

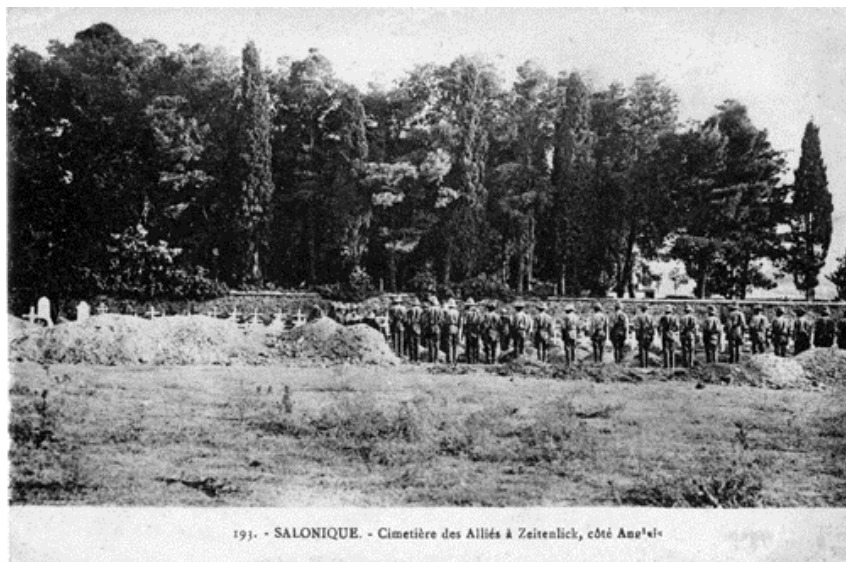
War and Remembrance: Constructing and maintaining Commonwealth WWI Cemeteries in Greece 1920-1940

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The First World War has been a major event in the modern history of the Balkans because (i) it created the largest battlefield that the world had seen in the area; (ii) it broke up the Ottoman Empire; (iii) it strengthened nation states; and (iv) it created millions of refugees. In addition, during that time the genocide of the Armenians took place, arguably one of the least known genocides in history.

Although heavily destructive the war also created a series of significant socio-economic and infrastructure contributions in the region. The forces that took part in it (Entente and the Central Powers) *inter alia* built up new road and rail network; improved the provision of health care; implemented wetland drainage projects and invented new methods of production. It is in this particular context where the first organized military cemeteries were built in the Balkans as part of commemorating the glorious people who perished during the war. The purpose of this paper is to document the systematic British program of caring for the war's dead, as well as of establishing permanent monumental military cemeteries of World War I in Greece.



Funeral at the British section of Zeitinlik (Lembet Road) cemetery.

teries of World War I in Greece.

The first burials of the soldiers of Entente forces took place in October 1915 in Thessaloniki, in the area of Zeitinlik, a site next to the Lazaristes' monastery, which was used as a headquarters camp and a temporary military hospital. There were provisional military hospitals in the area, while the catholic cemetery of Saint Vincent and Paul lied nearby as well.¹ Very soon though,

¹ V. Vlasidis, «Τα στρατιωτικά νεκροταφεία του Α' Παγκόσμιου Πολέμου στη Μακεδονία» [Military cemeteries of the First World War in Macedonian region], *Θεσσαλονίκη* [Thessaloniki], 8 (2013), p. 326; Μ.Ν. Ρούσσος-Μηλιδώνης [M.N. Roussos-Melidonis], *Οι Πατέρες Λαζαριστές στην Ελλάδα, Κωνσταντινούπολη και*

the burials expanded in areas around Thessaloniki and throughout the entire Macedonian Front, which was the area between the Vlore in Albania and Strymonas River in Eastern Macedonia, mostly across the newly formed Greek-Serbian borderline.

The process of managing the war casualties started for the British on December 26, 1915, just two months after disembarking in Thessaloniki.² By the end of the war, United Kingdom had built at least 100 provisional cemeteries and made dozens of individual burials. France reported 241 cemeteries in the early 1920³, and 146 by the end of the same year⁴, while Serbia reported 213 provisional cemeteries in Macedonia and 27 cemeteries in the island of Corfu.⁵ Many cemeteries were constructed for the casualties suffered by the Russian and Italian armies. The issue of constructing and maintaining military cemeteries after the end of the war quickly became of major importance.

