

**AN ACCOUNT OF THE UNVEILING OF THE ROYAL AIR FORCE MEMORIAL ON 16<sup>TH</sup> JULY 1923**  
**EXTRACTED FROM THE**  
**ANNUAL REPORT OF THE RAF BENEVOLENT FUND 1923**

The War Memorial was unveiled by H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, K.G., on Monday, the 16th July, 1923. The ceremony was brief but striking in its simplicity and sober grandeur.

The setting of the ceremony on the Victoria Embankment on a brilliant sunny day in the middle of the London season could not have been finer; the Embankment, a broad and noble highway, on the one side, and on the other side the River Thames flowing by almost at high tide.

The Air Force was represented by 600 men, with a proportion of officers, consisting of a Guard of Honour of 3 officers and 100 men, the Central Band of the R.A.F., 15 trumpeters, the Guard of Honour being flanked on either side by 200 men in column of flights. The troops were in service dress, Air Force blue, and presented a very fine and smart appearance and excited great admiration.

A large number of distinguished persons commenced to assemble from 11.30, representative of not only the three Services, but of the Government and the great offices of the State.

The Air Council was represented by Lieut.-Colonel Sir Samuel Hoare, Bart., C.M.G., Secretary of State for Air, The Duke of Sutherland, Under Secretary of State, Air Chief Marshal Sir H. M. Trenchard, Bart., G.C.B., Chief of the Air Staff, Air Vice Marshal Sir Geoffrey Salmond, K.C.M.G., Air Vice Marshal Sir O. Swann, K.C.B., and Sir W.F. Nicholson, K.C.B., Secretary of the Air Ministry.

The Royal Navy was represented by Admiral of the Fleet Earl Beattie G.C.B. (a Vice-President of the Fund), the Chaplain of the Fleet, and the Marquis of Linlithgow, Civil Lord of the Admiralty.

The Army was represented by General the Earl of Cavan, K.P., Chief of the Imperial General Staff, and by Lieut. General Sir Robert Whigham, K.C.B., Adjutant-General to the Forces, and by the Chaplain-General of the Army. There was also present the First Commissioner of Works, Sir John Baird, and H.M. Commissioner of Woods and Forests, Sir G. Leveson-Gower, was invited, but could not attend.

Civil Government was represented by Mr. Henry Gooch, Chairman of the L.C.C., and by Mr. F. G. Rye, Mayor of Westminster.

The Church was represented by Dr. Ryle, Dean of Westminster.

Amongst others were: Air Commodore and Mrs. F. R. Scarlett, Air Commodore and Mrs. J. M. Steel, Air Commodore and Mrs. Gerrard, Air Commodore and Mrs. T. I. Webb-Bowen, Air Commodore and Mrs. F. A. D. Masterman, Air Commodore and Mrs. F. C. Halahan, Air Commodore and Mrs. T. C. R. Higgins, Air Commodore A. E. Borton, Air Commodore and Mrs. D. Munro, Mr. G. Holt Thomas, and many others.

The Executive Committee was represented by the Chairman, the Rt. Hon. Lord Hugh Cecil, P.C., M.P., who was supported by Air Chief Marshal Sir H. M. Trenchard and Viscount Cowdray, P.C., and by the following members of the Committee : Lady Leighton, Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, Mrs. B. H. Barrington-Kennett, Mrs. L. M. K. Pratt-Barlow, Sir Charles McLeod (Honorary Treasurer), Air Vice Marshal J. F. A. Higgins, Air Vice Marshal Sir Geoffrey Salmond, Air Vice Marshal Sir Vyell Vyvyan, Air Vice Marshal H. R. M. Brooke-Popham, Air Commodore C. A. H. Longcroft, Air Commodore E. R. Ludlow-Hewitt, Lt.-Colonel J. T. C. Moore-Brabazon, Lt. - Commander. H. E. Perrin, Mr. Walter S. Field.

The Secretary of the Fund, Lieut.-Colonel W. E. S. Burch, and the Assistant Secretary, Lieut. J. P. Cuninghame, were also present.

The Architect, Sir Reginald Blomfield, R.A., Mr. Reid Dick, A.R.A., Sculptor, and Mr. Frederick Dove, representing the contractors, were present in their official capacities.

In addition, a large number of ladies not previously mentioned attended the ceremony, amongst whom were:- The Duchess of Sutherland, Viscountess Cowdray, Lady Maud Hoare, Lady McLeod, Lady Trenchard, Lady Salmond, Lady Vyvyan, Lady Henderson and Miss Henderson, Lady Blomfield, Mrs. J. F. A. Higgins, Mrs. Longcroft, Mrs. E. R. Ludlow-Hewitt, Mrs. Oliver Swann, the Hon. Mrs. Warner, Mrs. J. T. C. Moore-Brabazon, Mrs. Reid Dick, Mrs. W. E. S. Burch, Miss Chauncey, and others. Many other persons were invited, but were unable to be present.

Group Captain H.R.H. the Duke of York, President of the Fund, who served with the Independent Air Force in France, arrived on the ground shortly after 12 noon, and was received by the Chairman of the Executive Committee, who presented the following to His Royal Highness: Sir Reginald Blomfield, R.A., Mr. Reid Dick, A.R.A., Mr. Frederick Dove (of Messrs. Dove Bros. Ltd.), Mr. Morris (Foreman of Works), and the Air Attaches of France, Belgium, and America, together with such members of the Executive Committee as were not already known to His Royal Highness.

