

OUR WAR MEMORIAL - past, present and future

PAST: SANDI GRIEVE uncovers the history of the Memorial

The War Memorial, which stands in Pullar Park facing the Memorial Hall, is obvious to all who drive along Henderson Street but unfortunately now needs replacing. Efforts are being made in Bridge of Allan to raise money for this through the schools, coffee mornings and donations. But what is the history of the memorial?

In September 1920 Major Edmund Pullar offered to donate the land that is now the Memorial Park to Bridge of Allan. Sketches of the proposed monument were prepared by Mr John Stewart, a local architect. He was to produce 'something suitable and appropriate. Something that Bridge of Allan could look upon with no feeling of shame'. The nature of the memorial would depend on the response that the public made to the appeal for funds.

In addition to the memorial a boulevard was to be created with trees parallel to Henderson Street. Round the memorial field there was to be a path planted with bushes at the side. There was also to be a path up the centre leading to the memorial with flower beds on either side. The local council was sure that Bridge of Allan would 'rise to the occasion'. It was thought £1500 was required - a lot of money at the time - though the final cost was in fact £2000.

By 1923 the memorial was completed. It was described as a simple obelisk, 16 feet high, made of Heptonwood stone. It had four bronze panels and a plaque with the words 'RAISED IN HUMBLE GRATITUDE TO THE MEMORY OF THE MEN OF BRIDGE OF ALLAN WHO DIED IN THE GREAT WAR'. The upper part was finished with a marble band and on the four sides were the Scottish coat of arms, badges of the Black Watch and the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders and a Latin cross in low relief. There was also a circular wreath of laurel leaves forming a crown in Heptonwood stone. This stone, from Yorkshire, is also used in a facade at Lloyds Registry in Fenchurch Street, London. It was also used for the font in Fenham St James & St Basil Church in Newcastle.

Unfortunately it was pouring with rain the day the memorial was unveiled, but this was nonetheless done in style by Mr Edmund Pullar of Westerton, the Depute Lieutenant. The territorials of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders in full dress uniform mounted a guard with fixed bayonets, the QV school band played, seating was provided and 80 ex-service men invited. After this there was a reception in the Museum Hall.

Three years later a garden festival was held in the grounds of the Hawthorns in Kenilworth Road to raise money to replace the wooden steps with

Auchenheath stone and to buy more plants. And in November 1947 there was a rededication and unveiling of a new plaque as a memorial to those who had died in World War II.

All this can still be seen today but unfortunately the memorial is in a state of disrepair. In fact it has been deemed dangerous. It would be good if Bridge of Allan could once again 'rise to the occasion' and have a memorial and park we can all be proud of.

BILL KIDD looks at the design of the memorial

The Bridge of Allan memorial is non-representational, non-allegorical (no statue, no grieving figure, no kilted soldier) and non-militaristic. The bronze dedication eschews the sacrificial language common elsewhere ('Who fell in the Great War', 'Who gave their lives for King and Country', 'Our Glorious Dead', etc.). Religious iconography is one element among others given equal prominence alongside the national and regimental on the four sculpted reliefs at the top of the obelisk, though the Saint Andrew's cross in the Black Watch regimental insignia reinforces its Christian symbolism. The crowning horizontal wreath conveys victory as well grieving or remembrance. As with the Cenotaph, which this design recalls, the location of the memorial is a civil and not a religious one such as a cemetery, and allows reasonable all-round visibility and ease of access for ceremonies.

PRESENT: ALLAN BROWN writes about the state of the memorial today

The problems affecting the monument are all too obvious. The plaques carrying names have split at the corners, with the stone work showing severe signs of decay (below). Some years ago Central Region carried out repairs to the foundation, and, well let's just say, the work could have been carried out to a higher standard. The foundation



Splitting around plaques

base is now sinking, the stone work has split, which has allowed ingress of water.

The repair work has been assessed by an architect, and the total cost has been put at £31,500. It is hoped that some of the stone from the Museum Hall can be used in the



Stone damage

repair work, which will include the restoration of the plaques and the landscaping of the surrounding area.

ALISON LOGIE reports on fund raising

The recent fundraising event for the War Memorial raised over £2000, with donations still coming in. There was a huge turnout for the Village Coffee Morning held on Saturday 6th October. In fact people could hardly get in the door of the Parish Church Hall, attracted by the bagpipe playing of Alexander Soutar. The servers of the coffee and tea were rushed off their feet and the kitchen was a hub of immense activity.

A cake and candy stall was managed by Helen Christie, a newcomer to the village. A tombola and two raffles were provided. Face painting, Guess the Birthday of the Lion and ice cream sales were all part of the fun. The Paratroop Regiment and Argyll and Sutherland Highland Battalion of the Royal Regiment of Scotland raised nearly £250 by collaring people as they came in. Tombola prizes were generously donated by members of the public and the many businesses throughout Bridge of Allan - thanks to all involved.

FUTURE: The next step

We now have raised a total of £21,500 - our target is in sight! Everything is in place for the work to begin once the finance is available.

When complete, we shall have a memorial fitting for those local men who made the ultimate sacrifice and to whom we owe an infinite debt. It is planned to include the names of those who have fallen in later conflicts such as Korea, Malaya, and Bosnia. We would ask that any family who has suffered a loss in any of these or other conflicts to contact the editor.

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