

Case Name: Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headquarters Building

Case Number: 465010

Background

DESCRIPTION

The CWGC headquarters building is located on the east side of Marlow Road at its roundabout junction with Bad Godesberg Way. It therefore essentially occupies a prominent corner position. To the east of the building is the town's Kidwells Park.

Its design could be described as fortress-like and this will be discussed further below. Its solid massing and form is immediately striking. Rising to five storeys in part (six if one counts the roof-top plant-room), its different elevations are articulated to give the impression of separate blocks or structures joined to form a homogenous whole. The set-back entrance gate off the Marlow Road has the Commission's name and crest on an over-sailing enclosed pedestrian bridge which forms the flat-arched head to the gateway. The courtyard surface is patterned in coloured paviers and slabs - the design is perhaps best appreciated from above - and includes original planters as part of an integrated horticultural scheme. (The design drawing for the courtyard and approach hard landscaping is part of the original planning application documentation.) Further brick and concrete planters can be found along the west, Marlow Road elevation and there are creepers on the south elevation and within the courtyard. (The 1975 Brick Bulletin article indicates that the use of creepers was integral to the original design.)

The building is brick-built, in Flemish bond in a buff-brown brick. Its many plate glass teak-framed windows, which have concrete lintels, are deeply recessed in splayed reveals. The elevations employ both set-back and projecting bays to add external interest. This is particularly noticeable to the south-east corner where the corner of the building is 'cut-out' above a single-storey flat-roofed corner which is thus dwarfed by the junction of the full-height south and east ranges. The building varies in height with the tallest portion overlooking Kidwells Park to the east. The eaves levels are detailed in brick, stepped and chamfered to create parapets behind which are roof terraces to some ranges.

The courtyard nature of the CWGC takes advantage of the parkland setting with many of the offices overlooking this green space. Original planning drawings and a further plan in The Brick Bulletin allow an understanding of the concept layout. The ground floor houses the reception entrance hall and conference rooms in the east range (all principal rooms are to the east), and was originally intended for external relations and records stores, the registry, and had a caretaker's flat in the south-west corner. On the first floor are the offices of the Vice Chairman, Director General and secretariat with a noticeably wider corridor to their west than on other floors, and accommodation for further external relations and records and the legal branch. The second floor was for personnel and finance and the third floor housed the works division including horticulture. The fourth floor included a staff restaurant and kitchen, lounge and games room: this floor is now a staff lounge and bar although retaining 1970s components such as its ceiling lights. The fifth floor, which is a partial floor only, houses the plant room. Both the third floor offices and fourth floor staff recreational accommodation have access to roof terraces. There is also a basement carpark, accessed from the north.

The building has inevitably experienced some alterations: the cast iron turntable to the north was removed in the late 1980s and additional storage was added adjacent to the basement lifts soon after opening; the caretaker's flat became staff recreation in the 1990s and is now storage, it retains some original doors and fitted wardrobes. Some partitions in the offices have been added or removed. New air conditioning units have resulted in modifications to the under-window units with an added veneer detail, and in places there are inserted modern ceilings and lights. Also, the treads to the main and back staircases have been re-tiled. However, the grain of the building remains essentially as designed in the early 1970s and there is much that is original: the conference rooms and principal offices, for example, retain original furniture and fittings; both staircases have their original metal balustrades and hand-rails with timber edging to the risers, and the lifts, although refurbished in the 1990s, remain in the north-east of the building. Internal doors are solid wood with matching architraves, and the conference rooms have chamfered columns supporting the ceilings, wood panelled walls and folding doors which allow the flexible use of these meeting rooms.

The reception area is perhaps the most striking internal space, given that the walls continue in the same brickwork as the exterior and the floor is in glazed brick. There are also a number of memorial plaques here and also a wall-mounted bronze sword, of a form used in many CWGC memorials. There is a replica of a

bronze tiger of a type affixed to the Indian Army Memorial in the Heliopolis War Cemetery in Egypt, and explanatory plaque. There are also two elaborate gilded wall plaques commemorating the First World War dead in both English and French. The CWGC has confirmed that none of these were specifically designed for the building although it is clear from journal articles of the mid 1970s that at least some have been on display in the reception area for a considerable period.

Asset(s) under Assessment

Facts about the asset(s) can be found in the Annex(es) to this report.

