



Turner's cross with Crusader Knights either side of a stone lozenge.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF WAR CLOISTER

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WINCHESTER
COLLEGE

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View through Angel Gate.

The Architecture of War Cloister at Winchester College

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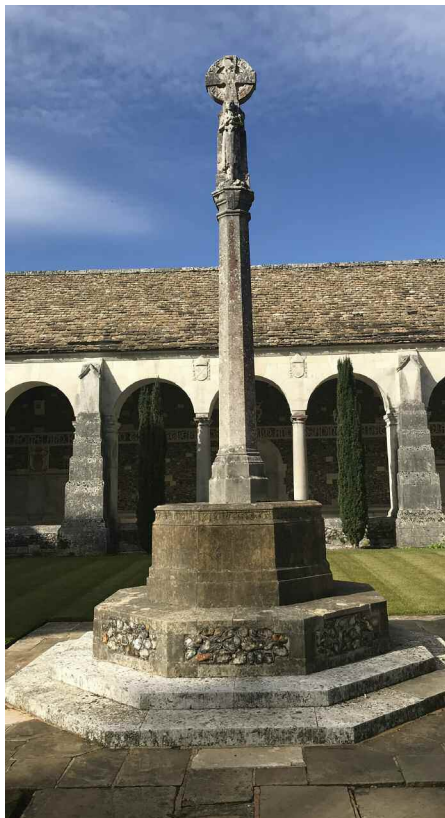
Completed between 15th May 1922, when Viscount Grey of Fallodon laid the foundation stone, and 29th May 1924, when Arthur Duke of Connaught opened the memorial, War Cloister stands as a tribute to the vision of the Headmaster who initiated the idea, Montague Rendall, and of course to the 513 Wykehamists who fell during the Great War. In size, it remains the largest private war memorial in the United Kingdom.

To fulfil his vision and that of the Old Wykehamists who attended the Amiens dinner on 17th November 1917, Rendall and the Governing Body recruited an architect and sculptors of the highest calibre: Herbert Baker, Charles Wheeler and Alfred Turner. Baker was already famous for his work in South Africa and India, and Wheeler for war memorial sculptures the length of England. Both would later be knighted. Wheeler would go on to become the first sculptor to be elected as President of the Royal Academy of Arts in 1956. Baker designed many of the great buildings of the then British Empire. He was also appointed as one of the chief architects for the Imperial (now Commonwealth) War Graves Commission at the end of the Great War, including the largest War Graves Commission cemetery known as Tyne Cot, just below the Passchendaele ridge. The cemetery acquired this name because of the large number of Northumberland regiments which served in the area.

Alfred Turner studied at the Royal Academy and later became a member. His work was mainly in the area of statues, reliefs and war memorials in the first half of the twentieth century. George Kruger Grey, a Chichester born artist, was mostly famous for designing coinage for many countries throughout the world. He also specialised in stained glass windows. This gave him a unique talent to carve and paint all the Arms, Emblems and Names on the walls and roof spaces of War Cloister.

It was agreed to build a cloister as this complemented the already existing Wykeham's Cloister surrounding Fromond's Chantry. It was also decided to site the War Cloister on the ground of the old racquets courts and Meads wall

on the western side of the College grounds. Above all, Rendall wished this to be here so that future generations of young Wykehamists coming down to lessons from the Commoner Boarding Houses, would walk through this “Via Sacra”. The walls are flint faced and knapped, but a number of the old bonding stones in these flint walls are from the original Meads wall, with dates on them such as 1792. Some of the bonding stones on the external walls have “temples” among them for candles. During the Illumina event held in December every year, lit candles are placed in these “temples” as dusk settles. To approach War Cloister from Meads through Angel Gate, with Wheeler’s Madonna and Gleadowe’s bronze sculpted angels above, is to approach the low wall at the cemetery entrance to Tyne Cot in the Ypres Salient. They are remarkably similar and deliberately so.

