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‘PLANTING’ MEMORY: THE CHALLENGE OF
REMEMBERING THE PAST ON THE SOMME,
GALLIPOLI AND IN MELBOURNE

In exploring the mnemonic role of gardens, this paper will first focus on the value of gardens as both a palliative for melancholy, as liminal enclaves, and as carefully constructed surrogate memory systems. Their importance as places for reflection and recovery is examined through the lens of post-war Flanders, with a brief examination of the immense task required to recover the land from the trauma of the First World War. The paper then examines the manner in which pilgrims and veterans took their personal narratives to the battle zones. With so little to see, the bereaved had to reclaim lost names from the lost land; this process is explored through the work of the gardeners who had to ‘plant’ memory and of architects who designed vast monuments to enumerate those who had simply vanished without trace. Noting Fabian Ware’s transformational contribution to this process, this paper examines how the sites of battle became named and reclaimed, how shallow ditches and slight mounds were rendered sites of reverence, and how garden cemeteries have become the epicentres of ritual remembering. Two ‘mirror’ sites of national memory are examined: the ‘Anzac’ headland in Turkey, and the memorial parkland and gardens of Shrine Reserve in central Melbourne, both hallowed places strewn with symbolic trees, designed gardens and abundant rhetorical ‘topoi’. They are also places where the seed and soil of distant battlefields have been mingled with the national landscape, where the front has literally been transplanted to another country. The paper concludes by suggesting that the garden memorial is an essential component in the future of remembering, creating open and inclusive spaces that rely on participation and careful nurturing to ensure that memory stays alert, relevant and passed on from generation to generation.

THE MNEMONIC ROLE OF GARDENS

Gardens have long been regarded as a ‘palliative for melancholy’ and a congenial environment for solitary contemplation.¹ In Western Christian teaching the garden is seen as a place for spiritual reflection, a space designed to stimulate meditation, introspection and the easing of the imagination.² Furthermore, gardens are liminal enclaves, withdrawn from the customary disruption of urbanization, where precious objects, memorials and other sculpted forms can be placed under the open sky ‘in the eye of God’ (Figure 1).

In their many different and varied forms gardens, parks and arboreta have become closely associated with memory systems, whereby themes, ideas and classical references can be referenced in statuary, fountains and diverse formal objects. Reflecting on the episodic arrangements of gardens such as those at Stowe or Stourhead, John Dixon Hunt has examined how these *objets de jardin* can act as a sequence of code that might be

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Figure 1. The Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, approached along the avenue from the west. All photos: Suzette Worden, June 2014

‘strung together into an iconographical programme or narrative’.³ However, here the garden-as-mnemonic-text is at its most vulnerable. Over even a short period of time cultural references can be lost or displaced, and a ‘proper’ reading will be at the mercy of the linguistic sophistication and foreknowledge of subsequent generations. In addition, growth, decay and replacement will muddle the narrative intent. Over time even the most carefully arranged gardens face this erosion of their original purpose.

Those who design memorial gardens and arboreta, in particular, rely on a parallel narrative of naming; using labels, captions and texts to provide a running commentary on the origins, associations and mnemonic function of particular trees, shrubs or plantings. We can see this played out in the memorial parks on the former battlefields on the Western Front and on other theatres of war. It has also been realized on a grand scale in the National Memorial Arboretum in Alrewas, Staffordshire, where the vast planting schema offers an indexical account of British conflicts in the past century. At Alrewas, the mnemonic structure of the designed garden is exactly synchronized with the task of memorialization.⁴ Arguably, it is the most comprehensive theatre of symbolic memory in Europe, offering a dramaturgical spectacle populated – one might say didactically enacted – by plants, shrubs and young trees all on a scale that might have impressed the great landscapists of the eighteenth century. Strewn with an assortment of sculpted forms, arches and stones of remembrance at Alrewas, the iconic complements the indexical. There is a well-scripted dialogue between neatly arranged nature and well-crafted text that allows names and events to speak ‘beyond the grave’, even though there are no bodies interred in its vast acreage. It is a place where we remember by proxy; a place where remembering the dead is linked to a life cycle of planting, caring and nurture.

