Lancaster Civic Vision

Celebrating our Heritage – Enhancing our Environment – Shaping our Future

CRIMEAN WAR MEMORIAL

Lancaster Civic Vision Guide 110

Lancaster Cemetery has one of the few public memorials in the UK to commemorate those who fell in the Crimean War (1853–6). The Imperial War Museum's register of war memorials lists 41,972 for the First World War but only 454 for the Crimean War. Of the 331 memorials for which a description is available, only around 15 could be considered war memorials in the modern sense of a monument to all the local people who died and that has been placed in a prominent public place. The largest is in Waterloo Place, St James's, London, unveiled in 1861.





Figure 1 (left) The Memorial (Source: Author)
Figure 2 (right) Illustration from the *Lancaster Gazette* of the Memorial's unveiling

Lancaster's memorial (Figure 1) was erected in the then recently opened Lancaster Cemetery and it was dedicated on 8 November 1860, four years after the 30-month war had ended (Figure 2). The delay seems to have been due in part to the difficulties the Monument Committee had in raising the necessary funds. The delay aroused pointed letters to the *Lancaster Guardian*. The monument was designed – without charge – by the noted Lancaster architect, E.G. Paley, in 1856. He had very recently designed Lancaster Cemetery and its chapels (1854–5) and he is buried there. The monument cost £120–£140. It is a simple, 34-foot obelisk of Carboniferous limestone from the Dalton Hall quarry in Furness, donated by the quarry's owner, E.G. Hornby. The monument was built during 1860 by Christopher Baynes of Lancaster, a builder and stonemason. The monument is Grade II listed.

The inscription on the plinth, facing the town, reads as follows:
CRIMEA / TO / THE IMPERISHABLE MEMORY OF / THE BRAVE / SOLDIERS AND SAILORS / NATIVES OF LANCASTER AND THE NEIGHBOURHOOD / WHO FELL IN THE / RUSSIAN WAR / A.D. MDCCCLIV.V.VI / THIS MONUMENT / ERECTED BY PUBLIC SUBSCRIPTION /
IS DEDICATED.

The names of the 19 who fell are inscribed on the other faces. Their names and details are given on the website of the King's Own Royal Regiment Museum (KORRM). The lettering on the monument is becoming illegible: it faces west, leaving it very exposed to weathering. Some correspondents to the *Lancaster Gazette* felt that the memorial should have been placed nearer the town, but the Cemetery site was already in Corporation ownership.

Two years after its inauguration, the Memorial was still unfinished because it lacked the inscription of dedication (see above) and the names of the dead. Throughout 1862 the *Lancaster Gazette* published several letters to the editor complaining of this omission and insisting that every name be recorded. It is unclear why there was this delay. It may have been due to a lack of public subscriptions, rectified mid-year by an anonymous donor. Or it may have been because the Memorial Fund did not want to spend existing donations on the Memorial, having something else in mind, but then shamed into action by the *Lancaster Gazette*'s campaign. The inscriptions were carved in late August.

The principle of public subscription for erecting war memorials continued with Lancaster's First World War memorial next to the Town Hall and with Westfield War

Memorial Village, both opened in 1924. The *Lancaster Gazette* (1/12/1855, 5) encouraged a campaign for a Crimean War monument in a prominent location even before the war had ended, and they suggested that "every habitation should be visited" because it was desirable that "*all* should subscribe", it being better that the funds come from "the pence of the indigent many than with the pounds of the wealthy few". Even "the widow's mite" was encouraged, as a correspondent to the newspaper urged.

Over 20,813 British servicemen died in the Crimean War, only 19 came from the Lancaster area, so it is unclear why so large a monument was erected here but in so few other places. Perhaps it was intended to promote municipal solidarity – local funding by many public donations, and local stone, designer and builder – as well as to commemorate those killed and record their sacrifice and duty to country.

Text and photograph – Gordon Clark.
Published by Lancaster Civic Vision (©2022)
Lancaster Civic Vision is the trading name of Lancaster Civic Society, registered charity no. 258434