

= Royal Artillery Memorial =

The Royal Artillery Memorial is a stone memorial at Hyde Park Corner in London , dedicated to casualties in the Royal Regiment of Artillery in the First World War . The memorial was designed by Charles Jagger and Lionel Pearson , and features a giant sculpture of a BL 9 @. @ 2 @- @ inch Mk I howitzer upon a large plinth of Portland stone , with stone reliefs depicting scenes from the conflict . Four bronze figures of artillery men are positioned around the outside of the memorial . The memorial is famous for its realist contrast with other First World War memorials , such as the Cenotaph designed by Edwin Lutyens , and attracted much public debate during the 20th century .

= = History = =

The First World War , which took place between 1914 and 1918 , saw the extensive use of artillery , particularly on the Western Front . Technical advances , combined with the relatively static nature of trench warfare , made these guns a key element of the conflict : over half the casualties in the war were caused by artillery . Artillery guns and their crews were themselves targets , however , and 49 @, @ 076 members of the Royal Artillery died during the conflict . In the years after the war , many former servicemen , including gunners , found the scale of the losses difficult to deal with , or felt that the events challenged their trust in the political leadership that had led them into the war . Visual reminders of the conflict were often avoided : mutilated servicemen , for example , were banned in the 1920s from joining in veterans ' marches , and those with facial injuries often hid them in public .

The Royal Artillery War Commemoration Fund ( RAWCF ) was formed in 1918 , made up a mixture of senior officers and other ranks . The RAWCF 's intention was to remember the artillery men who had died during the war , and after some discussions of various options , including purchasing a house for wounded soldiers , or building a number of small shrines across the country , the RAWCF decided to construct a single memorial to the fallen Royal Artillery servicemen . Memorials to lost servicemen from the previous major conflict , the South African War fought between 1899 and 1902 , had , however , been widely criticised as being unimaginative and unimpressive . As a result of these problems , the prominent artist Sir Edward Poynter had put forward recommendations that far more care , time and funding be given to the construction of future war memorials , which were taken on board by the RAWCF . The RAWCF sought a design that would be " unmistakably recognisable " as an artillery monument , and were insistent that the eventual designer take detailed advice from a junior officer who had served in the war .

The RAWCF first examined a design by Captain Adrian Jones , who had produced the Boer War Cavalry Memorial a few years before , but his design was rejected . Next , the committee contacted the artists Edwin Lutyens , Herbert Baker and Aston Webb . Lutyens ' sent in three designs , each costed at less than £ 15 @, @ 000 ( less than £ 607 @, @ 000 in 2009 terms ) , but they were felt to be too similar to the Cenotaph and to give insufficient prominence to the artillery . After the RAWCF insisted that a howitzer be prominently incorporated into the designs , Lutyens withdrew . Baker disagreed with the concept of single service monuments , but submitted a proposal costed at over £ 25 @, @ 000 ( over £ 1 @, @ 010 @, @ 000 in 2009 terms ) , which was declined and Baker subsequently withdrew from the project ; Webb declined to submit a proposal and also withdrew .

The committee then approached Charles Jagger in early 1921 . Jagger had been trained as a metal engraver before attending the Royal College of Art . He served in the infantry during the First World War and was injured at the battles of Gallipoli and Neuve @- @ Église , being awarded the Military Cross . At the end of the war , Jagger became involved in the design of war memorials , in particular the stark , brutal sculpture at the Hoylake and West Kirby War Memorial . Jagger was approached by the RAWCF both because of his reputation as a designer and because of his service as an infantry officer , although the American artist John Sargent , a patron of Jagger 's , may have encouraged the committee to consider the young artist . The RAWCF requested that he submit a model for a realist sculpture , to include a group of soldiers in bronze on a pedestal .