The staged setting of a garden such as Alrewas can be usefully compared with commemorative landscapes such as the Ehrenhaine, or ‘Heroe’s Groves’, of post-war Germany, or memorial gardens such as Coronation Park in Toronto (where groves of maple trees were planted in memory of Canadian troops who fought overseas) or indeed

the large parkland of King's Domain in Melbourne, which has been progressively filled with plantings, statuary and other memorial markers since it was first initiated in the 1920s. These revered public places might also be regarded as dramaturgical spaces, with the natural and situated objects acting out specific parts that represent both physical vulnerability and transience, but also respectful reverence within a larger framework of sacrifice and nationhood. In such places the seasonal cycle of nature 'confronts men and women with their own changes and mortality', to quote Doris Francis, concentrating the mind on the brevity of life and swift passage of time.⁵

This paper explores the role of arboreal and natural 'memorials' in creating meaning, and looks at how the planting of commemorative trees, plants and flowers requires wilful participation from those who wish to remember. Planting, as George McKay and others have pointed out, is at times a political act, requiring intervention, nurturing and constant vigilance.⁶ Whereas the erection of a memorial in stone and bronze might bring about a moment of closure, a memorial garden usually offers only a start; gardening is seen as a means not an end. On the former battlefields of the Western Front in France and Belgium the theatre of war has been superseded by theatres of memory. These vary in scale and intent from the declamatory and highly politicized tone of the Island of Ireland Peace Park on the Messines Ridge to the more modest Sheffield Memorial Park near Serre, which has accumulated a succession of private and regimental memorial components in the past ninety years.

This paper also touches on the challenge for the Imperial (later Commonwealth) War Graves Commission in galvanizing and managing the symbolic power of the cycles of natural decay and renewal. Drawing on the consoling properties of nature, they had to bring order to chaos, soothe the memory of dreadful events that had occurred nearby, and try to arrest the moment of untimely death. Consolation is a crucial factor in any garden memorial, and perhaps of all art forms they have the unique capacity to evoke poignant analogies between human existence, the fragility of nature and the assurance of 'cyclic regeneration'.⁷ Here, the role of the gardener is crucial: a skilful gardener can appear to deny death and disorder by planting, maintaining and caring for plants within the walled domain. As Francis *et al.* observed, a well-tended garden is a 'symbolic bulwark' against disorder, decay and the occasional randomness of death.⁸ Nowhere was this more urgent than on the pulverized battlefields of the Western Front, Macedonia (northern Greece) or the Dardanelles (western Turkey). The green coverlet of carefully cropped turf that was laid between the white headstones in the 'Silent Cities' on the Somme, at Arras or around Ypres was intended to offer succour to those whose loved ones had been lost in the calamitous void of trench warfare.⁹ The scale of that task is worth examining in some detail.

'FREEZING' MEMORY

Soon after the Armistice had been signed, Winston Churchill (then Minister of Munitions) recommended that the battered remains of Ypres should be left forever in ruins as an enduring monument to the sacrifice of British and Empire troops. For him and millions of others, the ancient Flemish city had become a symbol of fortitude and resilience. It was an historic and hallowed place through which every unit of the British Army had at one time passed. Its pulverized buildings, he argued, would be more articulate than any carved memorial or reverential monument. It was a powerful plea, typically Churchillian in its rhetorical tone, but it fell on deaf ears. Within months the townspeople were reclaiming the ruined town, diligently clearing away the impact of war and patiently restoring its medieval order.

To many, the immensity of the task seemed overwhelming. Across a great arc of southern Belgium and northern France the land lay in tatters, its soil poisoned and

villages levelled. The statistics are numbing: some 333 million cubic metres of trench had to be backfilled, barbed wire covered an estimated 375 million square metres, and over eighty thousand dwellings had been destroyed or damaged, as were 17,466 schools, public buildings and churches. In four years the population of the devastated regions had diminished by sixty per cent.¹⁰ To illustrate the scale of the damage a comparative map was drawn up by the British League of Help for Devastated France. It superimposed the scale of war damage onto the Shires of England to reveal that no fewer than twenty-one English counties would have been severely blighted by war – a swathe of destruction that reached from Kent to the north Midlands.¹¹

