

Dedham War Memorial

If all had gone according to plan the War Memorial would have been in place exactly 100 years ago in time for Remembrance Sunday 1920; 31st October was the provisional date for the dedication ceremony. At a Parish Meeting on 13th February 1919 it had been agreed that *“a war memorial should be representative of the whole parish, permanent in character, and worthy of the object it is designed to commemorate”*. A second meeting a week later determined that it should be erected in Royal Square. A Committee formed of eight parishioners and the Vicar, Canon F. G. Given-Wilson, was appointed to collect subscriptions and recommend what form the memorial should take. It was not until December 1919 that there was a further meeting to approve the Committee’s choice: *“the design of Mr W. D. Caröe’s of a Way-side Market Cross”*.

The architect William Douglas Caröe (1857-1938) was a very distinguished *“Architect to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners”* who designed many war memorial crosses at this time, each one different but to a broadly similar design; one of them stands in the churchyard at Stoke-by-Nayland. Caröe was already known in the parish because his wife’s sister was married to Canon Gerald Rendall, who lived at Dedham House and was much involved in church matters.

Four years earlier he had been chosen to design the choir vestry screen in the church. Since Dedham was formerly a market town, his proposal for the war memorial evoked a traditional market cross, mounted on a stepped platform where goods could be displayed. It was skillfully sited to dominate the wide civic space created where Royal Square adjoins the broadest part of the High Street.



Postcard showing Royal Square in the late 19th century

The Ipswich stonemasons Clay and Wright were appointed to construct the War Memorial, which was funded by donations from parishioners. The sum raised exceeded the £475 needed and funds over this amount were set aside to cover future maintenance. In November 1920 it emerged that although the memorial itself had been built by that time, it still had not been completed because, *“the work was delayed in the carving of the figures”* which were an important part of the design. They show the Virgin and Child, referring to our church’s dedication to St Mary; the Crucifixion, with the clothed figure of Jesus denoting the “Victorious Christ”, triumphant over death; the Archangel Michael defeating Satan, symbolising good overcoming evil; and England’s patron saint St George with the Dragon at his feet, representing the nation triumphing over its enemies.

It was not until the following summer that the War Memorial was at last ready and the Parish Magazine was finally able to report that it was dedicated on Sunday afternoon, August 7, 1921 in perfect weather and *“in the presence of a large concourse of people”*. The carefully-staged ceremony was master-minded by Dedham builder Mr Saunders after a short service in the overflowing parish church with music arranged by the organist Mr Hicks. Two cornets were played to fine effect by Mr Parish of Salmon’s Farm and his son while ex-Sergeant Henry Howard sounded the clear and impressive bugle calls. The procession of clergy and choir was followed by ex-servicemen and the path

was lined by the Dedham Troops of Boy Scouts and Girl Guides. The memorial was unveiled by Dedham resident Major-General C.M. Ross-Johnson, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., who had served in the Royal Field Artillery during WWI and he gave a short and memorable address. The Vicar felt that the village could be justly proud that the ceremony to honour their dead had been carried out in the right way entirely by Dedham men and women. A postcard of the occasion went on sale for people to send to their friends.

There were two tablets on the memorial carved with the names of 33 men directly associated with Dedham who lost their lives in the Great War 1914-18; some died in major battles such as Arras, Loos, the Somme and Gallipoli, others in action as far afield as Macedonia, Egypt and Palestine. In 1945 two further tablets were added listing the 14 Dedham men who died in the Second World War in France, North Africa and other countries including Greece, Tunisia, Italy and Burma. Tragically there were also two civilian casualties, a mother and her infant son; they were killed when a bomb destroyed their home on the Long Road, which it is thought the enemy pilot may have mistaken for a runway of Langham airfield. Ivy Carr told me that the baby was about to be baptised and the christening cake was found still intact among the ruins of the house.

There were also four lines of a verse on the war memorial, suggested as appropriate by Canon Rendall.



They come from a poem that was written in 1631 by Captain Thomas James (1593-1635) celebrating the bravery of his comrades who died during the Arctic winter on a failed expedition to discover the “North-West Passage” sea route between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.

“We that survive, perchance may end our days. In some employment meriting no praise ... They have outlived this fea, and their brave ends. Will ever be an honour to their friends”.

The eagle-eyed will spot that the letter “r” has been accidentally left off “fear!”

