Lancaster Civic Vision

Celebrating our Heritage – Enhancing our Environment – Shaping our Future

LANCASTER WAR MEMORIAL

Lancaster Civic Society Guide 18



On 3 December 1924, six years after Armistice Day marked the end of the First World War, Lancaster unveiled its War Memorial on a site just east of the Town Hall. The nearby Town Hall and Queen Victoria Monument in Dalton Square were gifts to Lancaster from the wealthy local philanthropist, Lord Ashton. In contrast, the War Memorial was funded by public subscription – £1,894 to build it and £336 to fund its upkeep by the Borough.

Compared with the other two, the War Memorial is remarkably simple in design – a wall of pale Longridge sandstone, nearly 11 metres long and 5 metres high at the centre. Embedded in the wall are 10 bronze plaques with the names of 1010 men of Lancaster who died in the Great War, listed in alphabetic order without distinction by rank or service unit. In front of this, a low altar was added after the Second World War to record the names of the 330 who died in that conflict and in the Korean War and the Falklands conflict.

Dominating the Memorial is a large bronze figure in black. Her huge wings suggest "Winged Victory", an image that dates back to the Greek goddess Nike. She carries in her hands a large frond of palm, which is associated in the Christian tradition with not only victory but also the victory of the spirit, the entry to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday and, by extension, it is also a symbol of the Peace that follows Victory.

The Victory and Peace figure was cast by the Bromsgrove School of Art, a well-known Arts and Crafts School and then a Guild. The panels were cast by Morton of Cheltenham. The overall design was by Thomas Mawson, extending to the Garden of Remembrance around the Memorial. Mawson was a leading landscape and garden designer of the period who in 1924 was nearing the end of his long international career. He was born in Scorton, just south of Lancaster, and his firm had its offices on High Street in Lancaster.







The unveiling, attended by 900 residents and 300 subscribers, was particularly poignant for the role played by five mothers, Mrs Butterworth, Mrs Campbell, Mrs Gardner, Mrs Williams and Mrs Prickett, who each lost more than one son in the War and who together unveiled the name plaques. As you read the many names, you will see the 57 sets of brothers who died – Mrs Butterworth lost four sons.

Other notable public war memorials in the Lancaster area are in Morecambe (by the Midland Hotel), Heysham (designed by Mawson) and central Carnforth. There is a rare Crimean War Memorial in Lancaster Cemetery. The Westfield War Memorial Village in Lancaster is a very different kind of memorial, one that focuses on those who survived the conflict. It too was designed by Mawson, one of whose sons died in the War.

426 of the casualties were in the local King's Own Royal Regiment whose regimental museum shares a building with Lancaster City Museum in Market Square. Their regimental chapel is in Lancaster Priory. Further information can be obtained from the Lancaster Military Heritage Group's book *The Last Post* (www.lancasterwarmemorials.org.uk).

Laurence Binyon, born on High Street in Lancaster, wrote in his poem *For the Fallen*:

"They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old.

Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them."

Written in September 1914 after the battle of the Marne, there were another four years and two months till the Armistice.

The War Memorial is next to the Lancaster Town Hall off to the left of Lancaster's one-way system, southbound – for satnav use LA1 1PJ.



Other Guides in this series that may be of interest include: *Lancaster Cemetery* (No. 3); *Westfield War Memorial Village* (No. 19); *The Ashton Memorial, Lancaster* (No. 55); *Ashton Hall* (No. 94); and *Thomas Mawson of Lancaster* (No. 46).

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