While the native populations in France and Belgium toiled to reconstruct their homes and land, pilgrims and war veterans roamed the former battlegrounds to locate places that might contain the memory of significant events. Outwardly there was nothing much to see; the landscape that drew them was an imaginary one. It was a place of projection and association, a space full of history, yet void of obvious topography. A place where physical markers had been obliterated but where the land had been overwritten with an invisible emotional geography. Tens of thousands made individual and group pilgrimages. They hoped to unite intense memories of loved ones with places that no longer existed. Veterans, such as the poet Edmund Blunden, always sought to go ‘over the ground’ again, recognizing that there were fragments of the ‘Old Front Line’ that had the power to activate his imagination and to bring the memory of his dead comrades closer to him.¹² Invariably, however, the wasted landscapes in France, Belgium, the Dardenelles and Macedonia were largely bereft of landmarks except for painted signposts indicating where things once were – former villages, churches, chateaux, farmsteads – and littered with war refuse and unspent ordnance. They were, as Paul Shephard has stated, blank places which ‘you took your story to’.¹³

Although many veterans were most drawn to very particular tracts of the old lines, it is little wonder that bereaved pilgrims homed in on the military cemeteries dotted across Flanders and Picardy. These soon became, and still are, the epicentres of grieving, marked now by gleamingly clean stones deeply inscribed with the high diction of mourning. Many insightful narratives have been told about the work of the Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC), and what Rudyard Kipling termed ‘this Dead Sea of arrested lives’, and this present volume contains insightful essays on the systematic audit of the dead, the process of recovery and burial, and the transformational work of individuals such as Fabian Ware.¹⁴ To complement these narratives, this paper now focuses on two adjacent aspects: firstly, the process of remembering, or what we might understand as re-remembering, the bringing together of parts that had been pulled asunder and dis-membered through violence and trauma; and secondly, the spatiality of commemoration: the arboreal, floral and vegetative contexts in which the headstones, obelisks and memorial arches are so thoughtfully placed. To this end, next examined is the interrelationship between plinth and place, touching on the tensions that can be aroused by officious procedures, and an exploration is made of the mnemonic value of the cemetery garden. But first, to start with names and naming.

NAMING AND KNOWING

In a detailed account of re-designing the Menin Gate at Ypres, Sir Reginald Blomfield focused on the key challenge for him and his design team: ‘I had to find space for a vast number of names, estimated at first at some forty thousand but increased as we went on to about 58,600.’¹⁵ Inscriptions had to spread across the walls, over arches, columns and even the stairwells, but Blomfield could still fit only 54,896 names into the tunnel-like arch. Six thousand were transferred to national burial sites nearby.¹⁶ Many miles south

in Picardy, the design of the gigantic arch at Thiepval was dictated in part by the need to display the names of 73,367 men with no known resting place who had died during the Battle of the Somme. Designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens, the huge arch consists of sixteen enormous load-bearing columns each faced by stone panels carved to a height of some six metres, each name clearly identifiable, the words never quite beyond legibility.

Little can prepare the casual visitor for the scale of the monument; it defies easy description and is almost 'unphotographable'.¹⁷ No image can seize its daunting scale, its weight and the panorama of names, 'So interminably many,' wrote Stephen Zweig, 'that as on the columns of the Alhambra, the writing becomes decorative.'¹⁸ It is also unnervingly precise in both its grammar and specificity: individuals who may have served (and died) under assumed or false names are listed; common names – Smith, Jones, Hughes – are further identified by their roll number, and the memorial includes an *Addenda* and even, according to Julian Barnes, a *Corrigenda*.¹⁹ Not only is it an impressive totem on the 'memory-scape', it is a gargantuan roll of honour built in brick and stone. As Shepherd has convincingly argued, it is this painstaking attention to detail – the assiduous 'clip and mow and prune' of the gardening, and the insistence on specificity at every level that makes it possible for the Commonwealth War Cemeteries to commemorate the dead without glorifying war.²⁰

Naming, and the precise evocation of names, was central to the cult of commemoration after the Great War. As a process it grew out of the complex bureaucracies developed by the industrial armies during years of total war; the administration of death echoed the regular rhythm of the military machine which had by the time of the Great War become 'rationalised, routinised, standardised'.²¹ However, initial attempts to coordinate the burial and recording of the dead were haphazard. In Flanders it was the diligent zeal of Ware and his Graves Registration Unit that laid the foundations of a systematic audit of the dead and their place of burial.²² Ware established a method for graves registration, a scheme for permanent burial sites and a system for photographing any grave requested by a relative. Within a year Ware's makeshift team had registered over fifty thousand graves, answered five thousand enquiries and supplied two thousand five hundred photographs.