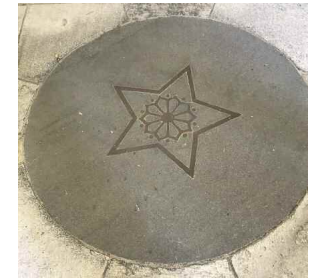


Turner’s central cross and octagon.

The War Cloister has four ranges corresponding to the directions of the compass. These surround the central garth, with four walkways of London paving slabs leading inwards to Turner’s central cross with the Greek inscription *Christos Anesti* – Christ Arisen. A small sculpted cross set in a circular stone lozenge sits atop, guarded by two Crusader Knights facing east and west. From above this produces a square shape with the cross in the centre.

To return to the inner and outer walls, one sees both below and above Rendall’s inscription knapped flint. The style of the lettering in the inscription is Lombardic. Flint knapping is regarded as a particularly difficult masonry skill, only acquired by long

experience. It is more typical of East Anglian ecclesiastical architecture than that of Hampshire. It involves shaping the flints and settling them into masonry dust to a depth of two to three inches. The Hampshire masons learnt the craft ably and quickly. Most of the flints came from the nearby village of Shawford.



Star of India on black marble paving slab.

Each range finishes in a corner known architecturally as an ashlar-faced dome. There are therefore four. Once again to produce the dome demands skilful masonry techniques, where squared or dressed stone is finely jointed towards the central key-stone of the dome. Each corner represents the contributions of the Empire towards the great struggle. This starts with the Indian dome in the north east corner, moving to the African dome in the south east corner, along to Australia and New Zealand in the south west, and finishing with Canada, Newfoundland, and Jamaica in the north west.



Shields of the provinces of India.

Standing in the Indian corner, when one looks up to the key-stone, one sees a carved star of India and the lotus, or sun disk, surrounded by a wreath of lotus flowers. Looking to the ground one stands upon a paving slab of black marble from Budh-Gaya in the state of Bihar, on which is set another Star of India. At the time of construction of War Cloister this marble was being used in many of the buildings of New Delhi. The marble paving inlay was given and transported free of charge to Winchester College. This applies also to the other three Empire and Dominion domes, and their respective stones.

The wall stones in this corner are the official Arms of the then Twelve Provinces of India in order of establishment: Madras, Bombay, Bengal, United provinces of Agra and Oudh, Punjab, Bihar and Orissa, Burma, Central Provinces, Assam, Baluchistan, North-west Province, Delhi. They are magnificent and are the Charges blazoned on Circular or Eastern Shields.

In the African corner, one looks up to see this time a key-stone depicting the Southern Cross and Anchor of the Cape of Good Hope surrounded by a wreath of mimosa, South Africa's then floral badge. The depiction above is also reflected below, but this time carved into granite quarried from the base of Table Mountain. The wall stones represent the West African Dependencies, the Arms of the Union of South Africa, Egypt, the mountains of the moon and the source of the Nile. Finally the favourite symbol of Cecil Rhodes, the Zimbabwe bird, is beautifully carved.



Australian five star Southern Cross.



New Zealand paving slab.



African Southern Cross and Anchor.

Moving to the Australian and New Zealand corner, this time in the key-stone we see the Southern Cross in a wreath of wattle leaves. There are two paving slabs; the five-star Southern Cross for Australia laid into a piece of Wyenite from Gibraltar Bluff, Bowral, New South Wales. Wyenite (or sometimes Syenite) is a coarse-grained igneous rock, resembling granite. On the New Zealand paving slab, also granite, there is the four-star symbolical cross with the letters N Z and the silver fern, a native plant made famous by the All Blacks rugby team. Many of the wall stones recall the contributions, not specifically combat, of the Pacific islands, the East Indian islands as well as the naval stations of Singapore and Hong Kong. The Arms of the Commonwealth of Australia and the Dominion of New Zealand are especially striking.

Finally moving to the north west corner we find Arms and symbols recalling the roles of Canada and Newfoundland, as well as the support of the West

Indian islands and Jamaica. The key-stone this time is, unsurprisingly, a maple leaf. The paving slab is made of Canadian marble from Texada Island, British Columbia. It is a beautiful marble with a slightly pink coloration. On it we see the Northern Constellation of the Great Bear and a border of maple leaves.