On October 23, 1917, the governments of United Kingdom and France requested from Eleftherios Venizelos' government to be granted some land in order to build permanent military cemeteries. The Greek government agreed to this request⁶, following an agreement between Belgium and other forces of the Entente⁷. The agreement was to be drafted and signed by the parties involved, while General Guillaumat attended the matter and submitted the draft to the Greek administration of Macedonia.⁸ The agreement was drafted by a committee that was under the presidency of the former General Governor of Thessaloniki, Periklis Argyropoulos, while General Guillaumat was also involved together with representatives of the British, French, Italian and Serbian missions.⁹

The agreement was eventually signed between Greece (General Governor of Thessaloniki Constantinos Adosidis), France (General Boucher), United Kingdom (General Milne), Italy (Colonel Giamberini) and Serbia (Field Marshal Živojin Mišić) in Thessaloniki during November 7/20, 1918 and it was ratified by the Laws 2473/1 August 1920 and 2630/29 July 1921.¹⁰

Σμύρνη (1783-2004) [Fathers Lazaristes in Greece, Constantinople, and Smyrna (1783-2004)], Thessaloniki: The Catholic Church of Greece, 2004, p. 175.

² See in relation to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Archives (then CWGC Archive) WG 1084, Graves in Greece - Except Press Cuttings 26 Dec. 1915 - 18 Nov. 1940, Burial return re grave in Salonica, Salonica 26 Dec. 1915.

³ Archives du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères (AMAE), Cimetières Français en Macédoine Grecque, Compte-Rendu de la Mission de Repérage des tombés en Macédoine, Salonique, 23 Feb. 1920.

⁴ AMAE, Cimetières de Regroupement. Macédoine Grecque, Note sur les cimetières de Macédoine, créés ou refaits par les missions de Regroupement des tombes en 1920, Salonique, 25 Nov. 1920.

⁵ Ιστορικό Αρχείο Υπουργείου Εξωτερικών της Ελλάδος [Historical Archive of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, IAYE], 1932-1934 A/5/3, Legation Royal de Yougoslavie en Grèce to the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Note Verbale, No. 24156, Athens, 12 Jun. 1930.

⁶ IAYE, 1921 4.4, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Representative of the Government in Thessaloniki, No. 2960, Athens, 9 Feb. 1918.

⁷ See CWGC Archive, Add 1/1/2, Agreement between the United Kingdom and Belgium, 25 May 1917; IAYE, 1921 4.4, the Governor General of Macedonia to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, No. 18326, Thessaloniki, 5 Jul. 1918.

⁸ IAYE, 1921 4.4, Le général Guillaumat, Commandant et Chef les Armées Alliées en Orient, à Monsieur le Gouverneur General de la Macédoine, Thessaloniki, 18 Mar. 1918.

⁹ IAYE, 1921 4.4, the Governor General of Macedonia to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, No. 18326, Thessaloniki, 5 Jul. 1918.

¹⁰ IAYE, 1935 A/18/3, Law No. 2473, on the ratification of the Agreement of the 7/20 Nov. 1918 for the British, French, Italian and Serbian cemeteries in Greece, *Government Gazette of the Kingdom of Greece*, A'

As a result of this agreement, several permanent military cemeteries were established in Greece and in other Balkan countries to care for the war dead of the French, Serbian, Italian, Russian, Greek and British armies.¹¹ It is worth noting that German and Bulgarian military cemeteries were built as well, but they only lasted for a few decades.¹²

In the beginning there was lack of coordination and communication for that matter among the various Greek governmental bodies, to the extent that the Ministry of the Military¹³ and the Supreme Military Administration of Macedonia¹⁴ were not even aware of the existence of the cemeteries and the way they functioned. This prevented the effective preservation of foreign cemeteries in the Greek territory. The responsibility for the protection of the cemeteries was given to the local police authorities.¹⁵

United Kingdom was the first country that designed a project plan for the establishment and functioning of the military cemeteries. For this specific reason the British demonstrated ample interest in the implementation of the agreement in Greece. Therefore by the beginning of 1919 they proposed that the Greek side signed an additional agreement that considered the establishment of a special British-Greek committee. A similar agreement had already been signed between the British and the French for the protection of the British graves in France.¹⁶ The committee would be responsible for caring of the casualties and for the construction of memorials for the dead soldiers of the United Kingdom.¹⁷ For

220/24 Sep. 1920; IAYE, 1932 A/45/9, Law No. 2630, on the expropriation of estates for founding permanent allied cemeteries, Kütahya, 23 Jul. 1921, *Government Gazette of the Kingdom of Greece*, A' 131/30 Jul. 1921.