Little over a year later the work to gather, re-inter and individually mark the fallen had become a state responsibility. The dead, as Michael Heffernan pointed out, were no longer allowed 'to pass unnoticed back into the private world of their families'. They were 'official property' to be accorded appropriate civic commemoration in 'solemn monuments of official remembrance'.²³ As others in this volume have observed, it was not long before visiting gardeners began to dress the military cemeteries with shrubs, small trees and indigenous plants.²⁴ The process of 'softening' had begun. It soon became an integral part of the cemetery designs through the systematic involvement of the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew. Horticulturalists such as Gertrude Jekyll brought a unique touch to the planting regimes, despatching forget-me-nots from Munstead Nursery so that the cemeteries would more closely resemble English gardens. Working closely with Lutyens and others, she required that indigenous plants be used to enhance the associations with the gardens of home, whether that be Britain, South Africa, New Zealand or Australia.

Ware's innovative programme of recovery, identification and remembering had at the same time introduced another quite radical process – indeed his approach heralded a new era, an epistemological shift, in the diction of commemoration – the era of the common soldier's name. On monumental structures in France and Prussia during the nineteenth century, the naming of dead soldiers of all ranks had been occasionally adopted, but never in Britain. When such a proposal was considered as a way of honouring the dead of Waterloo (1815) it was rejected by Parliament.²⁵ More usually, only officers

were named, rankers were simply identified by the number of dead and it was left to military units to initiate and raise the money for memorials that listed all ranks.²⁶ This was certainly the practice after the wars in the Crimea (1853–56), but by the end of the Boer Wars (1880–81, 1899–1902) it had become commonplace for local military memorials in Britain to contain lists of those who had died, often denoting rank – a practice that was avoided after the Great War largely to connote ‘equality of sacrifice’, irrespective of class, rank or status. By late 1918 the administration of death and grieving had become organized, regulated and marked by ‘a historically unprecedented planting of names on the landscapes of battle’.²⁷ Indeed, the very words chosen for the Stone of Remembrance in each of the larger cemeteries underlines this fact: ‘Their name liveth evermore.’ A phrasing that caused Lutyens to ask provocatively, ‘But what are names?’ For the bereaved, however (and especially for those in the distant reaches of the Empire), they were often all that was left.

PLACE AND THE ‘ANXIETY OF ERASURE’

While names can be recovered, even recuperated from the past, language strained to describe the calamity and depravity of modern war. John Masefield, author and future Poet Laureate, struggled to find the vocabulary necessary to describe his first sight of the Somme battlefield in 1916:

To say that the ground is ‘ploughed up’ with shells is to talk like a child ... to call it mud would be misleading. It was not like any mud I’ve ever seen. It was a kind of stagnant river, too thick to flow, yet too wet to stand, and it had a kind of glisten and shine on it like reddish cheese, but it was not solid at all and you left no tracks in it, they all closed over, and you went in over your boots at every step and sometimes up to your calves. Down below it there was a solid footing, and as you went slopping along the army went slopping along by your side, and splashed you from head to foot.²⁸

After the war words did not come any more easily. The sites of memory that attracted visitors in their thousands were often little more than tracts of wasteland to which historic significance had to be attached. It was in fact a spectacle of absence, a potent emptiness of flattened earth, ruined and shattered forms, interspersed with cemeteries strung out like the ‘beads on a rosary’.²⁹ Robert Freestone suggested that the structures and relationships between the many sets of stakeholders who have some authority over a given ‘site of memory’ are ‘complex, incomplete, sometimes unfair, confused, and conflicting’.³⁰ Identifying, conserving and managing the ‘places we want to keep’ because they are deemed to have layers of significance is strewn with competing demands.

