

THIRD REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF GRAVES REGISTRATION & ENQUIRIES NFLD. CONTINGENT, 53 Victoria Street, London, S. W. 1. (Special Report On Wandsworth)

To the Prime Minister of Newfoundland.

Sir:—In accordance with your telegram of May 25th, I herewith submit the following report on the Newfoundland Plot, Wandsworth Cemetery.

RECAPITULATION.

The Newfoundland Plot at Wandsworth was purchased by the Newfoundland War Contingent Association in October 1916. In this plot were buried the men who died in Wandsworth Military Hospital. Contrary to military orders they were buried four in a grave. The N.W.C.A. enclosed this plot with a Portland stone border, and in the centre erected a Portland cross on which was painted an inscription.

Some time last year the plot was reconstructed, having the bodies exhumed and re-interred in separate graves, shortly after which I took over the duties of looking after our soldiers graves.

I tried to get in touch with the N.W.C.A., and asked to attend their committee meeting, and try to work in union with them, but I did not succeed, their idea being that this plot was theirs and they could carry out their own ideas irrespective of the Imperial War Graves Commission or any other military organization, if they got the permission of the then Colonial Secretary.

Their intention was to erect a memorial in the centre costing about £400, the memorial taking the form of a cenotaph. In the final report of the N.W.C.A. they say that:—

"The Government of Newfoundland will deliver the necessary 'blocks of granite free, and it is presumed that that includes freight in 'England.' Lord Morris to whom 'the question was put as to whether 'marble was obtainable in the Colony for the purpose, has offered 'to arrange for the necessary 'blocks to be delivered at the site, 'also free of cost, and it is now suggested that the cenotaph itself 'should be marble, while the column 'supporting it should be granite, and 'that the Association should accept 'the generous offer of Lord Morris 'to supply the former.'"

This idea was all very fine if we had all our men buried in this cemetery; but where our men are scattered over fifteen different cemeteries, it cannot be expected of the Government to spend £400 on each; and it was entirely against the spirit of the Regiment on the principle of the Imperial War Graves Commission that graves should be treated differently, our one idea being that officers and men, no matter in what part of the world they lie, should therefore ordered the Superintendent of Wandsworth Cemetery to forbid any work on the plot until the dispute was settled.

This was done at the conference between you, the Chief Staff Officer and myself last December, but I was not handed over the title to the plot of the permission of the N.W.C.A. who held the property until the 22nd April 1920.

TRANSFER OF CONTROL

I immediately visited the cemetery and made arrangements to have it put in first class condition. The work was in progress when the article appeared in the "Daily Mail." I have purchased the extra plots at the cost of £255, the Portland stone border, erected by the N.W.C.A. is again in the hands of the monument masons who are completing it, the plot is being sown instead of turf, and the London Command is erecting the individual crosses.

Maile & Son, to whom the contract was given for cutting a central memorial, have the first cross almost completed, and I hope to have the cemetery in proper order by the first of July on which date I propose to have the graves decorated.

CORRESPONDENCE

From the following correspondence you will see that the responsibility for the conditions spoken of in the "Daily Mail" does not rest either with your Government or myself.

The Secretary,
N.W.C.A.
Dear Miss Knox,

I have been sent over by the Newfoundland Government to take over all graves of Newfoundland sailors and soldiers on this side of the Atlantic. I visited Wandsworth Cemetery and found that the N.W.C.A. have very kindly taken an interest in the graves there.

I should be very pleased to know what the association had proposed to do and if anything has already been

done so that we might work in unity.

Yours sincerely,
T. NANGLE, Major,
O.C. Graves Registration, Nfld Contgt.
September 3rd, 1919.

Seven days later, receiving no reply, I called on Miss Knox; the following letter resulted.

Dear Major Nangle,

In reply to your letter of the 3rd instant, and reviewing our interview of this morning with regard to the burial ground at Wandsworth, the question of dealing with this grave plot has been raised between this Association and the Government of Newfoundland on more than one occasion.

