

The present Keeper, Gillian Strudwick, is still accommodated in Vine Cottage next door, in recognition of the importance of her role in maintaining this horticultural marvel.

This year, 2018, is the Vine's 250TH birthday – an astonishing anniversary – and Historic Royal Palaces will be considering replacing the Hartley structure with something more appropriate. It would be good to see the 1904 design replicated, not least because it is of a piece with the charming viewing gallery which survives from that structure.

THE RICHARDSON EVANS MEMORIAL PLAYING FIELDS IN WIMBLEDON AND OTHER FIRST WORLD WAR MEMORIAL LANDSCAPES By Carrie Cowan

A scorching sun beat down when the long-delayed dedication of the memorial garden at Kingston Vale took place. The occasion was in every way a memorable one – the ceremony marking the end of a series of efforts extending over many years to preserve a beautiful open space for posterity.¹ So began the piece in *Wimbledon Borough News* on 17 July 1925 titled 'Mr Richardson Evans' Great Achievement', in which he was described as the initiator and prime mover who had boundless enthusiasm for the preservation of natural beauty.

The memorial landscape commemorated those from the Wimbledon area who lost their lives in the First World War. It was designed, somewhat unusually for the time, by a woman, Madeline Agar, landscape architect, assisted by Brenda Colvin, one of Britain's most distinguished landscape architects who later became President of the Institute of Landscape Architects and was awarded the Commander of the Order of the British Empire, the CBE. The landscape was

later named after Mr Richardson Evans, who was instrumental in securing the land for the use of the public with its memorial.²

After the First World War ended, the scale of the human loss demanded a different type of commemoration. While many favoured a traditional sculptural or architectural monument, many others opted for a memorial which, instead of focussing on the dead, would serve the needs of the living. Parks, gardens, playing fields and avenues fell into this category of living or useful memorials.³ Only a handful of First World War memorial landscapes as a type are included on the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest on the National Heritage List for England and more research remains to be done.⁴ Recent work by Historic England and others shows that the number of such landscapes is still unclear.⁵ There are over 500 listed on the Imperial War Museum War Memorials Archive, but it appears likely that there are still more to be recorded.⁶

In London, only the Promenade de Verdun in Purley and Broomfield Park's Garden of Remembrance in Enfield, listed within the wider entry for Broomfield Park (fig. 53),⁷ are included on the Register. Some structural elements of such memorial landscapes are listed buildings on the National Heritage List for England, such as Leytonstone war memorial and gardens where the enclosing wall, piers, posts and chains and lamps are all listed⁸ and in Barking Park, the

2. Sir Charles Tyrrell Giles, chair, accepted the deeds at the memorial service on behalf of the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators to preserve and maintain the land on behalf of the people and future generations, *Wimbledon Borough News*, 17 July 1925.

3. *Introduction to Heritage Assets; War Memorial Parks and Gardens*, Historic England, 2015, p.1.