These tensions are brilliantly captured in a short story by Julian Barnes, *Evermore* (1996), whose central character, Miss Moss, makes regular visits to her brother’s grave in a military cemetery in northern France. On one of her annual pilgrimages she travels prepared to dig up the coarse French grass, which by her standards is inappropriate for British soldiers to lie beneath, and replace it with a home-grown substitute:

After dark she dug out the offending French grass and relaid the softer English turf, patting it into place, then stamping it in. She was pleased with her work, and the next year, as she approached the grave, saw no indication of her mending. But when she knelt, she realised that her work had been undone: the French grass was back again.³¹

This attention to an authentic nature of memory has long historic roots. It is possible to trace a pattern of commemoration to the Battle of Gettysburg (1863), which continues on to the barren ash hills around Verdun, through to such Second World War sites as the beaches of Normandy, the ‘martyred village’ of Oradour-sur-Glane and the razed

city of Hiroshima.³² On each of these battlegrounds the moral resonance of the site itself is seen as paramount. Ditches, mounds, ruins and barren tracts have been maintained, preserved and sometimes enhanced because they are seen as ‘historical traces’ which have an unassailable authority. However, the semiotics of commemorative spatiality are complex because they must be constantly negotiated and redefined.

This difficulty notwithstanding, a semiotics of place has been clearly articulated by the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, who was compelled by the qualities of particular sites and examined their role in the formation of collective memory. ‘Space is a reality that endures’, it has the capacity to unite groups of individuals and believers concentrating and ‘moulding its character to theirs’.³³ So saturated in potentiality are some sites that pilgrims have been continuously drawn to places that ‘contain’ the memory of overwhelming events. In this sense, the terrain around the Brandenburg Gate, the ‘raised knoll’ in downtown Dallas and the land at ‘Ground Zero’ in New York can be considered secular shrines capable of rekindling memories of awesome events, as locales of embodied potentiality.³⁴

In the same spirit, Robert Harbison, wandering over historic sites of battle and musing on the manner in which we help create ‘significant’ landscapes, has suggested that ‘serious tourists’ actually monumentalize – and re-construct – the landscapes they pass through. Pilgrims, especially recurrent visitors such as Miss Moss, ‘classicise’ certain places by concentrating on nodes of significance – the Butte de Warlencourt on the Somme, Hill 60 near Ypres, the ash mounds around Verdun – which gradually acquire ‘ceremonial eminence’ whatever their outward condition.³⁵ The cemetery gardens designed and planted by imperial gardeners on the Western Front battle lines play a key part in serving as nodal markers in a landscape that is now largely returned to agriculture but is littered with significance. However, military cemeteries play only one part in these memory-scapes: they need to be seen in a commemoratively spatial context. Next examined are two such memory-scapes, one created on the sites of battle in Turkey, and the other – in Australia – that was created in response to those distant battles.

CONTESTED NATURE IN GALLIPOLI

In Western Turkey, the Great War battlefields are perched on the tip of the Dardanelles Peninsula. A complex historical site, it has been recurrently invested in and contested by ‘insiders and outsiders’ since the Allied and Empire troops evacuated its bloody ridges in early 1916.³⁶ Along the line of the old No-Man’s-Land the terrain is peppered with statuary, museums, revered landscapes, facsimile trench lines and cemetery gardens. The main period of cemetery planning and memorial building took place in the 1920s when the IWGC assumed responsibility for situating and planning thirty-one cemeteries and five Allied memorials.³⁷ They are carved in the restrained neo-classical style that characterize the work of the IWGC, work that was carried out in challenging climactic, geological and socio-political conditions. Sir John Burnet, principal architect, complained about the insecure ground, its poor drainage and the propensity of the impoverished locals to remove the essential materials intended for the Commission. He had also to work in an emotionally charged context. As at Ypres, there was a vociferous lobby by Australian and New Zealand ex-servicemen to designate the entire ‘Anzac’ area as consecrated ground; a lobby that, while unsuccessful at the time, would later lay the foundation for territory disputes that have become spasmodically inflamed since the Turkish government agreed the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923.