¹¹ For an introduction to the remembrance and cemeteries of the First World War in Macedonia, see E. Gavra - V. Vlasidis, "Military Cemeteries of the First World War in Macedonia Region: Routes of Reading History in Search for the Common Cultural Heritage", in N. Avramidou (ed.), *1st Specialty International Conference on Monumental Cemeteries. Knowledge, Conservation, Restyling and Innovation (Modena, 3-5 May 2006)*, Rome 2007, pp. 179-189; V. Vlasidis, "Those who were left behind. The Commonwealth cemeteries of World War I in Macedonia", in B. C. Gounaris - K. Diogos (eds), *British Presence in Salonica and the Macedonian Hinterland*, Thessaloniki 2012, pp. 46-53; V. Vlasidis, "Rediscovering WWI Serbian monuments in Greece. From Ignorance to Consideration of the Cultural Heritage", in *Archives, Media and Culture of Memory in the First World War: Proceedings of the International Conference, Novi Sad 29-30 October 2014*, Novi Sad 2014, pp. 307-327; V. Vlasidis, *Μεταξύ μνήμης και λήθης. Μνημεία και κοιμητήρια του Μακεδονικού Μετώπου (1915-1918)* [*Between Memory and Forgetfulness. Monuments and Cemeteries of the Macedonian Front 1915-1918*], Thessaloniki, 2016. For the memory of the Macedonian Front see V. Vlasidis, "Great War and the Balkans. The use of memory in Bulgaria and in Greece", *Etudes Balkaniques*, 51/1 (2015), pp. 242-255; V. Vlasidis, "This is not Our War: Macedonian Front War Memory", *Proceedings of the International Conference, World War I in Central and Eastern Europe: Politics, Culture and Society*, Faculty of History and the Archives, Dublin: University College Dublin, 2015 (in print).

¹² For the German-Bulgarian cemetery see V. Vlasidis, "Establishing WWI Military Cemeteries in Greece in the Interwar Period: Play of Memory and Complicity of History", in Snezhana Dimitrova, Giovanni Levi - Janja Jerkov (eds), *One Hundred Years of Inheriting: The First World War Phenomenon*, Blagoevgrad: South-West University Press, 2016 (in print).

¹³ IAYE, 1935 A/18/3, Secretary of Military P. Protopapadakis to the Supreme Military Command in Macedonia, No. 154116, Αθήνα 12 Jun. 1922.

¹⁴ IAYE, 1935 A/18/3, the Higher Military Command in Macedonia to the Ministry of the Military, No. 16021, Thessaloniki, 19 Jul. 1922.

¹⁵ IAYE, 1935 A/18/3, the Governor General of Macedonia to the Ministry of the Military, No. 24513, Thessaloniki, 26 Nov. 1922.

¹⁶ IAYE, 1919 3.8, Agreement between the United Kingdom and France respecting British war graves in France, Paris, 26 Nov. 1918.

¹⁷ IAYE, 1919 3.8, Granville to the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Athens, 24 Mar. 1919; IAYE, 1921 4.4, the Ministry of the Interior to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, No. 11178, Athens, 19 Apr. 1919; IAYE, 1921 4.4,

this purposes, Captain A.F. Menzies arrived in Greece at the end of 1920 with orders to inspect the cemeteries in Thessaloniki, Kavala, Alexandroupolis and elsewhere.¹⁸ The agreement was finally signed on August 27/September 9, 1921 and was ratified by a Royal Decree, which was published in the official *Government Gazette*.¹⁹

One could conjecture that the idea of the British to establish a permanent body overseeing the smooth operation of cemeteries and monuments was due to factors such as: (i) their dominant position in the eastern Mediterranean; (ii) their knowledge and interest in the Balkans and particularly in Macedonia during the 19th and early 20th century; and (iii) the support that the British received by Eleftherios Venizelos' devotees and supporters.²⁰

However this scenario is not correct. In fact, United Kingdom's main interest was to manage in the best possible way its losses during the war, as well as to commemorate the victims in the coming years. The Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC) was founded in 1917 following Sir Fabian Ware's suggestion.²¹ The main reason for building cemeteries was the management of pain and grief of the families over their dead. Therefore, they built several cemeteries close to the battle field as well as monuments for those casualties whose

the Royal Embassy of Greece in London to the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, No. 2065, London, 5 May 1920.

¹⁸ IAYE, 1935 A/18/3, Note Verbale of the British Legation in Athens, No. 278, 10 Dec. 1920.