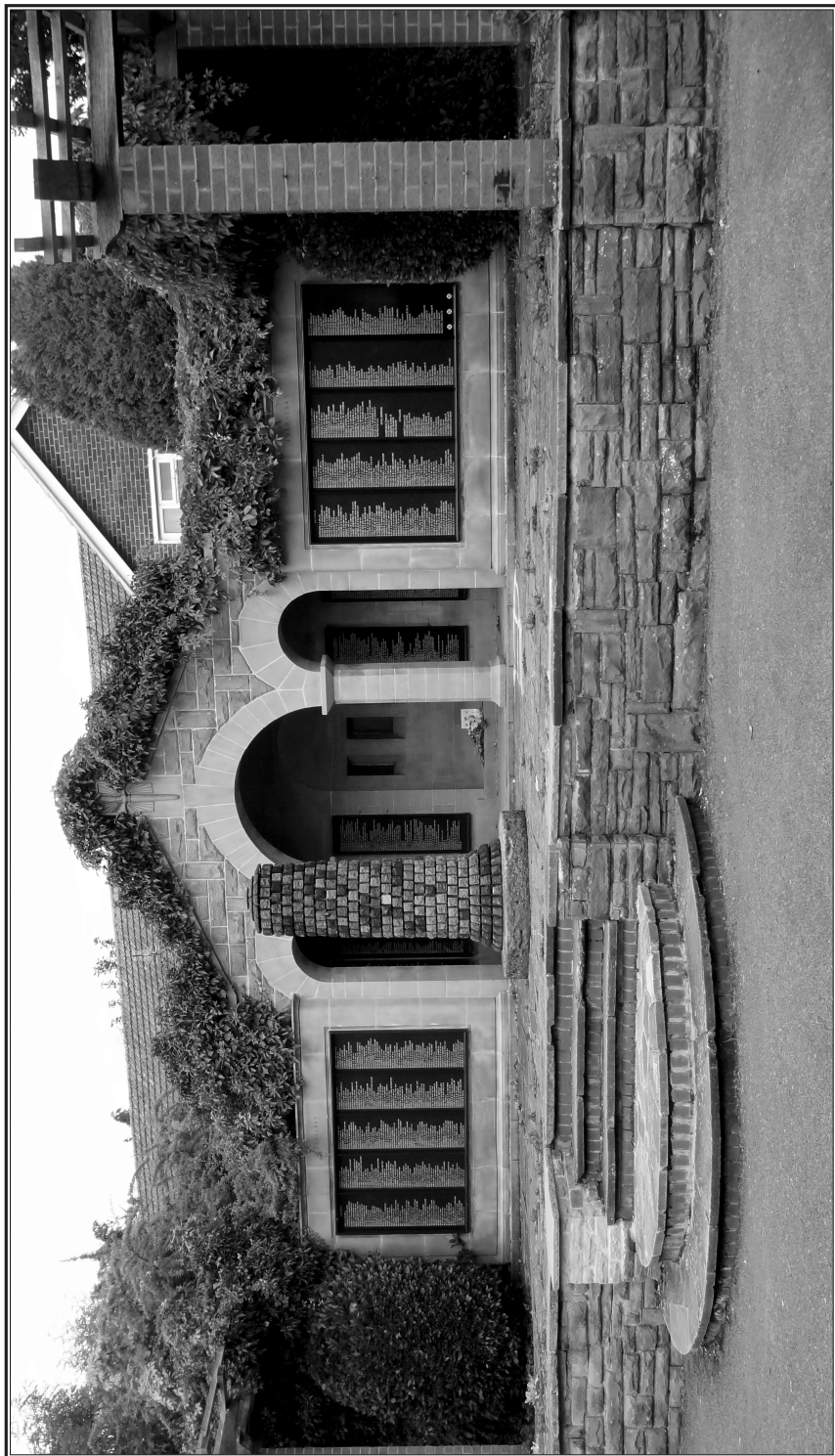
4. For a list see *Introduction to Heritage Assets; War Memorial Parks and Gardens*, *op. cit.*, p.2.

5. *ibid.*, pp.2, 14. More research remains to be done on memorial parks and gardens as a type, and they have received surprisingly little notice in either the literature of war memorials. In 2014, the Garden History Society published a special edition of *Garden History* (42: supplement 1) commemorating the First World War, which includes 'A Living Monument': Memorial Parks of the First and Second World Wars' by David Lambert. Lambert also wrote an *Introduction to Heritage Assets; War Memorial Parks and Gardens*, *op. cit.*, and there is now a guide to the *Conservation and Management of War Memorial Landscapes*, Historic England, 2016.

6. Over 339 gardens and 212 parks or playing fields are quoted in *Introduction to Heritage Assets*, *op. cit.*, p.2.

7. Promenade de Verdun Register Entry: <https://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1431287>, accessed 1 November 2017; Carrie Cowan, 'The Promenade de Verdun: A war memorial landscape in Purley', *London Landscapes*, Summer 2016, p.10. Broomfield Park Register Entry <https://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000517>.

1. 'Garden Of Remembrance, Dedication on the Common, Richardson Evans' Great Achievement', *Wimbledon Borough News*, 17 July 1925.



