these "gallant men" were led by the Vicar of Barton Road, and the shrine was unveiled by Mrs Dunn, mother of a combatant.

By the first anniversary of the Armistice, in 1919, thoughts of Great War memorials had crystallised into a need. Several villages

around Dover had begun collections for a memorial. Already one, a window at the Primitive Methodist Church, had been unveiled. At the request of the King, the Last Post and the silence had become part of Remembrance ceremonies. Dover obediently observed the silence at 11am. Unfortunately, without a signal for the beginning there was some confusion. By the next anniversary, the Dover Express hoped, there would be a Memorial and a "properly conducted demonstration".

In 1921 the poppy was adopted. The bright red on every jacket brought a November summertime to Remembrance in Dover. Just after Armistice Day the memorial at St Mary's had been unveiled before a vast crowd. Although the occasion might stir feelings of loss, said the Bishop, there should be in the fallen, "a sense of pride in them for what they did ... It is right to erect a memorial to their memory.

Nothing is too good for them".

That year and the one before had seen a crop of memorials dedicated, including the unusual one, offered with thanks, of electric light at the Tower Hamlets Mission Hall. By Armistice Day River and several outlying churches could hold outdoor services at their memorials. Mrs Smith in Dover, whose four sons had served, "read with envy the accounts of the village memorials". In mind of the "great debt we owe those who fell," she continued, "the least we can do is to possess a small statue with the names of Dover's fallen inscribed on it".

Cost was presumably an issue though, for a sub-committee of the Town Council had instead suggested a shrine in Maison Dieu Hall. It would hold a book naming the fallen - and those who had done war work. The newspaper editorial agreed with Mrs Smith. This idea was "not good enough". Furthermore, such a memorial was inadequate for town Remembrance ceremonies, and mixing up the living and the dead was neither "adequate nor suitable".

Debates raged. By 1922 the Dover Express had called the proposed shrine "mean", and, worse, had pointed out that functions in the Hall would most disrespectfully obscure the shrine with benches of beer barrels. "If all that Dover can do ... is make a niche in the wall," the newspaper thundered, "it should be made on the outside ...". "At least then Dovorians deprived of graves for their loved ones would have somewhere to lay their tributes. Highly critical of what it saw as unnecessary "secrecy and delay" the Dover Express added that the people of the town "should have been left to decide the form and site of the War Memorial". The whole episode was particularly painful, because the magnificent Marine Station memorial had that year been unveiled, and at

Armistice Day was covered with wreaths. The only consolation was a street-filled service of Remembrance at St Mary's memorial, which the Mayor attended.

During the war and after the Armistice Dover had seen many precedents for the eventual construction of the Town War memorial. Each helped form the Intangible Memorial, which was not only the essential counterpart but also influenced the material design of the Town Memorial.

Personal and individual knowledge, as with the announcements in the Dover Express, was a very strong component of the Intangible Memorial. It shaped the material Memorial, as this knowledge was reflected in the Roll of Honour, including questions of who was and was not eligible. At the same time it gave the Memorial a great meaning. This, as the years have passed, is largely lost to us today. (It is this aspect that the Dover War Memorial Project primarily seeks to recover)

A further component of the Intangible Memorial was the collective sense of suffering and commiseration. This would have built up over the years, with interactions between neighbours as well as public announcements, as in the papers. It was clearly expressed in Dover during the memorial services and unveilings. The Intangible Memorial also provided comfort for the bereaved. An often repeated view at the memorials and unveilings was that families should have great pride in the achievements of their loved ones, who had sacrificed themselves for a greater good.

Such sacrifice was seen to give great honour and glory, and also to provide an example for those left behind. This was one of the reasons why those who had survived, and civilian casualties at home were not included on the Town Memorial.

Thanksgiving too was key - not only for and from those who had returned, which

was often expressed in subscriptions, but for deliverance, and above all for those who had died in bringing that deliverance. These components of the Intangible Memorial were key to the debates that raged on the design of a Town Memorial. A practical aspect too was that for the many bereaved who could hold no funeral and had no grave to tend, a memorial and a Remembrance ceremony could stand in their stead. The Intangible Memorial thus informed the choice of a suitable site for the Town Memorial.

Finally, the Intangible Memorial was a bringing together, a secular and religious mix wherein the whole community could be joined. The community was not just the present, but the past and the future people also. For the Intangible Memorial remembers the past and uses it as a lesson for the future.

The Town Memorial was unveiled on 5th November 1924. It was beautiful. It may have been long in coming, but during that time the Intangible Memorial had been negotiated and matured. Moderate and restrained in its material form, the Town Memorial was enormous in intangible antecedent and meaning. In a phrase, the Town Council had "got it right". This was a feeling shared by Doverians of the time. As a Councillor said, it was "one of the most popular things that had happened in Dover for a great many years".

The story above is but one version of many of the Intangible Town Memorial. Also, the tale does not end at the unveiling. There is much more to tell about the Meaning of the Town Memorial, and the next part of this series will explore further. But in the meantime, next time you pass, do have a look at the Town Memorial. What does it mean to you? Which version of the Intangible Town Memorial lives inside *your* head?

FOOD *for* THOUGHT

Alan Lee

As we are looking forward to celebrating Christmas let us think back to those dark days of January 1940. The British Government had just introduced food rationing to the country with most foods rationed either by weight or by points or by cost.

Some of the amounts for each adult per week were: meat by cost 1 shilling and 10 pence, sugar 8 ounces, 4 ounces of butter or fat, 4 ounces bacon, 3 pints milk, 2 ounces tea, 1 ounce cheese and 1 egg. Other foods such as dried fruit, biscuits, jam, rice and tinned food were given a point's value, or to the holder of the ration book, coupons.

Every family had to register at the shop or store where the food was to be purchased and this was the only place that the family could buy its food.

Each member of the family had his or her own ration book; adults had a buff coloured book, with blue for children over three and green for babies.

This was a period of great innovation within the kitchen. Such dishes as Tripe and Onions and Faggots and Pease Pudding made an appearance and are still popular today. Also some of the fillings for sausages were strange to say the least.

Then a big blow to a large number of British people came in July of 1940, that great favourite and *cure all* Tea was placed onto the ration list.

Fresh fish was never rationed but