

# The Origins of The War Memorial Dartmouth Park, West Bromwich

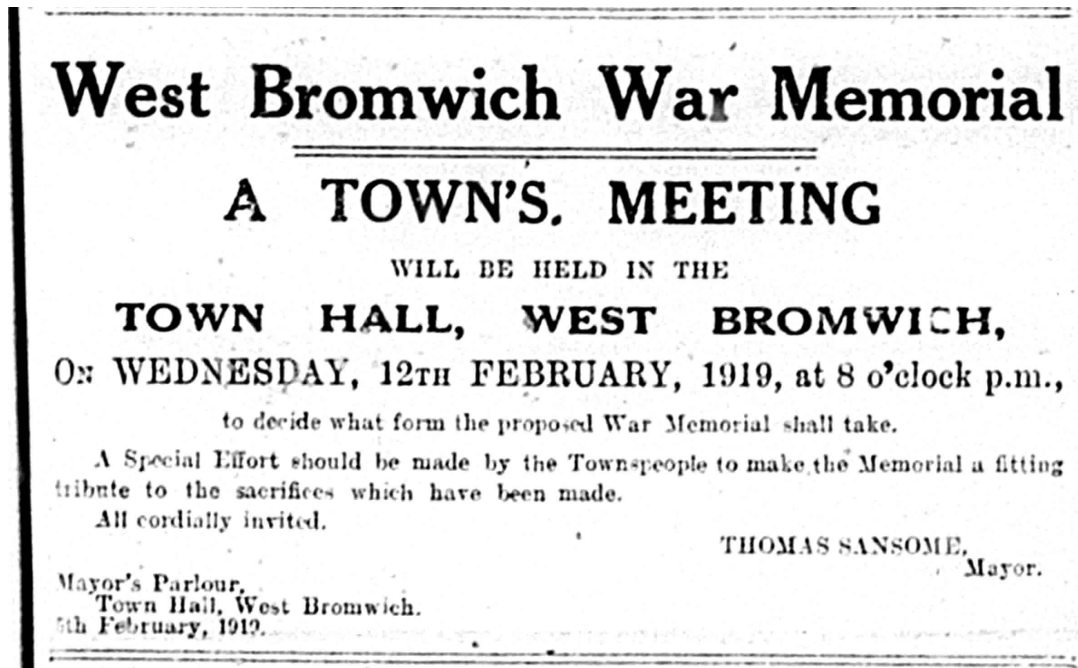
A centenary commemoration by Mark Barrett and Carol Hartill



Photograph courtesy of Alan Smith

*The Friends of Dartmouth Park*

# Choosing the form and location of the Memorial



It took over four and a half years from the Armistice in November 1918 to formulate a plan for West Bromwich's civic War Memorial and to put that plan into effect.

Things got off to a very quick start with an initial appeal for funds just 10 days after the Armistice and a first Town Meeting held 3 months later. After that meeting the Mayor made a proclamation that included the following:

*"A Town's Meeting of the inhabitants of West Bromwich have resolved that a War Memorial shall be established for West Bromwich to express their gratitude for and to commemorate the self-sacrifice, devotion to duty, and heroism of the men of West Bromwich in the Naval, Military and Air Forces, and in particular of those men who have given their lives in the Great War for the defence and safety of their country, The Memorial will not be for any church, denomination or party, but will be for the whole town, and I appeal to the inhabitants of West Bromwich to show their gratitude for what the men have done for them and to make the Memorial worthy of the Borough, and above all worthy of the supreme sacrifice which so many of these brave men have made. . . . I hope the fund will receive very generous support by everyone of all classes, and that every man, woman and child in West Bromwich will contribute to this fund, not only because we want as large a fund as possible, but so that everyone can claim to have done something towards the objects we have in view. Both large and small donations will be gratefully received."*

However a whole raft of problems had to be overcome. The possibility existed that either the Memorial inside the Old Church or the Memorial outside the Victory Club on the High Street could be considered as the civic Memorial. Both of these were ultimately dismissed but

many other ideas were explored.