53. Broomfield Park Garden of Remembrance, Enfield
(PHOTOGRAPH DUDLEY MILES , WIKIMEDIA COMMONS)

memorial's flanking walls and piers are listed.⁹

In *London Gardens Online* there are around 162 First World War memorials by keyword but the majority of these were set up within existing cemeteries, churchyards, village greens, parks, commons, public gardens and private schools with little further landscaping deemed necessary, or with little evidence for such landscaping. Only around 24 memorials show evidence for a designed landscape, purpose-built and contemporary with the memorial,¹⁰ which serves as its setting and is part of the symbolism creating a sense of peace and reverence.¹¹

Many gardens were altered when Second World War additions were made to an existing war memorial. At Chase Green Cenotaph Garden in Enfield, for example, the original path layout was changed (*fig. 54*); at Surbiton War Memorial Gardens, the garden was extended; and at Trinity Square Gardens, Tower Hill, the First World War Mercantile Marine Memorial by Sir Edwin Lutyens was joined by Sir Edward Maufe's Merchant Seamen's Memorial after the Second World War, laid out in the form of a sunken garden.

Some memorials were designed within a simple walled enclosure, with post and chain, railed or hedged, such as Deptford Memorial Garden, which appears in a separate enclosure to the public gardens that were laid out later. The enclosure forms a sanctuary but with low walls so that the memorial could be seen by passers-by.¹² At Grovefields or Grove Open Space in Harrow, paths were laid out in a cross with the war memorial at its centre, set in a hedged enclosure with an avenue of trees leading up to the entrance.¹³ Indeed, memorials were often laid out with a formal processional approach.¹⁴

At Keston Common it is likely that the

semi-circular hedge to the rear of the memorial and the two yew trees in front are original planting; enclosing the memorial, they are very much a part of the design, their simple forms and dark colours providing a contrast to the white stone and bronze memorial.¹⁵ Dark evergreen shrubs along with yew trees were favoured for many memorials for their association with English country churchyards. The frame of trees and shrubs created a dignified setting as well as highlighting the memorial.¹⁶ Within Coulsdon Memorial Recreation Ground, the memorial took the form of an open portico, ideal for use as a shelter out of the rain for park users. A serpentine path leads up to the shelter of white Portland stone, which forms a contrast against the semi-circular backdrop of dark trees. There are also memorial parks without central monuments, such as Carville Hall Memorial Park in Hounslow, Forster Memorial Park in Lewisham, Kensington Memorial Park, and Westerly Ware War Memorial Recreation Ground in Kew, which has ornamental gates instead (*fig. 55*).

Often the memorial had a walled backdrop with flower beds or was encircled by paths. The memorial in Tottenham Cemetery had a backdrop consisting of a stone wall carrying the inscription. East Ham Memorial in Central Park, Newham was encircled by a perimeter path with connecting paths in a corner of the park, with steps leading up to the monument, creating a sense of reverence (although it is now encircled by railings).¹⁷ The Bromley memorial at St Martins Hill is set upon a mound, which serves a similar purpose to the steps, and the Sidcup war memorial is similarly on a slope. At Chingford Gardens of Remembrance, a sunken paved garden encircles a monument surrounded by flower beds (*fig. 56*) while at Ilford War Memorial Gardens, the paths were laid out in the form of a cross beside the memorial.

Modest budgets meant that the

8. Leytonstone war memorial and gardens List Entry: <https://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1418327>, accessed 1 November 2017.

9. Barking Park War Memorial List Entry: <https://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1424142>, accessed 1 November 2017.

10. I found about 24 using a combination of historic maps and photographs, *London Gardens Online*, *War Memorials Online* and the Imperial War Museum war memorials register but there may well be more.

11. *Conservation and Management of War Memorial Landscapes*, *op. cit.*, p.19.

12. *ibid.*

13. The cross plan with the avenue can be seen on the 1935 Ordnance Survey map.

14. *Conservation and Management of War Memorial Landscapes*, *op. cit.*, p.19.

15. Keston Common War Memorial List Entry: <https://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1426522>, accessed 1 November 2017.

16. *Conservation and Management of War Memorial Landscapes*, *op. cit.*, p.20.

17. *ibid.*, p.19.