Annex	List Entry Number	Name	Heritage Category	EH Recommendation
1	1401985	Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headquarters Building	Listing	Add to List

Visits

Date	Visit Type
14 June 2010	Partial inspection

Context

We have been asked to consider the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) headquarters building for listing on architectural and historical grounds. The application was prompted by the Commission's proposal to move from the present building to purpose built offices elsewhere, more suitable to its current needs and staffing numbers (much reduced since the present building was constructed since its records went on-line in 1998). This would then allow the present site to be redeveloped for housing which would require the demolition of the headquarters building under assessment. A planning application to this effect is ready for submission to the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead Council but is on-hold pending the outcome of this listing assessment. The CWGC is therefore keen to receive a decision as soon as is possible in order to guide its plans and would like this decision to be progressed as a high priority. The applicant asserts that not only does the building have architectural merit, but also makes claims to historic interest given the role of the CWGC internationally. These claims will be considered below. The CWGC are represented by Defence Estates: although not part of the MOD, the CWGC has requested estates assistance from DE given that the MOD fund the maintenance of most of the war graves cared for by the Commission around the world.

At a Council meeting of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead on 20 April 2010 the Council resolved to note the architectural significance of the CWGC building and the campaign to have the building listed. The Council resolved to support that campaign and we have received a letter from the Council's Chief Executive to confirm this position, dated 30 April 2010.

We have been aided in our assessment by the input of our Architectural Investigation colleagues who have provided a note on the building's architects and wider context.

The CWGC building is in a prominent position to the east of the Marlow Road, an arterial route and on the western edge of Kidwells Park. Immediately to its north is the Berkshire College of Art, built as a Technical School in 1895 to the designs of E J Shrewsbury and which is a Grade II listed.

Assessment

CONSULTATION

The Local Planning Authority has provided information relating to the original planning approval and subsequent planning history, and has also facilitated access to the original planning drawings and letters. As mentioned above, the Royal Borough supports the campaign to have the building listed.

We have received representations from the listing applicant and CWGC in response to our initial consultation. KM Heritage has submitted a report on behalf of the Commission dated August 2010 which discusses and then concludes that the building does not possess special architectural or historic interest. The CWGC building is compared with other buildings of the 1970s, including offices, and is found wanting.

Defence Estates have also provided a covering statement to the KM Heritage report raising minor queries and asking for some amendments. These have been dealt with in our report where appropriate.

The listing applicant has provided a detailed representation with a number of appendices including correspondence between the Maidenhead MP, Theresa May, and the Director General of the Commission. In addition the applicant has confirmed the identity of the design architect for the building, Peter Mlodzianowski RIBA, now Chairman of Polish Operations for Aukett Fitzroy Robinson, and has therefore provided evidence from Mr Mlodzianowski as to the design brief and intent of the architects involved. Our advice references this as appropriate. It should be noted that there are areas of dispute between the applicant and CWGC. The former asserts that Mr Mlodzianowski was the design architect, that the building was intended as a memorial to the war dead with deliberately conceived fortress references in its architecture and that the building can make claims to special historic interest. Following the closure of our consultation period we received additional representations from the applicant, specifically a copy of a letter from the former Director General of the Commission, Mr Kellaway, to Theresa May MP. This letter quotes extensively from CWGC records at the time of the designing of the building and opinions that Mr Mlodzianowski was a very minor player in the Fitzroy Robinson & Partners team and is therefore not able to speak about the design brief with any authority. (Mr Rainbird, the partner-in-charge, is now deceased.) The fortress and memorial claims are also denied. Although these representations were received after the closure of the consultation, they were received prior to the drafting of our assessment advice and, as they contain relevant information, have been drawn on also. KM Heritage's report, on behalf of CWGC, argues that the building was not built as a memorial and that it does not possess special historic interest.

We have received an additional comment from the CWGC's architectural advisor confirming that the memorials and bronze sword in the reception area were not designed specifically for the building. This has been clarified in our advice.

We have received a number of emails from members of the public who have expressed their support for the listing of the building, following the covering of the story in the local press.

ASSESSMENT

The CWGC building sits astride a number of English Heritage listing selection guides. As a government building the Law and Government selection guide has some relevance. CWGC's headquarters is not a town hall or civic centre although there are some parallels to be drawn with buildings of this type, nor does it have the architectural ambition and conspicuous display that one can see in many central government buildings but this reflects the specific nature of the Commission and significantly its budget. However, in common with civic buildings there is a greater emphasis on the design and finish of the public areas than the private ones. The building also functions as an archive and as such has an educational and curatorial role perhaps best reflected in our selection guides under Commercial and Entertainment where libraries are given consideration. However, its administrative function is the building's primary one and as such our Commercial Buildings guide is the most relevant, as it covers office buildings, albeit that the CWGC is not technically a commercial organisation. This Selection Guide states that because of the very large numbers of commercial buildings surviving which post-date 1840, increasing discernment is required when considering examples for listing. As for all building types, considerations include design interest, composition and planning relative to date as well as architectural quality.