Jagger decided to work with the architect Lionel Pearson , who designed the stone structure of the memorial , and through June and July 1921 the RAWCF and the authorities considered the proposal

. Jagger 's model was similar to the eventual memorial , but had only two gunners at either end of an oblong memorial ; the howitzer on the top was smaller than the eventual version , and pointed sideways , rather than lengthways along the pedestal . In reporting to the committee , Jagger said that he felt strongly that the design should unashamedly focus on the events of the war , noting that it " should in every sense be a war memorial " . Jagger explained that the artillery had " terrific power " and was the " last word in force " , and that the howitzer he had chosen was the only suitable weapon to symbolise those capabilities . There were concerns on the committee that the design would offend some members of the public , especially women , but the RAWCF eventually voted 50 to 15 in favour of accepting the design and the proposed cost of £ 25 @, @ 000 . Jagger was formally awarded the contract for the memorial in March 1922 .

Due to the pressures of other projects , Jagger did not begin work on the memorial until the following year , by which point he had decided to alter the design . The revised memorial would be a third @-@ larger than before , forming a crucifix , guarded by three bronze soldiers ; after much discussion , it was agreed that the howitzer would point south to produce a pleasing silhouette from the park . A lengthy , year @-@ long debate occurred within the RAWCF as to what inscription should be placed on the memorial , adding to the delay . Jagger then decided that the fourth side of the memorial should feature a dead soldier ; after considerable debate , the RAWCF also agreed to this modification . Jagger 's work continued to take longer than planned , partially due to shortages of staff , the need to approve each amendment to the plan and practical problems on the site itself . The names of his models for two of the statues are known : William Fosten for the Driver and another ex @-@ gunner called Metcalfe for the Ammunition Carrier .

The work was opened four months late on 18 October 1925 by Prince Arthur and the Reverend Alfred Jarvis . Despite the delay , the RAWCF and Jagger left on very good terms , the committee exceptionally pleased with the final memorial to the Royal Artillery .

Over the years , pollution and water penetration caused damage to the bronzes and stonework . English Heritage conducted a major restoration of the memorial during 2011 , completed in time for Remembrance Day . On 14 January 1970 the memorial was protected under UK law as a Grade II \* listed building , but in July 2014 its status was raised to Grade I ; it was one of five memorials in London receiving a higher grade to mark the centenary of the outbreak of World War I.

= = Design and symbolism = =

The Royal Artillery Memorial today is located in what Malcolm Miles has termed the " leafy traffic island " of Hyde Park Corner in central London . The memorial is 43 feet long , 21 feet wide and 30 feet high ( 13 m by 6 m by 9 m ) ; the pedestal and the one @-@ third oversized replica of a BL 9 @. @ 2 @-@ inch howitzer , modelled on a gun in the Imperial War Museum , that sits on top of it are made of Portland stone . Cast by the A. B. Burton foundry , four bronze figures are placed on each side of the memorial : a driver to the west side , an artillery captain on the east , a shell carrier to the south , and a dead soldier on the north . Carved stone reliefs show various detailed military scenes from the First World War . The memorial 's main inscription on the west and east faces reads " In proud remembrance of the forty @-@ nine thousand and seventy @-@ six of all ranks of the Royal Regiment of Artillery who gave their lives for King and country in the Great War 1914 ? 1919 " .

The memorial forms a sharp contrast with both the earlier monuments of the South African War and most contemporary monuments to the First World War . Memorials of the South African War typically included figures of soldiers , sometimes dying in conflict , but always heroically in a " beautiful death " . Classical symbolism was often used to distance the event of death from the observer , as typified in William Colton 's work at Worcester . Most First World War memorials reacted to the criticism of this approach by adopting cleaner architectural forms , but still retaining the ideal of a " beautiful death " , an approach which can be seen at Lutyens ' Southampton War Memorial , the precursor to his more famous Cenotaph in London . These memorials frequently used abstract , beautiful designs intended to remove the viewer from the real world , and focus them on an idealised sense of self @-@ sacrifice . Soldiers in these memorials were still frequently

depicted as Homeric warriors , and classical ideals and symbols remained popular , as can be seen at the Machine Gun Corps Memorial by Francis Derwent Wood , displayed close to the Royal Artillery Memorial itself . Where dead soldiers were shown , they were depicted in an image of serenity and peace , often physically distanced from the viewer on a high platform , the entire effect reflected by the silence that traditionally surrounds ceremonies at the Cenotaph .

