

Today - Ruyton Remembers

Sir Frederic Kenyon OBE KCB

1863 -1952



As WWI drew to its close, the Government started to discuss what would be the best way to commemorate the millions of war dead, as well as uniting the scores of military cemeteries that were now scattered across Europe.

Various committees were set up to discuss the best ways of ensuring that all would be remembered equally. In July 1917, Fabian Ware appointed Edwin Lutyens and Herbert Baker as architects with Charles Aitkens, Director of The Tate, authors Sir James Barrie and Rudyard Kipling to serve on a committee to bring their ideas forward. They visited the battlefields and cemeteries then returned to formulate views for the various options and designs and were joined in September by Arthur William Hill, Assistant Director of Kew Gardens.

Frustrated by the lack of progress, the Committee appointed Sir Frederic Kenyon, Director of the British Museum, to complete the deliberations and give a final decision on the way forward. He was a classical scholar and in his report 'HOW THE WAR CEMETERIES ABROAD WILL BE DESIGNED', his proposals were based on the way the ancient Greeks in 5th century Athens BC honoured their dead. This was that 'In death all should be equal', no ranks or distinctions were shown as all had made the ultimate sacrifice. On this basis it was agreed that headstones of all the military cemeteries should be uniform and also should be maintained by the British Government in perpetuity.

His report was submitted to Fabian Ware in February 1918 and published in November of that year. His feeling was that there would

be great dissatisfaction in the country if the wealthy were able to raise elaborate tombs to their husbands and sons, but the poor would have none and be forgotten.

To this end the Commonwealth Headstone was designed, all the same colour and size, only the details of each man being given as an individual. Architect Edwin Lutyens designed the look, layout and stone, with Rudyard Kipling and Sir James Barrie providing suggestions for the wording. The Commonwealth War Cemeteries of the World are still designed and laid out as per Kenyon's original report.

His connections with Ruyton

The 11th of the 15 children of John Robert Kenyon and Charlotte Louise Kenyon of Pradoc West Felton.

He was born in London and married Amy Hunt, whose sister was Dame Agnes Hunt of Boreatton. His two sisters Eliza and Emma lived in The Cottage, School Road and played a prominent part in village life, including raising money to build the War Memorial