As for marking their part in the campaign, there was no comparable response from the Turkish authorities until the 1950s, and then again in the late 1960s when a number of imposing modernist structures were built at Cape Helles, the most southern point

of the peninsula. During the late 1980s a number of Islamic memorial sites were built, and in the last decade several large figurative statues – some strident, even bombastic, in tenor – have been located at Anzac and Helles. Although the war ended here in 1916, an understated battle for monumental supremacy has been waged ever since. Turkish and Commonwealth memorial sites are located uncomfortably close to each other on the cliffs over the once-disputed beaches, and immense statues of Turkish heroes stand face to face with the Commission's obelisks, locked forever in 'parallel monologues'.³⁸ On the eve of the eightieth anniversary of the Allied landings in 1995 the Turkish authorities supplemented the martial statuary with an ambitious – but not uncontroversial – planting regime designed to dress the battlefield with appropriate symbolic floral designs. Although the cemetery gardens were largely untouched, the surrounding areas were liberally planted with non-indigenous ceremonial shrubs and trees. Few have proved able to survive the extremes of the climate. Since then the native brush and thick undergrowth have largely reclaimed much of the ground beyond the shallow walls and ditches that mark the edges of the cemeteries. Although some have been creatively preserved many other trench lines, dugouts and other fragile remains have become overgrown and softened by indigenous plant growth.

As a hallowed site of national memory, the preservation of the Gallipoli battlefield as a physical and inviolable entity has helped maintain a strong consciousness of the past. David Lowenthal argued that this is 'essential to maintenance of purpose in life, since without memory we would lack all sense of continuity, all apprehension of causality, all knowledge of our identity'.³⁹ However, as is evident on the contested ravines and beaches of the Dardanelles, memory, identity and purpose are rarely values that are evenly shared, especially between nations many thousands of miles apart. Such spaces are invariably politicized, dynamic and contested. As Barbara Bender noted, they are constantly open to negotiation and their meaning needs to be constantly renewed through regular interaction by successive generations of visitors and second, even third, generations of relatives.⁴⁰ They are no longer singular sites of memory but have become multilayered and deeply stratified places of personal and public memory.

Just as there are several distinct phases in the creation and reception of public monuments, so the commemorative spatiality in which they occur has a number of similar phases. Jay Winter has proposed a three-part cycle in the afterlife of *lieux de memoire*. He defined the first as an initial, creative period – the construction of 'commemorative form' – which is marked by a programme of siting, building and the creation of ceremonies that are periodically centred on the reverential object. During a second phase, the ritual action is grounded in the annual calendar and becomes institutionalized as part of civic routine. There is then a critical, transformative period when the public monument either disappears or is upheld as an active site of memory. This final phase, as Winter reminded us, is largely contingent on whether a following generation of mourners inherits the earlier meanings attached to the place or event and adds new meanings.⁴¹ Without frequent re-inscription the date and place of commemoration simply fade away as memory atrophies. Very soon the monument loses its potency to re-invigorate memory: it becomes 'invisible'. Equally, this second generation of carers must pay attention to the space that surrounds or contains the once-revered object; they must preserve its perimeters, attend to its maintenance, and significantly they must tend to the symbolic shrubbery and flowers that surround the totemic stone. Neglecting to do so indicates a lack of attention, a loss of faith, a waning interest in preserving the memory of those whose names are inscribed into the stone. Withered wreathes, unkempt lawn and badly pruned shrubs are regarded as a prompt reminder of a negligence of the past. As mnemonic devices in a funerary environment, flowers are powerful purveyors of information.

In the post-war period the distance between the battlefields of the Dardanelles and the soldier's homelands of Australia and New Zealand proved too great for many relatives and pilgrims. Instead, in an adaptation of Winter's third phase of commemoration, proxy measures were created. This took the unique form of seed and soil exchanges which were initiated by Anzac troops, and then became part of a rich discourse of remembering shared between the once-belligerent countries.