Wall stones in the Australia and New Zealand dome.

The contributions of the Empire forces were immense, and often said to have been out of proportion to the comparatively small numbers of troops. The populations of Australia and New Zealand were tiny at that time. They were involved almost from the start of the war. Their forces were all-volunteer and remained so for the four years of the war, unlike the UK forces. After the ill-fated Dardanelles campaign the Australian and New Zealand forces were sent to the Western Front, where by 1918 they were grouped into their own specific respective Corps: the Australian Corps of five divisions commanded by General Sir John Monash; the Canadian Corps of four divisions commanded by General Sir Arthur Currie; and the New Zealand division. These became very much the spearhead assault divisions, alongside our own Guards and Rifle divisions in the 100 days advance which routed the German army in the summer and autumn of 1918. The Indian Army had long held a prestigious place in the order of battle of the Empire's forces. During the Great War they served not only in the Middle East fighting the Ottoman forces, but also on the Western Front as both infantry and cavalry. On 14th July 1916 the magnificent Deccan Horse Cavalry Regiment carried out the only major cavalry attack of that year, withering beneath the German machine-gun fire coming from High Wood on the Somme.

In Rendall's inscription around the walls of War Cloister standing nine feet above the mixed Portland and Purbeck paving slabs of the four ranges, the Christian impetus to serve is made obvious, and in the iconography in the

roof spaces and arches this is also made extant. Exiting from War Cloister into Meads one passes through Angel Gate. Turning around and looking back into the cloister through this gate, one sees beautifully framed the monograph M on the far western range wall for Saint Mary. This is directly in line with Turner's slender cross which is also framed by Angel Gate itself.

All of the ranges have at each end of their roof spaces, mounted on the beams, angels holding variously: the wooden cross of the early battlefield cemeteries, the wreath of victory, the Arms of Jerusalem with its Or on Argent coloration, an exception to heraldic law made in favour of the Sacred City. Other roof angels hold the badges of those Regiments with which Wykehamists were most closely associated during the Great War: the Rifle Brigade, the King's Royal Rifle Corps, the Royal Artillery, and the Hampshire Regiment in whose ranks our youngest Victoria Cross winner Denis Hewitt served. He died aged 18 on the opening morning of the Third Battle of Ypres, 31st July 1917, while leading a company attack on the strong point of Sint Juliaan; so much responsibility and courage demanded of one so young.

The north and south doorways also have a bas-relief of an angel above them. To the north the angel holds the dove of peace and a sheaf of corn representing plenty. To the south the angel holds the symbols of victory, a crown and palm leaves.

Some of the most impressive Christian symbols are seen in the central roof bosses of the southern and western ranges. In the roof space of the southern range there are two such bosses in vivid colours of gold and red: the monogram of St Mary and further on the emblems of Christ's passion depicting the ladder to climb onto the cross, the whip of the Roman guards and the spear of the Legionaries. In the western range roof space there are a further two bosses, showing the crown of thorns and the Lilies of the Virgin.

Accompanying the Marian and Christian symbols are the 123 Regimental badges of Regiments and Corps in which Wykehamists served in both world wars. On the inner stone arches and Portland stone columns stand the names of the 272 Wykehamists who fell during the Second World War. They face their forebears of the First World War whose names are engraved on close-grained Hopton wood, which despite the nomenclature is a Derbyshire marble. The Regimental badges are placed on outside corbel-tables, on both sides of the beams, and on inside corbel-tables on, or in the middle of, the oak tie-beams. It is a magnificent visual history, especially of the old County Regiments, regrettably no longer in existence, of the first half of the twentieth



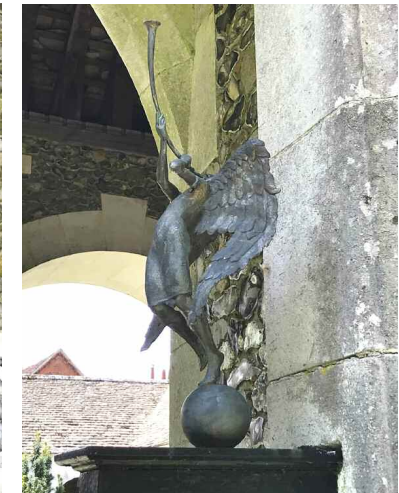
Roof boss of crown of thorns.