54. Chase Green Cenotaph Garden, Enfield
(PHOTOGRAPH CHRIS REYNOLDS, COURTESY WAR MEMORIALS ONLINE)

55. Westerly Ware Kew War Memorial Recreation Ground, Richmond
(PHOTOGRAPH ANDY SCOTT, WIKIMEDIA COMMONS)

landscapes were generally laid out to a design by the borough surveyor or a local nursery firm.¹⁸ At Cheam Library, Sutton a simple design was executed by local architect C. J. Marshall: the memorial was erected in part of the garden of West Cheam Manor and the enclosing manor garden walls were lowered from their original 3.6M height, with a perimeter path and a central path dividing the grounds into two grass lawns. Either side of the memorial were placed ornate stone seats and a German field gun. Marshall stated that the seats and gun were an essential part of the ensemble, helping to balance the design. The gun emphasised the horrors of war with its strong brutal lines in violent contrast to the memorial where every line was softened by curves.¹⁹

At Manor Park, Sutton, land was bought by Sutton Urban District Council's War Memorial Committee to make Memorial Gardens adjoining Manor Park; the memorial stood in seven acres of garden 'providing a picturesque resting place, cool and shady, for every resident'²⁰ (fig. 57). The Council architect, J. S. W. Burmester, was the designer and while there is rarely evidence of professional landscape designers being involved in memorial landscape design, there are exceptions, but the list includes only men.²¹ One such is at Bancrofts School, Redbridge where red brick buildings are ranged around a landscaped quadrangle that is laid to grass, divided in two by a path, which has a central white stone war memorial. It was all designed in 1920 by Sir Reginald Blomfield, one of the architects of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

Against such a background, the Richardson Evans Playing Fields at Wimbledon appear quite remarkable for its women designers and the survival of its war memorial landscape. Measuring some 164M in

diameter and covering 2 hectares, this is one of the largest of the London First World War memorial landscapes. In 1926 it was praised for the way that it 'combines and surpasses the best features of other memorials in its extent of land, its inner grove, and its monumental cross surrounded by hundreds of flowering trees and shrubs'.²²

How it developed is an interesting story. In 1908 Richardson Evans (1846-1928) with the aid of 13 subscribers, later to become the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators, set out to gain an extension to Wimbledon Common. The Commons Extension Scheme was launched not so much to extend the commons but to preserve the view overlooking the Kingston Vale and to preserve the freshness and charm of the Beverly Brook, the only unspoiled stream without building near London. The land was described as a 'beautiful stretch of woodland and greensward' but it was under threat from development.²³ Richardson Evans raised the necessary funds of £52,000, including thousands of his own money, and gained an extension of 172 acres so that Wimbledon Common became practically continuous with Richmond Park and Coombe Woods.²⁴ All but 42 acres had been secured by the outbreak of the First World War and in 1917 he set out to secure this final portion, buying the land for £10,000.²⁵ After the war Richardson Evans suggested setting aside a portion of this land as a memorial dedicated to the battalions belonging to the districts around the common, and a site of five acres was subsequently landscaped as a memorial.²⁶ At the dedication of the monument in 1925 the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres, who unveiled the memorial, explained that the land was not merely an

18. *Introduction to Heritage Assets; War Memorial Parks and Gardens*, op. cit., p.2.

19. C J Marshall, *The History of Cheam and Sutton*, 1936, rev 1971. List entry:

<https://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1440363>, accessed 1 November 2017. The gun and stone seats have since been removed.

20. 'Sutton's Heroic Dead', *The Sutton Advertiser*, 1 July 1921; List entry: <https://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1440302>, accessed 1 November 2017.

21. *Introduction to Heritage Assets, War Memorial Parks and Gardens*, op. cit., p.7.

22. Margaret Grant, First Curator of the John Evelyn Museum, 1926, 'Our Common', unpublished booklet in London Borough of Wandsworth Heritage Service.

23. 'Wimbledon Common, The Commons Extension, Mr Richardson Evans' Great Work', *Wimbledon Borough News*, nd, 1923, newspaper cutting, Borough of Wandsworth Heritage Service.

24. Richardson Evans, 'The Preservation of Wimbledon and Putney Commons (Fund Proposal), An Account of a proposal to secure as public open space lands in Kingston Vale and Putney Vale', 15 July 1910, Borough of Wandsworth Heritage Service.