¹⁹ CWGC Archive, WG, 407/1 Pt. 1 Anglo-Greek Agreement, 10 Jan. 1918 - 15 Apr. 1937. Agreement between the United Kingdom and Greece respecting British War Graves in Greece, HMSO, London 1921, with letter, 29 Mar. 1922; IAYE, 1933-1941 22, Αγγλικά νεκροταφεία στην Ελλάδα. Ελληνοαγγλική Μεικτή Επιτροπή περί βρετανικών πολεμικών τάφων (βάσει ελληνοαγγλικής συμφωνίας 1921) [English cemeteries in Greece. Anglo-Greek Mixed Committee respecting British War Graves (based on the Anglo-Greek Agreement of 1921)], *Government Gazette of the Kingdom of Greece*, A' 14/31 Jan. 1922, pp. 55-58.

²⁰ M. Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1997, pp. 93-114; S.G. Markovich, *British Perceptions of Serbia and the Balkans 1903-1906*, Paris: Dialogue Association, 2000, pp. 44-53; S. Markovic, "British Perceptions of the Salonica Front", in *The Salonica Theatre of Operations and the Outcome of the Great War. Proceedings of the International Conference organized by the Institute for Balkans Studies and the National Research Foundation Eleftherios K. Venizelos, Thessaloniki 16-18 April 2002*, Thessaloniki: IMXA, 2005, p. 428; B.C. Gounaris, "British Travellers, Diplomats and Sailors in 19th century Salonica", in B.C. Gounaris - K. Diogos (eds), *British Presence in Salonica and the Macedonian Hinterland*, Thessaloniki 2012, pp. 23-25; B.C. Gounaris, "Constant Gardeners of Salonica", in B.C. Gounaris - K. Diogos (eds), *British Presence in Salonica and the Macedonian Hinterland*, Thessaloniki 2012, pp. 41-45; B.C. Gounaris, "Rediscovering Macedonia", in B.C. Gounaris - K. Diogos (eds), *British Presence in Salonica and the Macedonian Hinterland*, Thessaloniki 2012, p. 13; E. Michail, *The British and the Balkans: Forming Images of Foreign Lands, 1900-1950*, London/New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011, pp. 46-53, 69-75; R. Richardson, *Home away from the home front: the British in the Balkans during the Great War*, PhD thesis, Birkbeck, University of London, London 2014, pp. 165-196.

²¹ For the creation of the Imperial War Graves Commission see CWGC Archive, WQ Pt. 1, Imperial Commission, 5 Jun. 1916 - 31 Mar. 1917; CWGC Archive, WQ Pt. 2, Imperial Commission, 24 Mar. 1917 - 19 Oct. 1917; CWGC Archive, WG 3, Genesis and Composition of the Commission, 31 Oct. 1917 - 17 Oct. 1941. For Fabian Ware and his efforts see D. Crane, *Empires of the Dead. How one man's vision led to the creation of WWI's War Graves*, London: William Collins Publisher, 2013.

corpses were impossible to collect or were not found.²² The cross of sacrifice was used as a sign of sacrifice for the country and not as a reference to the death of Jesus Christ.²³

According to the agreement, a mixed British-Greek committee was created, including four honorary members (two British and two Greeks) and six technical members (three British and three Greeks). The British honorary members were the British Ambassador in Athens and Fabian Ware. The technical members were the director of the British Archaeological School of Athens, the General Consul of United Kingdom in Thessaloniki and the Consul in Athens.²⁴ The honorary members of the Greek party were selected among distinguished people in the army, navy, sciences and arts. The technical members were the Health Director of the Ministry of Interior, the Director of Public Constructions in the Ministry of Communications and a supreme or senior officer of Staff.²⁵ Membership to the Greek honorary committee was granted for a term of three years, although it could be renewed.

Initially, the main task of the Committee was to move the graves from the provisional cemeteries, which were near the frontline, mountainsides and streams, to larger ceme-



Official inauguration of the Doiran military cemetery and memorial, September 25, 1926 (V. Nikoitsios collection).

teries qualified as permanent memorial burial sites. Subsequently, the construction and conservation of permanent cemeteries also became a responsibility of the Committee.

²² J. Winter - E. Sivan, "Setting the Framework", in J. Winter - E. Sivan (eds), *War and Remembrance in the twentieth century*, Cambridge/New York/Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 8-39; K.N. Inglis, "War Memorials: Ten Questions for Historians", *Guerres Mondiales et Contemporains*, 167 (1992), p. 9.

²³ A. King, *Memorials of the Great War in Britain. The Symbolism and Politics of Remembrance*, Oxford/New York: Berg Publishers, 1998, pp. 129-130.

