

Membury War Memorial

Towns and villages across the land made their decisions about how to commemorate the men who had died in the war. And of course they set up a committee to make those decisions!

The Membury Parish Council minute book has the minutes of Membury's committee.

A public meeting was held on 10 February 1919 to consider a Memorial for those who have died in action, or served their country during the Great War. A committee formed:

S M Manning Kidd (Chair); Rev F E W Langdon; H L Brooksbank; William Stone; John Salter; George Seller; L B Cross; W Virgin; James Lee; W G Down; Jno Burrough; Albert Northcote; George Perkam; Miss M Langdon; Mrs A Baker; Mrs Wm Vincent.

Their original idea was to purchase a 0.5 acre part of Orchard land next to the Red Lion Inn for a recreation ground containing a cross for a memorial. The landowner Mr James Standfast was approached and refused.

Further meetings were held on 4 March the letter from James Standfast was read:

In reply to yours I could not entertain the idea of selling part of the orchard for a recreation ground as it would destroy a lot of apple trees. Trees that are so much wanted. I am prepared to give a site for a Memorial Cross on part of the land where the old cottage stood.

Other ideas were discussed and it was agreed to hold a public meeting to discuss three schemes: a Cross; a Bell; a Club House.

On the 14 March a Parish Meeting was held to discuss the schemes and it was agreed that the Cross and the Village Room should be put to the people when they were asked to contribute and people could subscribe to one or both. Collectors were appointed: Miss Langdon, Mrs Vincent, Rev Langdon, John Demster, James Lee, George Seller, William Stone and George Perkam

On the 24 March the committee met and it was now called the War and Peace Memorial and each collector was given a book and told what district they had to collect. It was agreed that there would be different pages for each scheme (Cross the War Memorial and the Hall the Peace Memorial) and the money would be kept separate.

Mr Vincent reported that he had intended to place 2 seats on the Axminster Road but it would now be only one made of iron as the Rural District Council had objected to the concrete back of his seats as likely to frighten horses.

It was proposed to appoint a Bank Manager as Treasurer and it was agreed to ask Mr Atkins of Lloyds Bank

Six weeks later on 7 May the money collected was handed over to be banked. Rev Langdon proposed that an architect, Mr Caroe, be asked to design the cross and that he would pay any charge that he made.

William Douglas Caroe was born in 1857 near Liverpool in Holmsdale, Blundells and was the youngest son of the Danish Consul in Liverpool, anders Kruse Caroe (d.1897) and Jane Kirkpatrick Green (d. 1877). As an architect WD Caroe was a major figure in the Arts and Craft Movement and had made his name in ecclesiastical architecture. He had previously undertaken some work for Membury Church and so the vicar, Rev. Langdon recommended him to the Committee to design the war memorial. Caroe designed an elegant and simple memorial in a style influenced by the Arts and Craft movement. The committee had expected a usual shaped Christian cross.

Less than eight weeks later, on June the committee met and agreed that two questions were asked of Mr Caroe:

- Is not the top of the Cross ie the arms rather small in proportion to the height?
- What is the exact height of (a) of the shaft and (b) of the whole?

None the less design was adopted and it was agreed to ask him to superintend its making and fixing and that he should draw up specifications and let Messers Trask & Co have them. It was thought that local men could do the foundations. Fencing should be made by the local blacksmith.

The suggested inscription was: *“In Memory of the sacrifices made during the Great War August 1014 November 1919. By this sign thou shalt conquer”*. It was decided that no names be inscribed on the memorial..

The tablet for the Church in memory of the fallen to be given by Mr Newbery was discussed and it was agreed to ask him to have the names inscribed in copper. It is likely that this was the same Mr Newbery who had himself fought in the war and had also lost a son. Robert Newbery’s name appears first and after that the names are in alphabetical order.

There must have been a ceremony marking the erection of the memorial, but we have yet to find any newspaper report, photograph or other evidence.

On 22 April 1920 the annual parish meeting was given the cost of the Cross

Labour	£ 49 . 13 . 0
Bradford material	9 . 11 . 6
Ham Hill Doulton Stone Cross and lettering	<u>45 . 6 . 6</u>
Total	£104 . 10 . 6

There was £137. 11s.9d in the account and therefore there was a balance of £33.1s.3d

Some discussion took place as to the future proper constituted legal body for the control and upkeep of the cross. And a temporary committee was appointed (Vicar and 2 churchwardens). It was agreed to insure the Cross for £100 and the Churchwardens undertook to pay the annual insurance out of Church funds.