Modernism was the predominant architectural idiom from the end of the Second World War to the mid 1970s but some architects continued to use traditional materials and styles. Others found a compromise between the two. Office buildings (and indeed civic or government buildings) in all styles may be worthy candidates for designation if they meet the test of special architectural and/or historic interest. The architecture of the 1970s was perhaps more eclectic than the preceding post-war decades and while the norm for office buildings remained the use of concrete and extensive glazing there was also a reaction against this trend which saw brick buildings with historicist leanings being erected.

The CWGC headquarters is a sober and respectful building as befits its occupant. The use of brick could be seen as a device rooting it in traditional architecture while its architectural idiom combines a modernist aesthetic, in its blocky massing, yet with some historicist references, such as its 1930s-esque roof pavilion, and its courtyard plan. The recently updated Berkshire Buildings of England volume (2010, 379) describes Fitzroy Robinson & Partners, in the context of the CWGC building, as 'a commercial practice quick to turn to softer Aalto-esque brick after the Sixties.' Alvar Aalto (1898-1976) was a Finnish architect often described as the Nordic 'Father of Modernism' and Scandinavian and German influences, also rational Italian designs of the 1930s, can be seen in a number of brick stripped-back buildings in 1970s England.

The CWGC building is dignified but not flash: its lack of ornamentation and clever use of a limited palette of materials is again entirely appropriate for a government body whose resources were for the commemoration of the nation's war dead and not for statement offices. The building is a dominant townscape building in central Maidenhead. Its massing is subtle and effective, using different block heights to good effect. The chamfered window reveals harness light and shade to throw striking geometric shadows across the elevations. The brickwork is of good quality with careful detailing, such as the eaves reverse corbelling, adding interest. The courtyard plan allows the accommodation to be arranged in blocks around it, the courtyard-facing corridors or offices and entrance/reception hall therefore gaining light from this central well. The plan also allows the visitor to leave the buzz of traffic behind on entering the courtyard before crossing it to arrive at the reception, which is opposite the gate.

The internal form is largely as one would expect of an early 1970s office block with small offices throughout much of the building but also staff facilities including a canteen/common room. The thickened external wall has allowed many services to remain hidden and thus the interior is less cluttered than the norm with flush internal walls. There have been alterations, as described above, but these are remarkably few and the interior scheme largely retains its 1970s plan, carpentry and detailing. The reception area is the most noteworthy with its materials providing continuity with the exterior courtyard and with which it is intervisible because of the floor to ceiling windows here. As mentioned above, this concentration on the form and finish of the public area of the building is not unparalleled in many post-war civic buildings although the principal offices and conference rooms are also decorated to a standard befitting the higher echelons of the organisation, again as one would expect to find in say a town hall of the post-war era.

Given the rolling 'thirty-year rule', there are not a great deal of buildings of the 1970s on the statutory list and it is therefore difficult to find listed comparitors for the CWGC building. Offices of the 1970s are also not well-represented in architectural literature although one can observe trends and potential influences in the buildings of the late 1960s which are perhaps more fully appreciated and also in contemporary civic buildings.

Fitzroy Robinson is a large commercial firm of architects with no buildings currently on the statutory list. If an architect of international repute is associated with the design of a post-war building which is under assessment for listing then this can enhance that building's claims. Equally there are many buildings on the list where this is not the case or where the architect is unknown but where the architecture speaks for itself. It is interesting to note that while the CWGC worked with some of the leading C20 architects in the designs for its cemeteries, memorials and gravestones, it chose a commercial firm to design its headquarters and this was presumably a choice borne out of financial expediency and its sober aspirations for the building. However, Fitzroy Robinson worked extensively in the City of London in the 1970s including collaborations with others such as the National Westminster Tower (with Richard Seifert & Partners) and at the Stock Exchange (with Llewelyn-Davies and Weeks. They also designed a number of bespoke London office buildings at this time, four of which have been identified by the Twentieth Century Society as notable 1970s London buildings (2007) including their work for Manufacturers Hanover Trust, 7-8 Princes Street (1970-2), Brown, Shipley & Co, No. 2 Moorgate (1970-5), Credito Italiano, No. 17 Moorgate (1970-5) and the slightly later Watling Court, Nos. 41-53 Cannon Street (1977-81). Although perhaps better known as a prolific commercial practice rather than architects of the highest calibre it is clear that there are noteworthy buildings by this firm.