²⁴ *Government Gazette of the Kingdom of Greece*, A' 14/31 Jan. 1922.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

Moreover, part of the Committee's activities was to request from the Greek authorities to resolve all issues that arose, such as the registration of the cemeteries in the local Land Registry, the judicial settlement of matters regarding infringement, and the placement of the memorials and flowers that relatives sent from United Kingdom.²⁶

Although the members of the Committee did not meet each other on a regular basis, with only four official meetings being recorded²⁷, they worked very hard to resolve the most important issues. Menzies, the Secretary General of the Committee, undertook the responsibility to carry out the Committee's decisions and the daily work. He had very good relations with the local authorities in northern Greece as well.

The British started implementing their project before an agreement was formally signed. More specifically, according to the equivalent French committee, they had already begun moving individual graves and evacuating some provisional cemeteries into larger cemeteries that were located near cities and villages.²⁸ This procedure went on during the following years. Graves were moved not only from the Macedonian mountains,²⁹ but also



The Indian military cemetery at Monastiriu Street, Thessaloniki (photo V. Vlasidis).

²⁶ For the purposes of the Imperial and –after March 16, 1960- Commonwealth War Graves Commission see *The Commonwealth War Graves Commission, Charter of Incorporation dated 21st May 1917 and Supplemental Charter dated 8th June 1964*, pp. 7-9.

²⁷ CWGC Archive, WG 407/2, Greece - Anglo-Greek Mixed Committee, 1st Meeting, 15 Feb. 1924; CWGC Archive, WG 407/3, Anglo-Greek Mixed Committee, 2nd Meeting, 22 Oct. 1932; CWGC Archive, WG 407/3, Anglo-Greek Mixed Committee, 3rd Meeting, 14 May 1938; CWGC Archive, WG 407/5, Anglo-Greek Mixed Committee, 4th Meeting, 28 Nov. 1946.

²⁸ AMAE, Compte-Rendu, 23 Feb. 1920.

²⁹ IAYE, 1935 A/18/3, British Legation Notice, No. 7, Athens, 14 Jan. 1923.

from the islands, where the deceased from the sunken battleships were buried.³⁰ The main difference was that the British did not work alone anymore, but in collaboration with the local prefectural, health and police authorities.

The British-Greek Agreement and the Mixed Committee must have been the main reason why United Kingdom chose to create permanent cemeteries only in Greek land, while the other Entente forces used space that belonged to other countries. In particular, France created cemeteries in Serbia (now being FYROM) and in Albania, Italy built its cemeteries in Albania and requested creation of one cemetery in Bitola (then Serbia, now FYROM), Greece built cemeteries in Serbia (Piot) and in FYROM (Valandovo), whereas the British preferred to gather all the dead bodies inside the Greek borders, evacuating every other provincial cemetery outside Greece even though they were closer to cities such as Strumitza. The only exception was a cemetery in Skopje with 124 bodies of RASC soldiers (MT), who died due to the influenza virus after the sign of the Armistice with Bulgaria.

The permanent British cemeteries in Greece are as follows:

Cemetery name	Location	No. of graves	Transfer relics from to
Salonica (Lembet Road)	Stavroupolis, Thessaloniki	1,694	After the Armistice, some graves were brought in from other cemeteries in FYROM, Albania and from Scala Cemetery, near Cassiviti, on the island of Thasos
Mikra	Kalamaria, Thessaloniki	1,957	Cemetery was greatly enlarged after the Armistice when graves were brought in from a number of burial grounds in the area
Monastir Road (Indian)	Dendropotamos, Thessaloniki	358	
Kirechkoi-Hortakoi	Exohi, Thessaloniki	663	In 1937, 12 graves were brought from Salonika Protestant Cemetery
Lahana	Lahana, Serres	299	Graves were brought from the two front line cemeteries at Paprat and from other small burial grounds (41)
Struma	Kalokastro, Serres	962	Graves were brought from the churchyards at Homondos, Haznatar and Kalendra villages, and from Ormanli (24), Dolab Wood (17) and Big Tree Well (17)
Sarigol	Kristoni, Kilkis	711	560 graves were brought from Janes Military Cemetery
Doiran	Doirani, Kilkis	1,384	Graves were brought from small burial grounds. The most important was Strumnitza British Military Cemetery, north-west of Doiran

³⁰ IAYE, 1921 4.4, the Ministry of Interior to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, No. 19204, Athens, 4 May 1921.