The Royal Artillery Monument attempted a very different effect . Jagger takes a realist approach to his figures , embracing detailed images of military power with none of the classical symbolism of other monuments , or even Jagger 's own pre @-@ war pieces . The art historian Reginald Wilenski likens the memorial to the work of Frank Brangwyn , who focused on depicting the physical labour of soldiers and workers during the war . The memorial shows the three upright bronze figures stood at ease , rather than to attention ; the driver even leans back against the parapet , his cape hanging over his outstretched arms , suggesting an attitude of exhaustion or contemplation . The faceless , heavily laden statue of the fallen soldier appears less at rest than tired , pulled down as if by a great weight . At the same time , the sheer size of the memorial , including the oversized gun and the larger @-@ than @-@ life bronze figures , exudes a sense of strength and power ; the figures are stocky , confident and imposing . This strength and power contributes to the sense of masculinity that pervades the work , from the phallic image of the howitzer , to the solid , muscular figures of the gunners .

Despite the realist nature of the bronze statues in the design , commentators have often also noted the dehumanising aspects of the memorial . Its sheer size and bulk of the howitzer serves to distance the observer , dehumanising the soldiers in a similar way to the Cubist war paintings of Wyndham Lewis and Richard Nevinson . Even the carved stone reliefs have an aggressive , hostile quality to them , a consequence of their focus on surface detail at the expense of the humans in the design . When questioned about his lifelike depictions , Jagger remarked to The Daily Express newspaper that the " experience in the trenches persuaded me of the necessity for frankness and truth " . Using what historian John Graves @-@ Smith describes as themes of " endurance and sacrifice , not dynamism and conflict " , the memorial can be felt to speak to its audience about the experience of war in a way that the Cenotaph , for example , does not .

= = Critical reception = =

The Royal Artillery Memorial has continued to be the subject of much critical discussion . After the unveiling , a vigorous debate occurred in the British newspapers about the memorial . The Times was critical , comparing it unfavourably to the Cenotaph , while The Daily Mail highlighted the cost of the monument , and argued that the money could have been better spent on directly caring for injured veterans . Both the dead soldier and the howitzer drew particular comment ; art critic Selwyn Image complained about having any sort of artillery gun on the monument , whilst Lord Curzon was quoted as describing the howitzer as " a toad squatting , which is about to spit fire out of its mouth ... nothing more hideous could ever be conceived " . Modernists , such as Roger Fry , criticised the conventional , secure structure that underpins the memorial .

Other opinions were more positive . The Manchester Guardian noted that the frankness of the portrayal was a " terrible revelation long overdue " , and hoped that veterans would be able to show the monument to their wives and children as a way of explaining the events of the war . Ex @-@ servicemen were quoted by the newspaper as reminiscing about the war as they examined the statue , and remarking on how the bronze figures had captured the reality of their time in the artillery . The Illustrated London News reported how , two days after the official ceremony , a crowd had gathered in the rain just before dawn to conduct a small ceremony at the memorial ; the newspaper felt that this said more about the quality of the memorial than the more negative writings of art critics . These voices eventually held sway , and the memorial came to be popularly termed " the special Cenotaph of the Gunners " , with Lord Edward Gleichen praising it in 1928 as " a strikingly imaginative and most worthy representation " . By the 1930s , it was one of the best known monuments in Europe .

In later years , the reputation of the work diminished . The art critic Geoffrey Grigson echoed the

comments of Lord Curzon , when he complained in 1980 that the memorial was a " squat toad of foolish stone " . A renewed focus on Jagger 's works , including the Royal Artillery memorial , in the 1980s has led to a fresh reappraisal of the piece ; the most recent critical work on the memorial has described it as a " work of the highest quality and distinction " .