This aspect of re-remembering began as early as 1915, soon after the bloody struggle for one of the tactical strongholds at Gallipoli (known now as the Battle of Lone Pine, August 1915). A young Australian soldier, Thomas Keith McDowell, was reputed to have retrieved a single pine cone from the slopes of the bloody ridge. Stored in his kit bag during military service in Turkey, North Africa and the Somme, the convalescent corporal returned to Melbourne with the cone in late 1916. Some twelve years later, nurtured by the fertile Western District soils at Grassmere near Warrnambool – so the story relates – McDowell's aunt managed to propagate five seedlings from the cone, of which four were coaxed into small saplings. All four were handed over to the military and between May 1933 and January 1934 they were planted amid high ritual in key locations in Melbourne (Figure 2). One tree was destined for King's Domain, a thirty-six-hectare tract of well-maintained lawns, pathways and mature trees that acts as the commemorative hinterland to Shrine Reserve, a highly revered tract of land dominated by the classical edifice of the Shrine of Remembrance, one of the largest war memorials in Australia. An imposing granite structure, the Shrine is based on the Tomb of Mausolus at Halicarnassus and the Parthenon in Athens, and was initially intended solely as a memorial to the men and women from the State of Victoria who had died during the First World War (Figure 3). However, within a few years, its scale, imposing location in the city and the grandeur of its commemorative environs meant that it soon came to be seen as Australia's premier memorial to all sixty thousand nationals who had served in the war.⁴²

After a prolonged, and at times strongly contested, process of development, during which many native and exotic trees were systematically (and controversially) culled to make way for a commemorative planting regime, the Shrine was officially dedicated on Armistice Day 11 November 1934. An estimated three hundred thousand people – one-third of all those living in Melbourne at the time – gathered to witness its inauguration by the Prince Henry, Duke of Gloucester. One year earlier, the Shrine Reserve tree, grown from one of the four cones nurtured by McDowell's aunt, had been planted with full military honours on 11 June 1933 by Lieutenant-General Sir Stanley Savige.

McDowell's gift and his aunt's green-fingered prowess, while impressive, were not, it seems, unique. Another soldier, Lance Corporal Benjamin Smith from the 3rd Battalion, had also retrieved a pine cone from the Dardanelles and sent it back to his mother in Australia. Two seedlings were raised in 1928 – one was presented to her hometown in New South Wales, while the other was forwarded to Canberra, where it was planted, once again by Prince Henry, at the Australian War Memorial in October 1934.⁴³

In fact, the pines were part of a comprehensive exchange of seeds to and fro Australia, France and Turkey during and since the Great War. The transplantation of memory brought seeds from afar as Picardy and Ypres. In Melbourne, soil from Verdun was scattered at the foot of beech trees from Flanders, 'mingling the sacrifice of one country with the soil of another',⁴⁴ causing one French official to comment at the ceremonial planting that the 'trees could not feel that they were in a far away land now that they were near the Shrine'.⁴⁵ Despite the local clamour for native Australian trees, instead of the strict regime and funerary dignity offered by clipped yews and cypresses, the designers managed to integrate imperial planting with indigenous trees. By the mid-1930s, as Bruce Scates observed, avenues of box, kauri and cypress were flanked by



Figure 2. A 'Lone Pine' tree in the Shrine Reserve in Melbourne, planted on 24 April 2006 'in memory of the service and sacrifice of Victorians in the First World War'

English oaks, New Zealand Christmas tree, American elm and beech brought over from the Flemish battlefields. To augment further the scale and span of the British Empire, a Memorial Grove was planned around 'a nucleus [...] of trees from South Africa, Canada and India [...] terminating with an olive tree from Palestine'.⁴⁶

More than any other single ceremonial event, the planting of the lone pine in the Shrine Reserve Pine was invested with 'sacramental significance', which lent it a lead part in the dramaturgical layout of the Domain. A living link to the legions of the lost, its symbolic value was consistent with the commemorative vision of General Sir John Monash, former Commander of all Australian forces in the First World War, who was the driving force behind Victoria's extraordinary war memorial. In addition to resolving the political tensions behind its location and design, he played a critical part in raising the necessary funds, managing the construction and attending to a great many of the symbolic details, including redrafting the words of the inscription on the Western Wall: 'Let all men know that this is Holy Ground. This shrine, established in the hearts of men as on the solid earth, commemorates a people's fortitude and sacrifice. Ye therefore that come after, give remembrance.'⁴⁷



Figure 3. Visitors walking to the Shrine of Remembrance past the water trough memorial

With this proclamation in mind and with a clear emphasis on the emotional potency of ‘solid earth’, Monash forbade the siting of statues to war leaders in the immediate vicinity of the Shrine. Instead, the commemorative surround was planted with one hundred trees, each dedicated to a Victorian State military unit that had been engaged in the conflict. For decades, the trees served as places of commemoration for veterans and their descendants. Acting as surrogate graves, their trunks and footings were regularly strewn with wreaths, ribbons and personal mementos. They also became the focus of formal wreath laying services and ceremonies (Figure 4).