Roof boss of St Mary's monogram.



St Mary's monogram.



One of two bronze-cast angels.



Victory angel above Southern Gate.

century. The spearhead elite divisions cut the way through the German defences, but the old county regiments ensured the victory of 1918.

Above the beams and corbels are the stone tiles of the four roofs. These were cut from deep Purbeck beds in Dorset. Difficult to find, they come from many quarries.

Around all four inner walls of War Cloister, the national Coats of Arms or flags of the Allied Nations during the Great War are depicted in large name tablets. There are eight of these and they follow a pattern of design. Each name tablet has in its upper half a magnificent British Lion. From the Lion flow golden threads toward the national emblems. These are the golden threads of Alliance which brought about ultimate victory.

Moving clock-wise from the north east (Indian) corner, they are France and Belgium in the eastern range, Imperial Russia, Serbia and Rumania in the southern range, Japan, Greece and Portugal in the western range, with Italy and the USA in the northern.

As we have seen in the placing of the south and north doors, harmony and balance are a key to the whole structure. This was no doubt in Baker's view and Rendall's vision an attempt to bring order and a peacefulness to an experience of horror and chaos. In Reverend J D'E Firth's 1959 book on Winchester College, he described War Cloister as "a single act of faith commemorating countless acts of faith" during the Great War. One would be hard put to better this description.

If we move into the garth and stand next to the octagon on which stands Turner's cross, the desire for balance and harmony is once again witnessed. High on the inner arches of the eastern range are those Charges, Arms, and Regimental badges representing thoughts of home. The Arms of the home countries: the three lions of England, the rampant lion of Scotland, the Irish Harp and the Leek of Wales. Facing these across the garth on the inner western arches are those symbols of the nurturing Wykehamical community, representing Hampshire, Winchester, the Holy See of Winchester, William of Wykeham our Founder, and the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. When one faces the north and south arches there is a balanced pairing with the Shield of the Royal Navy facing the badge of the Merchant Service, the Arms of the Infantry facing the Arms of the Royal Artillery, the rewards of valour, the Victoria Cross, opposite the symbols of High Command in the

form of a Field Marshal's baton, and the ambulance service opposite the wings of the RAF.

In the other half of the north and south arches the offices of Government and Empire are placed opposite the Coats of Arms of the governance of the school: Lord Chelmsford, Viceroy of India and Viscount Grey, Foreign Secretary at the outbreak of war, opposite Warden Palmer and Headmaster Rendall's Arms.

The final cost of the War Cloister by 1924 was £65,000. This would equate today to just under £3,750,000. This money was all raised from the generous donations of Wykehamists. It was also conditional in that the OWs insisted the Warden and Fellows would find, independent of this money, the funds to finance the education of any fatherless son of a fallen Wykehamist who wished to come and would benefit from a Winchester education. This commitment was given at a meeting in the Junior Common Room of our sister foundation, New College Oxford, in 1919. The Governing Body having given this commitment, Rendall and Baker had the green light to start on War Cloister.



Flint: Wykeham's original building material. Flint for War Cloister was similarly sourced from Shawford.

A legitimate question would be "how relevant is War Cloister to the young Wykehamists of today?" Aged between 13 and 18 and of an increasingly international mix, the events of 100 years ago might seem less meaningful. Mostly, the current pupils are seen rushing through War Cloister back up to their boarding house or running late for a lesson.

We still hold our Act of Remembrance in War Cloister each Remembrance Sunday. There is also a less formal Act of Remembrance held on the actual day and hour of the Armistice. I am always struck by the solemnity and dignity with which the boys hold the two minutes silence. The atmosphere of War Cloister seeps into all present, and thoughts, some only half-formed, turn to their Wykehamist forebears. It is genuinely moving. Rendall would feel proud.