Cemetery name	Location	No. of graves	Transfer relics from to
Karasouli	Polikastro, Kilkis	1,422	Graves were brought from Hadzi Bari Mah (63), Caussica (62), Senelle Ravine (95), Gugunci village (154), Dolzeli village (23), Reselli (31), from the two cemeteries at Kilindir (45), Ardzan village (22). The whole Kalinova cemetery transferred to Karasouli in December 1920 with 476 graves
Dedeagatch	Alexandroupolis, Evros	64	13 graves from Kavalla Anglo-French Cemetery, 5 from other places
Portianos	Lemnos island	347	
East Mudros	Lemnos island	885	
West Mudros	Lemnos island	226	
Syra	Syros island	111	Graves were brought in from Amorghos (7); Antiparos (5); Ekinosa (9); Heraklia (26); Kassos (1); Ano Kouphonisia (1); French Consular Cemetery on Milo (Melos) (20); Naxos (2); Paros (1); Santorini (1); Skarpanto (Kerpe) (9); Stampalia (Astypalea) (3); Syra British Consular Cemetery (12) and St. Trias Churchyard at Livadi, Zea (Keos) (1)
Corfu	Corfu island	13	
Piraeus Naval & Consular	Piraeus, Attiki	23	
Bralo	Bralos, Fthiotis	95	

All cemeteries in continental Greece have been constructed according to the original plan elaborated by the IWGC architect, Sir Robert Lorimer (who was responsible for Italy and Greece) and adapted to the specific features of the location and soil. They were mainly rectangular plots, with the only exception being the cemetery in Kristoni, which is circular. The graves were either placed in rectangular arrangements or in rows. There are no memorial crosses in these graves, only rectangular plaques that are either placed upright in place of a traditional cross, or parallel to the ground and they are slightly raised. This was a practical solution in order to resolve the problem of paying respect to the soldiers of diverse religious beliefs; although it also gave the families the opportunity to have the plaques engraved at will. The only exception is the Salonica cemetery located on Monastiriou Road in Thessaloniki, which is dedicated to the Hindu, Sikh and Muslim soldiers from India, who in their majority served in the transportation and servants units.³¹

³¹ Vlasidis, "Left behind", p. 53.

There is no differentiation between the graves of the officers and those of soldiers, as they are all placed along the same rows and they share the same type of plaques. Usually at the one end of the cemetery lies the cross of sacrifice based on an initial plan of the architect Sir Reginald Bloomfield and at the other end lies the Stone of Remembrance with the inscription: "Their names liveth for evermore". The Remembrance Stone, which was originally designed by the architect Sir Edwin Lutyens, is normally found in cemeteries with more than 1,000 graves.³² The only cemetery without a Stone of Remembrance is the Karasouli cemetery in Polikastro, Kilkis, where the whole area is covered in grass and is surrounded by low stone walls.

The cemeteries and memorials of the islands of Lemnos and Syros were built according to the specifications of the Scottish architect, Sir John Burnet. This is the reason why they combine the Stone of Remembrance and the Cross of Sacrifice in a single construction, which is also the typical plan of the cemeteries in the area of Gallipoli. Furthermore they don't have all gravestones in straight lines and in rectangular plots, but they form together with the gravestones different shapes.

The importation of materials and the construction of the new cemeteries took place concurrently. Flagstones, crosses, wires, stones and bushes were used to build the cemeteries and the memorial sites. The reconstruction project had to be completed by the end of the 1920s.³³ That was not an easy task. Some cemeteries, like the one in Alexandroupolis, were in bad condition and isolated from the British services. For this reason the British Embassy requested from the local garrison headquarters of Alexandroupolis to take care of the cemetery. The garrison headquarters sent a task force that provided occasional conservation, but it also incurred safety issues that the army could not undertake. The cemetery was in need of a permanent guard.³⁴

For those cemeteries in Crete, Lemnos, Syros and other islands, the person in charge of construction was Lieutenant Cyril Hughes, the Deputy Director of Works in Gallipoli; he was appointed Deputy Director of Works in control of the Imperial War Graves Commission's cemetery and memorial construction program on Gallipoli. After those cemeteries were completed, the British-Greek Committee shared responsibility of administration.³⁵

Nevertheless, the most important cemeteries, such as the one in Doirani and those in Thessaloniki had already been completed and consecrated before 1927 in the presence of British and Greek political authorities and people.³⁶ In particular, the memorial site in Doirani and its monument were solemnly inaugurated on September 25, 1926 following the demand of the British, under the presence of Eleftherios Venizelos, Sir Frederick Ke-

³² Vlasidis, *ibid.*

³³ IAYE, 1921 4.4, Note Verbale of the British Legation to the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, No. 49, Athens, 28 Mar. 1921; IAYE, 1926 69.7, Bureau du presse de Salonique, Discours du Sir Frederick Kenyon à Doiran, 25 Sept. 1926, attached to the Thessaloniki Press Office to the Press Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, No. 3806, Thessaloniki, 29 Sept. 1926.