The memorial was much admired by visitors to Dedham, including the architect’s wife Grace Caröe when she came here to stay with her sister Ellen

Rendall. The Magazine reported that in August 1922 she presented the village with a set of seven earthenware pots to hold local people’s offerings of flowers, which so far had been displayed in “*a medley of pots and vases of different shapes and sizes, which might have a very unpleasing effect*”. The new containers were specially designed by her husband “*to be in harmony with the cross*” and Mrs Rendall offered to reserve one for anyone who was interested; if more were wanted Mrs Caröe would be happy to provide another set. It is very likely that these pots were made by the arts-and-crafts Compton Pottery, set up in 1901 close to the Caröes’ home at Hambledon in Surrey, which we know carried out commissions for a number of architects including Caröe himself. It would be most interesting to know whether any of these pots with the



Dedication of the war memorial 7 August 1921

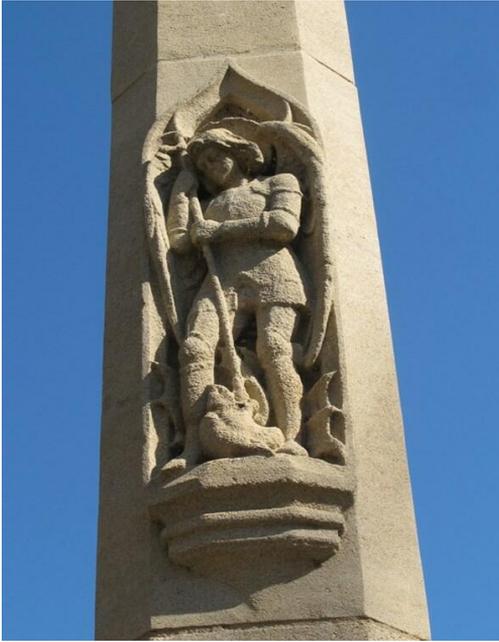
impressed Compton Pottery mark on the underside (or photographs showing them) have survived in the parish.

In November 1946 when most of the original subscribers who were its legal owners had either died or moved away, the survivors agreed that the War Memorial should be handed over to the custody of the Dedham Parish Council to be preserved and maintained by them in perpetuity. The remaining funds entrusted to them were to be used for its future upkeep.

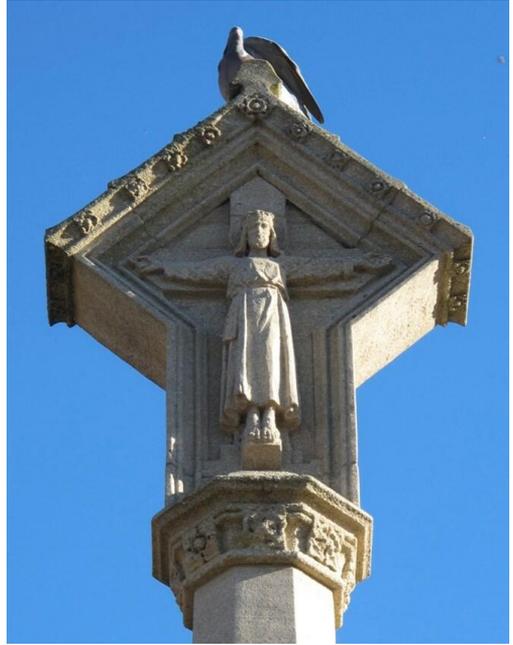
Trust and nine years later a further grant was awarded for steam-cleaning, stone repairs and repointing using lime mortar.

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The cobblestones round its base were later installed to raise the level of the gravelled circle around the memorial, so as to prevent cars causing damage by backing into it. In December 2007 the memorial was cleaned and repaired with a grant from the War Memorials



The south side of the cross shaft with a sculpture of the Archangel Michael defeating Satan