After the burials of our men at Wandsworth ceased, the Association decided to wall in the graves which they had purchased, and later to erect a permanent memorial.

Letters were addressed to the Colony and what was proposed, and saying that this Association would be glad to carry out any wishes the Government might have in the matter. No reply was received on the subject and Mr. E. R. Morris was commissioned by the Executive Committee to ascertain the wishes of the Colony when he visited Newfoundland in May-July of this year.

On his return, Mr. Morris reported that he had received the majority of the Government that the erection of a permanent memorial, completing the grave plot at Wandsworth, should be left in the hands of this Association, and in accordance with this authority the designs, estimates, etc. are being proceeded with.

All correspondence on the subject is at this office, and I shall be very pleased to go into it with you at any convenient opportunity.

Yours faithfully,
S. KNOX, Secretary, N.W.C.A.
10th September 1919.

The following day I called on Mr. E. R. Morris the best friend our wounded boys have had on this side the Atlantic.

With reference to our conversation to-day, I wish you would put before the N.W.C.A. my position as regards Wandsworth Cemetery.

(1) All men in the plot were members of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment and therefore should be treated in the same way as their comrades.

(2) The administration of all graves comes under Directorate of Graves Registration and Enquiries, and the Imperial War Graves Commission no matter who bought the plot, unless there is written instructions from the Next-of-Kin of each man.

(3) It will be impossible for me to allow a £400 memorial at Wandsworth while in other cemeteries graves are as yet unpaid for and unmarked.

Please make the Association understand that I do not wish to cause trouble or annoyance, but I am the one responsible to the military authorities in this Country and to the Dominion Government. I do not wish to be placed in a false position, or allow the Government to get into one.

I shall be back from France about the end of September and should like to meet the Committee concerning Wandsworth.

The suggestions I should like to put to the Association would be: that it should confine itself to the erecting of Central Memorials in the four large cemeteries in U.K. namely:—Wandsworth, Brookwood, Ayr, Winchester.

While the erecting of the headstones and the arrangement and care of the plot should be left to me as representative of the Army Organization in charge of such matters.

I am sure that you will do your best for me so that the Association will not think that I am trying to run them or cast any slur on the excellent work they have done for us during the past five years.

Yours sincerely,
T. NANGLE, Major,
O.C. Graves & Monuments, Nfld. Contgt.
September 11th 1919.

The only answer the Association gave to this was their final report quoted by me above.

On 21st April 1920 the Superintendent of Wandsworth Cemetery wrote Miss Knox, Secretary of the N.W.C.A. as follows; this letter was received by the High Commissioner on April 26th and handed to me.

IV.
Miss Knox,

Dear Madam.—I shall be glad to know if you can let me know if anything is being done to replace the kerbing round these graves. I cannot do anything to keep the graves tidy until this has been done. They are not looking at all nice at present.

Yours faithfully,
G. W. SNOW,
Wandsworth Cemetery,
London, S. W. 18

21st April 1920.

On April 22nd the High Commissioner wrote me the following, which I received April 26th on my return from a visit to other graves in the U. K.

V.
Major Thos. Nangle, C.F.,

Dear Sir,—I would enclose herewith grant of Grave space purchased by the Newfoundland War Contingent Association, at Wandsworth Cemetery, the administration of which ground is now transferred to your Department.

As you have already been advised verbally, it is the wish of the Prime Minister in Newfoundland that the Memorial to be erected at Wandsworth Cemetery should be similar to those erected in other Cemeteries in the United Kingdom, and therefore the matter will be left to you to make arrangements for the erection at Wandsworth of a similar Memorial to those chosen for the other Graveyards in this country.

The intention first of all was that the War Contingent Association would provide a Memorial at Wandsworth out of its funds. This however has been over-ruled, and presumably, the Government will choose and provide the Memorial desired at Wandsworth.

Yours faithfully,
EDGAR R. BROWNING
High Commissioner for Newfoundland,
22nd April 1920.