Some people argued that all the monies raised should be used to care for the dependants of those who had been killed in the war—the welfare and education of the orphans being a priority. A Memorial Hall and a holiday home at the coast were both suggested, also a new out-patient department for the local hospital and a new bandstand for Dartmouth Park.. Others thought that a small estate of suitable housing should be built to provide accommodation for the most severely disabled veterans.. Quite early on the idea of a new entrance to Dartmouth Park in the form of an arch, and bearing the names of "the fallen," was put forward and by May of 1920 it had taken precedence over all the others. However it gradually became clear that the cost of such an arch would be way beyond even the most optimistic fundraising total and in September of 1922 the local press reported

*"At a meeting of the Sub-Committee Mr Long submitted a design of a proposed Memorial together with the tenders and it was recommended that the design for a Memorial in Portland stone, with granite base, 24 feet in height, be adopted and that the tender of Messrs Hayes Ltd . . . be recommended to a meeting of the subscribers. It was also decided to recommend that the names of those who served in H M Forces during the War should be recorded in a suitable manner."*

By December 9th it was further reported that

*"The erection of the West Bromwich War Memorial has been commenced this week. The site is in the main drive to the Dartmouth Park, The base will be of grey Aberdeen granite 16ft. square, while Portland stone also enters into the scheme. The whole will be surmounted by a bronze figure and will reach a height of about 33 feet".*



# Paid for by the people of West Bromwich

**WEST BROMWICH WAR MEMORIAL**

A FUND has been opened to meet the cost of providing a TOWN'S WAR MEMORIAL, and it is hoped that the amount realised will be a substantial one so that the Memorial shall be a fitting tribute to the sacrifices which have been made during the War

A representative Committee has been formed to consider various proposals and to make a recommendation to a further Town's Meeting. Every effort is being made to ensure that the decision arrived at will meet with general approval

DONATIONS are earnestly invited and may be forwarded to me **THOMAS SANSOME** Mayor's Parlour, Town Hall, West Bromwich 20th February, 1919 Mayor

**The West Bromwich War Memorial.**

IN AID OF **A GRAND FANCY or EVENING**  
THE ABOVE **:: BALL ::** DRESS OPTIONAL

WILL BE HELD IN  
**— THE TOWN HALL, —**  
ON WEDNESDAY, MAY 7th, 1919,  
UNDER DISTINGUISHED PATRONAGE

DANCING FROM 7.30 p.m. to 2.0 a.m.

TICKETS - - - Single, 5/-; Double, 8/6  
to be obtained at ALMONDS LIBRARY, E. WYKE & SONS, FRED FORD and SIDNEY BENDOW.

Masks will be worn until midnight, to be purchased at the door.  
REFRESHMENTS AT POPULAR PRICES.

Although the cause of the Memorial was championed by three successive Mayors there was no central fund to pay for its construction. The responsibility for this fell on the fundraising efforts of the Organising Committee and the generosity of the people of West Bromwich.

The very first appeal for donations was posted in the local press on 21st November 1918—just ten days after the signing of the Armistice. However money was initially slow coming in—mainly because the form that the Memorial would take was not known and local businesses and residents were reluctant to donate to such an abstract concept. Nevertheless in April of 1919 the Memorial Organizing Committee made the first of a series of posts in the local press listing the source of all the donations they had received and a running total.

These lists make interesting and sometimes poignant reading. They show that some of the companies that made the largest donations included the likes of Kenrick &

## Lists of donations were published in the local newspapers

WEST BROMWICH WAR MEMORIAL FUND						
Donations received up to and including 24th April, 1919:—						
	£	s	d	£	s	d
Previously acknowledged.....				211	16	11
Spencers (W B), Ltd.....	10	10	0			
G Garratt & Co, Ltd.....	10	10	0			
Councillor Gill.....	7	0	0			
A H Siddons.....	5	5	0			
Captain P H Willmot.....	5	5	0			
E Harding.....	5	5	0			
H W Harris.....	5	0	0			
E Woodhall.....	2	10	0			
T L Ralphs.....	2	2	0			
Mr and Mrs Hutt.....	1	5	0			
Corporal J Crooke.....		10	0			
Mr and Mrs Etheridge.....	10	0	0			
W F Gillier.....		5	0			
Job Moore.....		5	0			
Mr and Mrs Stokes.....		2	6			
Occupier, 65 Seager Street.....		2	0			
Mrs M A Cox.....		1	0			
Mrs K Beresford.....		1	0			
				56	8	6
Total.....	£268	5	5			