H.R.H. the Prince of Wales arrived at 12.15, and was received with due ceremony by the troops, and, subsequently, the above-mentioned gentlemen were presented by the Duke of York to the Prince, who then proceeded to inspect the Guard of Honour, accompanied by the Duke of York and Air Chief Marshal Sir H. M. Trenchard.

This ceremony being over, Air Chief Marshal Sir Hugh Trenchard, one of the Trustees of the Fund (on behalf of the Air Force supporters of the Fund), expressed the welcome of those supporters to H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, in a short speech, which expressed gratitude to The Prince for coming to unveil the Memorial. The Chief Marshal said he felt that the Memorial was an indication to all who passed it of the work of those who died in the air in the Great War, and its unveiling by the Prince of Wales was an honour to those who had given of their best in the air.

Viscount Cowdray, also a Trustee (on behalf of the civilian supporters), said that they were met there to express their affection for the Air Force, their admiration and pride in its achievement, and to pay their heartfelt tribute to those who fell in (the War, and on that solemn occasion they were very glad to have their beloved Prince among them.

Lord Hugh Cecil, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Fund, said that they had erected a Monument to the officers and airmen of every part of the British Empire who fell in the War. They

had had the advantage of the skill and talent of Sir Reginald Blomfield and Mr. Reid Dick, and the Committee hoped that, guided by their skill, they had before them a monument not unworthy of its purpose. They would be moved at the sight of it to thoughts of pride and sorrow when they recalled the brave men it commemorated; it would bring to mind many reminiscences and memories. With their sorrow would be mingled pride and gratitude for what had been done by those gallant men who had passed away, and it was fit and proper that their memory should be perpetuated in the more enduring medium of bronze and stone with fitting beauty and dignity of form. They were fortunate in having a Prince who, following in the footsteps of their King and Queen, was binding the Empire together with bonds of loyalty, and those present that day had this in common with those who had died in the War - loyalty to the Throne and to His Royal Highness, who was so deeply enshrined in the affections of the Empire.

The Prince of Wales said: - "This monument, erected by the Royal Air Force Fund, which I am about to unveil, will stand as a lasting tribute in the heart of this great city to the memory of all ranks of the Royal Naval Air Service, Royal Flying Corps, Royal Air Force, and every other Air Force who played their part in the War, braving with high spirit the unknown dangers of warfare in a new element and dying to give us the final victory. Their exploits and undoubted courage have established a tradition for the new Service which our cloud armies of the future, whether in peace or war, will, I feel sure, follow with devoted pride; and the nation on whose behalf I am asked to accept this Memorial, and to whom I am to dedicate it, will ever thankfully remember the gallant lives and great deeds it commemorates."

On the conclusion of the speech, the Chaplain of the Royal Air Force, Air Commodore the Rev. H. D. L. Viener, C.B.E., who was supported by the Staff Chaplains of the R.A.F., then offered prayer, concluding with the Lord's Prayer, after which the Guard of Honour gave a salute.

The Prince of Wales then pulled the cord, and the Union Jacks fell gracefully away from the four sides of the Memorial, leaving it standing in its noble simplicity in the noonday sun. A few impressive moments then followed, as immediately the flags had reached the floor, the R.A.F. trumpeters sounded the Last Post, paused for a moment, and then, with a final roll of the drums, sounded the Reveille.

The Prince was then requested by the Chairman to unlock one of the bronze gates on the right flank of the Memorial, and handed to the Prince for this purpose a silver key.

The Prince, having unlocked the gate, followed by the Chairman and many other spectators, went round the rear of the Memorial, where he found drawn up a line of 27 boys, the sons of fallen airmen, and who are being educated and cared for by the Fund at Vanbrugh Castle School, Blackheath, S.E., which was the noble gift to the Fund of Mr. Alexander Duckham. The Prince inspected the boys in passing and shook hands with the Controller and Matron.

Passing out of the other gate, the Prince, having made a farewell salute to the Memorial, was escorted to his car by the Chairman, and left amid the cheers of the hundreds of spectators gathered around.

His departure was immediately followed by the Duke of York, and then the Memorial was thrown open to the public, and many beautiful wreaths, and equally beautiful small bunches of humble flowers, were laid all round the Memorial in great profusion, and hundreds of spectators passed round the Memorial, which was the subject of universal commendation and admiration.

This concluded, after a short but simple and impressive ceremony, the unveiling of the R.A.F. War Memorial, which is admitted on all hands to be a fitting Memorial and a noble addition to the Embankment between Westminster and Charing Cross bridges.

On Sunday, 11th November, 1923, the fifth anniversary of the signing of the Armistice, a simple and pleasing ceremony took place at the Memorial, when, at the request of the Executive Committee, and in the presence of many members of the Committee and thousands of spectators, Air Chief Marshal Sir Hugh Trenchard, Chief of the Air Staff, deposited a wreath, provided by the Fund, on the pedestal of the Memorial in the name of all ranks of the Royal Air Force and in memory of the fallen. The day was beautifully fine, and the brief and touching ceremony was carried out under ideal conditions, a very large number of wreaths, great and small, being laid around the base after the ceremony had concluded.