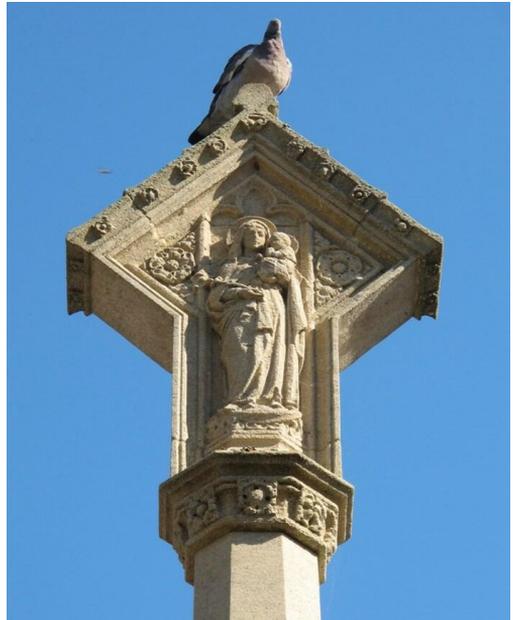


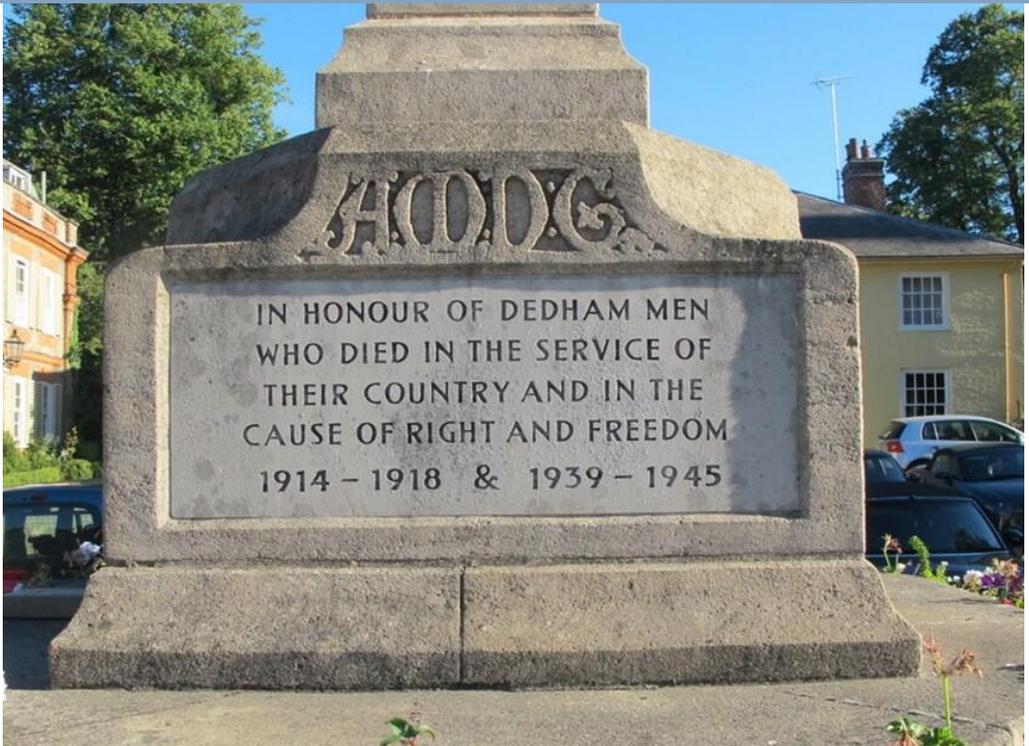
The north side of the head of the cross with a sculpture of the Crucifixion

The north side of the cross shaft with a sculpture of St George and the Dragon



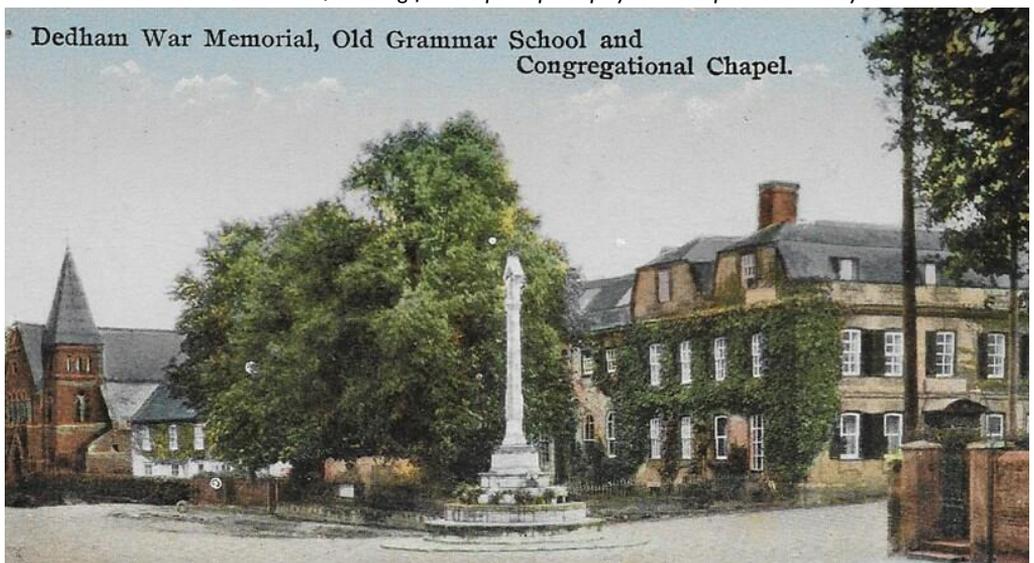
The south side of the head of the cross with a sculpture of the Virgin and Child





The inscription on the north face of the memorial, honouring Dedham men who died in both World Wars. AMDG stands for Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam (To the Greater Glory of God)

The Memorial in the 1920s, showing flowers perhaps displayed in the pots donated by Mrs Caröe



**Dedham War Memorial, Old Grammar School and
Congregational Chapel.**