## The final accounts for the construction of the Memorial

The account of the income and expenditure for the fund was presented by Mr Ralphs as follows:—Receipts: Donations, £2,046 8s 3d; bank interest, £46 19s 6d; interest on mortgage, £54 19s 8d; refund of Income Tax on interest on mortgage, £20 19s 10d Total, £2,169 7s 3d Expenditure: Memorial—Stone column £981 15s; bronze figure, £650; bronze plate, £15; architect's fee and commission, £81 11s 9d; case, £60; book, £226 19s; binding, £20; unveiling ceremony—orders of service leaflets and general expenses, £10 11s; general—stationery, letters of appeal, circulars, printing, etc, £49 6s 6d; advertising, £29 3s; postages, £31 7s; cheque books, 7s; miscellaneous, £5; balance at bank, £8 7s Total, £2,169 7s 3d

Jefferson, Robinson Bros and A Kenrick & Sons.

West Bromwich Albion Football Club donated ten guineas. A large private donation came from Viscount Lewisham and at the other end of the scale there were odd shillings and pennies from many other West Bromwich residents. A combined donation was made by the staff and children of Lyng Girls' Council School amounting to nearly £3 10s and the Vicar and congregation of St Andrew's Church gave £10.

A fundraising Ball was held at the Town Hall and contributed over £30. Amongst the anonymous donations came 10 shillings from "Wounded" and two payments were made "In Memory of our son Bert, Ypres, 1917."

When the fund finally closed donations had amounted to more than £2,000 (2023 equivalent approx £130K). This paid for the stone column and the bronze figure and all other ancillary expenses, plus the Book of Memory which was unveiled in the Central Library in 1926

# The Unveiling—30th July 1923

The unveiling of the Memorial took place at 7 pm on 30th July 1923. The honour of performing the unveiling fell on the Right Hon the Earl of Dartmouth who was Lord Lieutenant of Staffordshire and whose family had of course had close links with West Bromwich for centuries past. The time of 7 pm for the unveiling was chosen specifically to allow as many working people as possible to attend. And in fact considerably before that time a large crowd estimated at 20,000 people had collected in the Park.

Meanwhile another crowd had been assembling at the Town Hall, and shortly before seven o'clock a procession was formed which made its way from the Hall to the Park: The procession was led by Mounted Police and then followed the West Bromwich Excelsior Brass Band, a Detachment of the South Staffordshire Depot Regiment, Royal Field Artillery, Royal Army Service Corps, British Legion and Ex-Service Officers and Men, the Red Cross and Firemen. After this came members of youth groups and other local organisations including Council Committees and at the rear were various clergymen along with the Mayor, Lord Dartmouth and the Town Clerk.

At the Park war widows and mothers of men who fell in the war were positioned on the left of the Memorial, and discharged and disabled soldiers on the right.


Before pulling the cord for the unveiling the Earl of Dartmouth addressed the crowd and he said *"We do not require Memorials to remind us of the war, it is too recent for that, but these Memorials will serve a good purpose in showing those who come after us, and their children and grandchildren, the splendid service that was given by their fathers and grandfathers in the Great War. They would remember that in West Bromwich some 7,000 or 8,000 men answered the call of the country, and of these, 1,500 gave their lives."*

Bishop Taylor Smith then dedicated the Memorial with the following words: *"To the Glory of God and in grateful and affectionate memory of those who gave their lives for King and Country and a righteous cause, we dedicate this Memorial. May all who look upon it realise the peace of sins forgiven, the joy of faithful service, and the power of the endless life, to which may God vouchsafe to bring us all; through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen".*

The hymn, "O God, our help in ages past" having been sung, the Benediction was pronounced. The people then joined in singing the National anthem, and thus a memorable service was brought to a close.

The Mayor, on behalf of the town, placed a wreath upon the Memorial, and some 20 or 30 other wreaths were placed upon it by relatives and friends of the fallen.

COUNTY  
BOROUGH



OF WEST  
BROMWICH.

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*The Great Acknowledgment to Our Gallant Dead.*

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THE WORLD WAR, 1914-18.

## Unveiling of Memorial

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IN DARTMOUTH PARK, BY THE

**Rt. Hon. the EARL OF DARTMOUTH,**  
P.C., K.C.B.,

MONDAY, JULY 30th, 1923, at 7 p.m.,

— AND —

## Order of Dedicatory Service



Photo

"UNVEILING OF WAR MEMORIAL IN DARTMOUTH PARK."

D. Murray