VI.
The High Commissioner of Nfld.

Dear Sir,—I beg to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 22nd inst. giving me permission to take up the completion of the Newfoundland plot in Wandsworth. I also acknowledge receipt of title deeds for same.

I am enclosing for your information (and return, please) the title deeds of the Newfoundland plot at Kirkdale Cemetery, which I have had corrected by the Town Clerk of Liverpool.

Unless I hear from you to the contrary, I shall have the title to the plot at Wandsworth treated in the same manner.

At present there is another hitch with regard to completing our plot at Brookwood, as you will see from the enclosed letter from the London Necropolis Company.

I have also received a letter enclosing Admiral's Po's notes on the removal of bodies from enemy countries. My suggestion would be, as far as we are concerned, to have our bodies concentrated in a cemetery at Begumt Hamel. I understand there are 32 bodies so affected.

I am, Sir,
Your obedient Servant
T. NANGLE, Major,
D.G.R. & E., Newfoundland Contgt.
26th April 1920.

VII.
Major Thomas Nangle, C.F.,

Dear Sir,—I am enclosed herewith an original letter dated 21st April, 1920 received from the Superintendent of the Metropolitan Borough of Wandsworth relative to the graves of Newfoundland Soldiers in Wandsworth Cemetery.

It will be observed that the kerbing around the Graves is in need of attention, and I would be glad if you would take the matter up with the authority concerned so that the Graves at Wandsworth may not be neglected.

Yours faithfully,
V. GORDON, Sec.,
for High Commissioner for Nfld.
26th April 1920.

VIII.
29th APRIL 1920.

Imperial War Graves Commission, Dear Colonel Duham,—I visited the Wandsworth plot this afternoon and found that none of the graves had been temporarily marked. I do not know whose department this comes under, but if not yours would you kindly forward this letter to the people concerned, as I leave for France to-morrow morning.

Enclosed is a complete list of the particulars for the crosses.

I might add that this plot was purchased by the Newfoundland War Contingent Association and was

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handed over to me this week. I am having the plot completed, Portland kerbed and turfed. As soon as I have received all the Final Verification Forms from Newfoundland I shall send them to you. When the headstones have been erected I will then be able to hand you over the plot complete.

I am, Yours sincerely,
T. NANGLE, Major,
D.G.R. & E., Nfld. Contingent
29th April 1920.

IX.
29th APRIL 1920.
Mr. George Snow,
Supt., Wandsworth Cemetery.

Dear Sir,—In confirmation of our conversation this afternoon and of an interview with the Town Clerk, Wandsworth I send you the following information concerning the Newfoundland plot.

Mr. Nicholl has agreed to convey to you and to Mr. Buchanan the boundaries of our plot. As soon as you receive it please make arrangements with Mr. Buchanan for the kerbing.

I am going to France to-morrow morning, but any information you require kindly get in touch with my office.

I am also making arrangements with the Imperial War Graves Commission to have the temporary crosses erected as soon as possible. Knowing you will do your best for me to get this plot in good condition.

I am, Yours faithfully,
T. NANGLE, Major,
D.G.R. & E., Nfld. Contingent.
29th April 1920.

X.
At 8 o'clock, April 30th, I left for France. The following day one of my sergeants forwarded to me the articles which appeared in the English edition of the "Daily Mail" of that date.

XI.
Major Thomas Nangle, C.F.,
Dear Sir,—I have received to-day a letter dated 29th April from Mr. A. T. Sharp, the Organizer, Anzac Day Pilgrimage, of Victoria House, Melbourne Place, Strand, London, W. C. 2, on the subject of the condition of the Graves in Wandsworth Cemetery.

In view of the statements made in the enclosed letter, I would ask you to proceed to Wandsworth as soon as possible and report on the condition of the Graves of Newfoundland Soldiers in that Cemetery so that steps may be taken to put them in good order, at once.

Yours faithfully,
EDGAR R. BROWNING,
High Commissioner for Newfoundland,
30th April 1920.