³⁴ IAYE, 1935 A/18/3, the Garrison Headquarters of Alexandroupolis to the IV Army Corps, No. 15271/137, Alexandroupolis, 10 May 1924.

³⁵ IAYE, 1935 A/18/3, Minutes of the 1st Anglo-Greek Mixed Committee of the Imperial War Graves Commission, Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Athens, 15 Feb. 1924.

³⁶ IAYE, 1932-1934 A/5/3, the Deputy Governor General of Macedonia to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, No. 53555, Thessaloniki, 25 Nov. 1927; "Macedonia. The Salonika Army's Achievement", *The Times*, 10 Nov. 1928.

nyon, the then director of British Museum, and General Macdonald, who read out a message from General Milne.³⁷

Unlike France, Serbia and Italy, for whom the establishment, reconstruction and maintaining or elimination of the cemeteries depended on the availability of resources and monetary conditions as well on governmental preferences. United Kingdom had decided that the cemeteries established in Greek territory and in all other European countries would have a permanent existence and would not be affected by political changes, population exchange or the settlement of thousands of refugees in Macedonia, who often settled next to these cemeteries.

Thus they made sure from the beginning that the land provided by the Greek state was legally granted to the British state. The land where the British cemeteries were installed was granted to the British in compliance with Law 2630 established in 23 July/5 August 1921, except for that in Alexandroupolis which was granted in compliance with a Royal Decree in 4/18 August 1922.³⁸ Then the British consolidated a legal status on these lands by registering them in local Land Registries.

The British Embassy requested that the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs register all British cemeteries in local Land Registries.³⁹ This strategy was due to an infringement that occurred in Alexandroupolis' cemetery and in order to avoid conflicts between the British and the local authorities/people in the future.⁴⁰ The Greek state expressed no objection to the request and the Ministry of Public Health and Perception required that the General Governorate of Macedonia and Thrace and the Prefecture of Fthiotis proceeded to the registration in the Land Registries. The Ministry also gave instructions to the police authorities to guard the cemeteries so that any kind of infringement would be avoided. The Embassy, clearly knowing that the Administration would often hold matters up, repeatedly asked for information regarding the course of the land registration.⁴¹ No problem occurred for the cemeteries in Thessaloniki and they were all registered without complications.⁴² The cemeteries in Kilkis (i.e. in Polikastro, Doirani and Kristoni) and Serres (i.e. Kalokastro and Lahana) were registered a year later⁴³, while that in Bralos at a later date.⁴⁴ This delay caused the Embassy's concern.

³⁷ IAYE, 1935 A/18/3, Minutes of the 1st Anglo-Greek Mixed Committee of the Imperial War Graves Commission, Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Athens, 15 Feb. 1924; IAYE, 1935 A/18/3, the British Legation to the Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs K. Roufos, Athens, 28 Ιουν. 1926; «Η τελετή των αποκαλυπτηρίων του αγγλικού ηρώου εις την Δοϊράνην» (The unveiling of the English heroon in Doirani), *Το Φως*, 26 Sep. 1926. «Η τελετή της Δοϊράνης» (The ceremony in Doirani), *Μακεδονικά Νέα*, 26 Sep. 1926.

³⁸ IAYE, 1933-1941 22, *Government Gazette of the Kingdom of Greece*, A' 56/14 Apr. 1922.

³⁹ IAYE, 1933-1941 22, the British Legation to the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, No. 2, Athens, 3 Jan. 1933.

⁴⁰ IAYE, 1933-1941 22, Secretary of Public Health and Perception I. Makropoulos to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, No. 20383, Athens, 14 Mar. 1933.

⁴¹ IAYE, 1933-1941 22, the British Legation to the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, No. 87, Athens, 21 Mar. 1933; IAYE, 1933-1941 22, the British Legation to the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, No. 7, Athens, 8 Jan. 1934.

⁴² IAYE, 1933-1941 22, Secretary of Public Health and Perception I. Makropoulos to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, No. 69662, Athens, 27 Jul. 1933.

⁴³ IAYE, 1933-1941 22, Governor General of Macedonia P. Rallis to the Ministry of Public Health, No. 75137, Thessaloniki, 13 Jun. 1934.

⁴⁴ IAYE, 1933-1941 22, the British Legation to the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Athens, No. 5, 4 Jan. 1935.