Monash’s clear instruction held firm for some two decades. Although many more commemorative trees were planted, it was not until just after the Second World War that the memorial ground became crowded with rhetorical *topoi*, both newly commissioned pieces as well as those relocated to the memorial precinct. An equestrian statue of Monash in 1950 heralded the concentration of remembrance around the Shrine. Queen Elizabeth II unveiled the Cenotaph to the Second World War in 1954, followed by statues to military leaders (Thomas Blamey in 1960) and to popular figures (‘Weary’ Dunlop in 1995) and a host of more generic sculptures – a widow and her children (1998), two facsimile sculptures by Charles Sargent Jagger the same year, and an Australian Hellenic Memorial three years later.⁴⁸

Further monumental pieces by Peter Corlett have been added to its collection of statuary, and a memorial horse trough and other city monuments have migrated there. Gathered in between these nodes of significance, a number of small formal gardens have been laid out. The Legacy Garden of Appreciation is a cross-shaped planting of hedges and red poppies – grown from seeds imported from battlefields in northern France – which was established in 1978; nearby a Women’s Garden incorporates highly crafted concrete memorial violets within a grove of jacarandas, gathered around an Ex-Servicewomen’s Memorial Cairn. To the south of the Shrine a substantial stone and water feature has been designed to mark the role of Australian service personnel in wars – and on peace-keeping



Figure 4. Memorial Tree in the Shrine Reserve. Note the poppy placed on the trunk

duties – since 1945. Marred by public controversy, particularly on how to accommodate the memory of Vietnam, the ‘Subsequent Campaign’ memorial had to be described not as a ‘structure’ (and therefore governed by planning legislation) but as a piece of ‘garden furniture’, to ensure that it was exempt from any such control (Figure 5).⁴⁹ New blocks of polished stone have since been added to incorporate Australia’s part in recent ‘small wars’ in Afghanistan, Iraq, Timor and Somalia.

CONCLUSIONS

Shrine Domain is typical of many such *‘lieux de memoire’*, sites of hallowed memory that accumulate emotional intensity as, over time, they become an indexical account of national and state military activities overseas. However, like many other memorial and monumental landscapes, even those that appear benign and consensual, such spaces are inevitably politicized and periodically contested. Across Shrine Domain every attempt to devise or locate new memorials or cairns, or to modify aspects of the garden, have aroused high-pitched anxiety and public debate. Perhaps the distance from the battlegrounds in Turkey and Flanders has accentuated the historic divisions in Melbourne, lending an intensity to every debate, from the culling of native trees in the



Figure 5. Remembrance Garden Palms in the Shrine Reserve presented by the Veteran's Federation of the Republic of Vietnam in Australia

1930s to the squabbles about separate memorials to the role of women over the past twenty years.

Yet, these tensions aside, the garden memorials – at Alrewas, Serre, Gallipoli and in the Shrine Domain – have proved remarkably resilient and responsive to caring management. They also benefit from cross-generational interest and enthusiasm: in Australia the Melbourne Legacy Organisation and nurseries in Canberra have grown seedlings sourced from the trees at the Shrine of Remembrance and the Australian War Memorial. These have been presented to schools as well as ex-service and other organizations throughout Australia, as well as ensuring that memorial sites in Turkey have been regularly replenished by stock from Australia. Furthermore, the global transaction in seeds, soil and stone – ‘transplanting the front’ as it has been memorably phrased – is not only an Anzac phenomenon.⁵⁰ Canadian memorials also incorporate stone fragments, seedlings, shards of glass, fragments of *materiel* rescued and clandestinely transported from battlegrounds in Europe to North America.⁵¹ This global exchange of nature offers an interesting shift in the paradigm of remembrance and the continuing value of gardening. It introduces a new dialogic element into the idea of the garden memorial, a dialogue conducted not in the past tense but in the present, and is further evidence of the way that memory can be retrieved from the past, made tangible and nurtured into the future.

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