25. 'The Commons Extension, Mr Richardson Evans' Great Work', *Wimbledon Borough News*, nd, 1923, newspaper cutting, Borough of Wandsworth Heritage Service.

26. *ibid*. The memorial is sited on the west side of Wimbledon Common adjacent to Stag Lane at TQ21951 72160 in the London Borough of Wandsworth.

isolated open space but it was one of several such spaces linked together to form a composite scheme, and each portion of land saved for the public increased the value of the others. Finally this new piece of memorial land joined Richmond Park and Wimbledon Common.²⁷ In July 1928 part of the land was laid out as playing fields, which are now known as the Richardson Evans Memorial Playing Fields.

The landscape architect commissioned by the Conservators to design the memorial landscape was Madeline Agar (c.1874-1967), who was already working on the rejuvenation of Wimbledon Common in 1919. Agar was also running a design course at Swanley Horticultural College in Kent²⁸ and from 1906 she had been employed as gardener to the Metropolitan Public Gardens Association and then by the Wimbledon Conservators on restoration works after the First World War, including replanting part of the Common that had been occupied by the Guards Regiment. She was one of the first women to practise landscape design in the wider field of public works.²⁹ She wrote several books including *Garden Design in Theory and Practice* in 1911 and *A book of Gardening for the Sub tropics* in 1921.

Brenda Colvin (1897-1981), who became one of Britain's most distinguished landscape architects, had attended the design course under Madeline Agar and soon afterwards joined with Agar as a clerk of works and site assistant on the Richardson Evans war memorial landscape in 1921-2,³⁰ before setting up her own practice. She was a pioneer, dedicated to promoting the profession: she helped found the Institute of Landscape Architects in 1929, now the Landscape Institute, becoming President in 1951. Colvin designed many gardens as well as large-scale

urban and industrial landscapes, including for several universities such as the University of East Anglia as well as landscapes around power stations, factories, mineral workings, hospitals, and reservoirs. One of her key projects was the redesign of Aldershot, Hampshire. Colvin explained the design of the Richardson Evans war memorial landscape:

The long-term design objective comprised concentric rings of English oak around a central space for a monument when the funds were forthcoming, with a lot of undisturbed ground between... but for short-term public use Agar superimposed an additional scheme of winding paths with flowering trees and shrubs such as lilacs and laburnums to make an immediate effect. This short-term scheme was intended to be temporary and should have been removed when the oaks were nearing maturity.³¹

She singled out the Richardson Evans war memorial landscape as an example of the failures of the maintenance team to understand and correctly develop the site:

...for the sake of ensuring quick effects we can use more than one method on the assumption that those responsible for maintenance with the correct procedures will eventually bring about the designer's original intention. The small oaks at Wimbledon were sacrificed as soon as they began to threaten the lilacs and laburnums although sensitive thinning could have preserved both, until the oaks nearing maturity could have proved the long term value of her [Agar's] choice.³²

In fact the droughts of 1921 and 1922 caused stunted growth of the young oaks, which then had to be replaced and thus the original design was compromised.³³

Today the Richardson Evans memorial

27. 'Wimbledon War Memorial Dedicated', *The Times*, 16 July 1925, p.12. This is still the case and the Capital Ring footpath leads through the playing fields past the memorial connecting Richmond Park to Wimbledon Common.

28. This is now part of Hextable Gardens, <http://www.parksandgardens.org/places-and-people/site/1711?preview=1>, accessed 1 November 2017.

29. Trish Gibson, *Brenda Colvin: A Career in Landscape*, 2011, p.120.

30. The Brenda Colvin archive is held at the Museum of English Rural Life at Reading University. I could not find anything in the archive relating to her time at Wimbledon. https://www.reading.ac.uk/merl/collections/Archives_A_to_Z/merl-AR_COL.aspx, accessed 2 November 2017.

31. In the chapter entitled 'Design for both long term and short term effect' in Brian Clouston, ed. *Landscape Design with Plants*, 1977, p.9. <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=n8VvCwAAQBAJ&pg=PA162&lpg=PA162&dq=madeline+agar+wimbledon&source=bl&ots=jvzkd oEobw&sig=CyMwREOOFAYuNUxgbaIMikFLbQ&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0oahUKEwj-4zZr9PQAhXMLxoKHXF9Bg14ChDoAQmMAI#v=onepage&q=madeline%20agar%20wimbledon&f=false>, accessed 1 November 2017.