XII. (Enclosure)
Secty. High Commissioner for Nfld.
Dear Sir,—One of my helpers in connection with the Anzac Day Pilgrimage to the graves of the Austro-

Strand, London, W.C.2.

29th April 1920
These letters, together with the newspapers article, I received at Amiens on May 5th, on which date I wrote to you as follows:—

XI.
Dear Sir,—The following article appeared in the Daily Mail, 30th April, English edition:—

NEGLECTED WAR GRAVES
"Writing to the Daily Mail about the state of the Newfoundland 'soldiers' graves in Wandsworth Cemetery, Mr. A. K. Kirk, of 35 'Prentiss-road, Streatham, says:—

"While visiting Wandsworth in 'honour of Anzac Day, I was greatly surprised when one of the party 'pointed out the portion of the 'above cemetery set apart for the 'Newfoundland soldiers' graves 'If it were not for a memorial 'stone which has been erected in 'memory of those who lie at rest 'in that particular spot one would 'easily pass by without having the

Yours faithfully
A. T. SHARP
Organizer, A. D. P.
Victoria House

There were 735-172 section holders on British railways last year.

"faintest idea of there being a 'graves at all. They are in such 'condition. Surely the least estimate of the soldiers who 'gave their lives in an attempt 'make a better world is to see the 'they shall not be forgotten."

"We understand that the Newfoundland Contingent authorities 'are taking steps to have the gravestones 'put in order and that headstones 'especially made and inscribed 'will be shown to the relatives 'fore they are sent over here to 'erection."

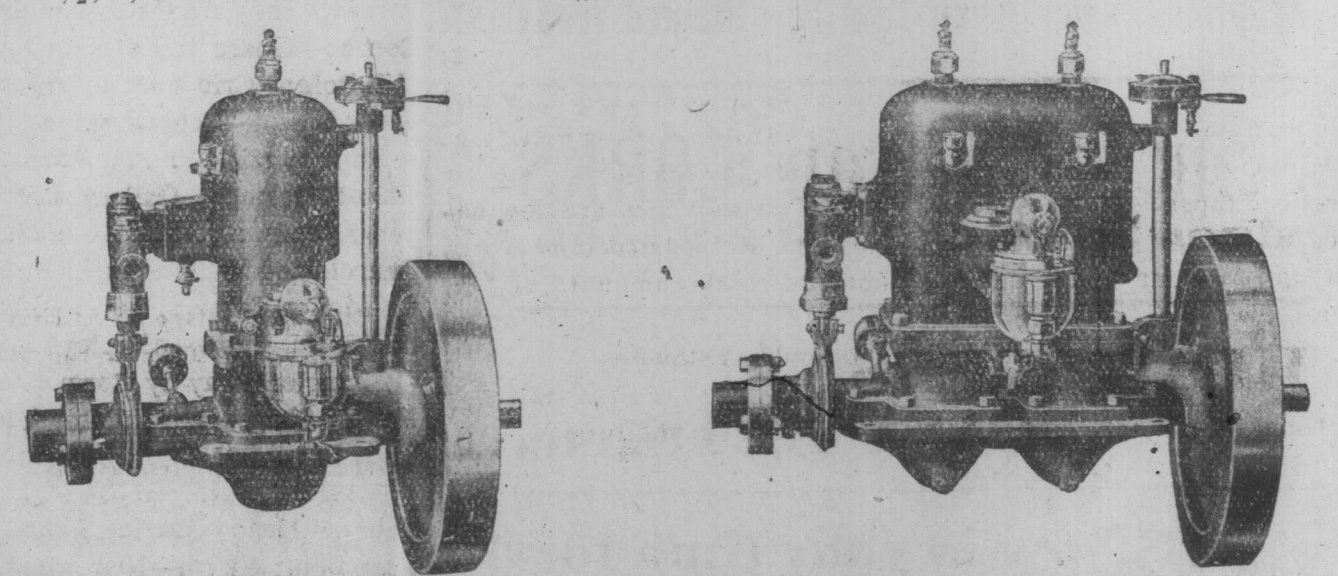
(To be continued.)

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