Naturally a number of problems persisted with regards to land ownership before World War I or even before the Balkan Wars. Such was the case of the cemetery in Mikra. Ali Dilaver Bey possessed a land of 11,257 square metres in Floka area. He had departed before the end of the Ottoman administration. During the war, the land had been confiscated and given to the head of the British forces, General Milne, to become a cemetery. After a few years, Ali Dilaver Bey sought compensation, to which he was legally entitled to. Given the circumstances, this burdened the Greek side.⁴⁵

The development plan of Alexandroupolis requested part of the fenced area around the cemetery in the same city⁴⁶, which was not accepted by the British. After an on-site investigation by Colonel G.E. Hughes and the Prefect of Evros, A. Nikas, on October 31, 1933, they successfully requested that the development plan be appropriately altered.⁴⁷

Though the land of the cemeteries might have been relatively easy to regulate, gaining access to the cemeteries was a different and often much harder issue because the small streets that led to the cemeteries were always not registered to the Land Registries. For instance, access to the Indian (Monastir Road) of Thessaloniki, Lahana and Kalokastro cemeteries was problematic since nearby pieces of land had already been sold to individuals, who could restrict access to them.⁴⁸ In the case of Mikra's cemetery, an issue came up on the eve of World War II, when the road that led to the cemetery was closed because of military defensive works. A new road was constructed, but it was not as easily accessible.⁴⁹ The British complained, but this time the Ministry of the Military refused to reopen the former road since it would cut in half the barracks of the Artillery.⁵⁰ The British insisted on the issue requesting at least the improvement of the road, because –according to them– that was the main British cemetery in Greece.⁵¹ The Greek side accepted the request and, a few days before the outbreak of the Greek-Italian War, the road infrastructure was improved.⁵²

While the Committee was trying to find a solution for the various problems with the Greek government, it was also taking care of the cemeteries, listing buried soldiers' names so as it would be easier to find the graves and help them with their needs such as writing

⁴⁵ IAYE, 1935 A/18/3, Ali Dilaver Bey's application to the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Athens, 19 Nov. 1928.

⁴⁶ IAYE, 1933-1941 22, the British Legation to the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, No. 167, Athens, 20 Jun. 1933.

⁴⁷ IAYE, 1933-1941 22, the British Legation to the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, No. 8, Athens, 8 Jan. 1934, to which attached is the plan of 1934; IAYE, 1933-1941 22, Secretary of Public Health M. Kyrkos to the Prefect of Evros, No. 38700, Athens, 20 Apr. 1934; IAYE, 1933-1941 22, the British Legation to the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, No. 277, Athens, 8 Oct. 1934.

⁴⁸ IAYE, 1933-1941 22, the British Legation to the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, No. 76, Athens, 3 Apr. 1937; IAYE, 1933-1941 22, the British Legation to the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, No. 149, Athens, 30 Jun. 1939.

⁴⁹ IAYE, 1933-1941 22, the British Legation to the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, No. 6, Athens, 5 Jan. 1940.

⁵⁰ IAYE, 1933-1941 22, undersecretary of the Military N. Papademas to the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, No. 154403, Athens, 30 Mar. 1940.

⁵¹ IAYE, 1933-1941 22, the British Legation to the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, No. 183, Athens, 10 Jul. 1940.

⁵² IAYE, 1933-1941 22, undersecretary of the Military N. Papademas to the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, No. 161916 conf., Athens, 5 Oct. 1940.

on a soldiers' tombstone, putting flowers on their graves or even accompanying someone from a long journey who came to honor the dead.⁵³

Conclusions

If we want to evaluate the British policy about the memorial military cemeteries in Greece we can easily come to the conclusion that it is probably the best choice United Kingdom could take about the memory of the soldiers' sacrifice in a war that they weren't supposed to take part in and it was definitely the best solution in creating a new culture for the commemoration of the soldiers in the area of Northern Greece. Until the beginning of the 20th century, dead bodies were not taken care of, while their memory was honored with monuments in central squares of cities and villages.

The creation of the British cemeteries near the battlefields and their maintaining motivated other countries to follow such practice. As a result, the Greeks were also obligated to create their own cemeteries in Axioupolis, Foustani, Doirani, Valandovo, Pirot in order to honor their soldiers.

Nowadays it is not the battlefields or the museums that strengthen the narration of the WWI in our area and preserve the memories of the elderly and instill them into the psyche of the younger generations. It is these fourteen cemeteries of the WWI, mainly in the region of Macedonia, Greece and in islands of the Aegean, which remind us of the sacrifice of the British Army during this war.



The Commonwealth memorial at Doiran (photo V. Vlasidis).

⁵³ See CWGC Archive, ACON 149, Visits - Gallipoli - Saint Barnabas, 8 Feb. 1928 - 3 Oct. 1928; CWGC Archive, Add 4/5/1, Gallipoli and Salonika Cruise, 1936.