32. *ibid.*

33. The Memorial Extension Land, *Wimbledon Borough News*, 12 June 1925.



56. Chingford Gardens of Remembrance, Waltham Forest
(COURTESY OF WAR MEMORIALS TRUST, WAR MEMORIALS ONLINE)

57. Manor Park War Memorial, Sutton
(PHOTOGRAPH CARRIE COWAN)



58. The war memorial landscape at the Richardson Evans Playing Fields, Wimbledon, showing the circle of oak trees around the memorial
(PHOTOGRAPH CARRIE COWAN)

59. War memorial landscape showing the oak avenue leading to the memorial at the Richardson Evans Playing Fields, Wimbledon
(PHOTOGRAPH CARRIE COWAN)

landscape survives as a circle of mown grass surrounding the monument, which was added later when the funds were forthcoming (figs. 58 & 59). Three concentric circles of the original oak tree design can be discerned with later, younger trees planted in between, but no shrubs. Across the circular design is a mown path from north-west to south-east flanked by an avenue of five or six mature oak trees. The 1952 Ordnance Survey map shows this path, but other paths across the landscape are probably not original. The whole is enclosed by a mixed hedge nearly 2M high. The landscaping is an important part of the memorial's symbolism and meaning creating a peaceful sanctuary; the oaks creating the dignified and respectful setting and symbolising liberty.³⁴

The central monument of Cornish granite stands some 6M high and comprises a Latin cross surmounting an octagonal plinth and three-stepped base set upon a raised bank accessed by flights of six steps on two sides. The planting beds are concreted over. The inscription on the plinth reads:

'The land around - 42 acres - is dedicated to public use in memory of all those who having been resident or belonging to families resident in the adjoining districts gave their lives in the Great War 1914-1918'

On another face Richardson Evans' words are inscribed:

'Nature provides the best monument. The perfecting of the work must be left to the gentle hand of time but each returning spring will bring a fresh tribute to those whom it is desired to keep in everlasting remembrance.'

The names of the fallen are inscribed on six granite panels attached to the plinth and a further plaque carries Richardson Evans' name.

In conclusion, as we commemorate the centenary of the Armistice of 11 November 1918, it is fitting to remember Richardson Evans' contribution; he who was described as 'a great leader in thought and in action, with initiative, generosity and arduous work, who

by gift of graceful expression of speech and in writing had stimulated and enlisted others'.³⁵ He explained how many of our dear ones loved the pleasant tract round which they lived:

I like to feel that, as they lay in the trenches, or field hospitals, their thoughts went back to the peaceful haunts to which they were never to return. Could we have found a more worthy memorial for our dear ones than this completion of the work begun by those who, in past generations, saved the commons for posterity.³⁶

SUNLIGHT, SPACE AND GREENERY AT GOLDEN LANE ESTATE

By Margaret King

Devastated by intense bombing in December 1940, the site of Golden Lane Estate was once almost entirely occupied with Victorian warehouses, densely developed with practically no open spaces. Its transformation from a 40FT high rubble dump into what Historic England considers to be one of the most successful of England's housing developments from the 1950s, is a story of great imagination and vision. The estate turned its back on the desolate, inhospitable surroundings to become inward-looking around a series of courts. It promised a uniquely civilised way of urban life with 'a powerful sense of place' - a balcony flooded with light from the sky; shared space to safely walk, play, exercise and meet neighbours; and sunlit, sunken gardens for peace and privacy.¹

35. 'The Memorial Extension Land', *Wimbledon Borough News*, 12 June 1925; 'Garden Of Remembrance, Dedication on the Common, Richardson Evans' Great Achievement', *Wimbledon Borough News*, 17 July 1925.

36. 'Garden Of Remembrance, Dedication on the Common, Richardson Evans' Great Achievement', *Wimbledon Borough News*, 17 July 1925.

34. *Conservation and Management of War Memorial Landscapes*, op. cit., pp.18-22.

1. Ian Nairn, *Modern Buildings in London* (London Transport, 1964), p.3.