The CWGC's representations draw unfavourable comparisons between this building and contemporary office buildings, commenting that there are more distinctive or ambitious 1970s buildings elsewhere. However, one cannot readily compare the CWGC building to those of commercial firms who did not have the budgetary or functional constraints of this organisation. It might be better considered in the light of buildings which use similar materials and a paired-down Post-Modernist idiom. One such is the nearby Maidenhead Library (1970-3 by Ahrends, Burton & Koralek; Grade II). The Grade II* extension to Keble College, Oxford (the De Breyne and Hayward buildings, also Ahrends, Burton & Koralek 1971-3) is another which is also brick built with dominant projecting buttresses and good detailing. However, it is in civic centres of the late 1960s and early to mid 1970s that this genre is most apparent, such as Sunderland Town Hall (Bonnington of Spence, Bonnington & Collins 1965-70), Kensington Civic Centre (Sir Basil Spence 1969-76) and culminating in the Hillingdon Civic Centre of 1973-6 (Matthew, Johnson-Marshall and Partners). It is with this company that the CWGC is best compared although bearing in mind that the above are all buildings where display and civic identity was a more significant factor in their design briefs than at Marlow Road. CWGC is a rare example of a comparable office building which is more modest in aspiration but nonetheless one of quality of design and detailing.

There is clearly a difference of opinion between the CWGC and its agents and the listing applicant at the symbolism of the architecture and its potential historic interest. The architect of the original building states that he and colleagues from Fitzroy Robinson & Partners discussed its form with the Commission and that a

building which expressed monumental permanence should be achieved. He describes the design as referencing a medieval castle with 'a fortified image externally, reflecting CWGC (sic) role as guardian of the war records.' Certainly the building gives the impression of solidity and its form and massing with its towers and entrance 'gatehouse' could be interpreted as a reference to fortifications. However, the CWGC strenuously denies such claims, indicating that at no time in the design discussions were such references discussed. The Commission is clear that great care was taken in agreeing the design, with their Artistic Adviser reporting at a Commission meeting in 1970 that 'He had had long talks with the Architects. It was natural that Members of the Commission should have some reservations about the rather formal appearance of the building. To his mind, this was right. It was to be a permanent building; it must not look out of date in ten years' time and it must have a certain dignity and solidity.' The transcripts of these early discussions do not make a connection to fortifications or castle-like architecture. Whether or not these claims of fortress symbolism claims are correct, the building's architecture is of sufficient quality to merit listing regardless of any potential inherent symbolism.

Claims have also been made that the building is of special historic interest because of its function and that it was conceived as a monument to the nation's war dead. Government guidance is clear that for a building to claim special historic interest it must be closely associated with a nationally important figure or must illustrate important aspects of the nation's social, economic, cultural or military history. The fact of housing and curating the records of the nation's war dead is not sufficient claim to special historic interest; if so, then every records office or archive could claim historic interest on account of its contents. The administration of the conservation and management of war graves and memorials is also not a claim to special historic interest. There are many administrative centres for government departments which have had or continue to have an impact on the nation's history. There is no convincing evidence that the building was conceived as a memorial: one would have expected this intention to be much publicised on the building's opening and for there to be more in the way of ornamentation, a memorial to The Fallen, or even a simple plaque to this effect, and there is nothing of this nature. Therefore we do not accept the arguments for special historic interest on the grounds of the building being a memorial to the nation's dead although we acknowledge the hugely significant and important work of the Commission. As discussed, however, the architectural form of the building is of sufficient interest and quality in its own right to merit inclusion on the statutory list and as such is recommended at Grade II.

CONCLUSION

The early 1970s Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headquarters building in Maidenhead has been assessed for designation and is recommended for listing at Grade II for its special architectural interest.

SOURCES

Tyack, G, Bradley, S & Pevsner, N, *The Buildings of England: Berkshire* (2010), 379

The Brick Bulletin, The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (1975), 4-10

RIBA Journal, Architecture awards 1974 (1974), August 1974, 17-22

A History of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, CWGC information leaflet.

CWGC website: www.cwgc.org containing information on the Commission and its work [accessed 19 July 2010]

Plans and letters relating to the granting of outline and full planning permission (planning reference 794/70), held by the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead Council on microfiche.

Reasons For Designation Decision

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission building, built in the early 1970s to the designs of Fitzroy Robinson & Partners as their purpose-built headquarters, is recommended for inclusion on the statutory list at Grade II for the following principal reasons:

- * Architectural interest: a sober and dignified courtyard plan building with striking massing, and an integrated hard-landscaping and horticultural scheme;
- * Materials and detailing: good quality brickwork (celebrated at the time) and detailing throughout including reverse corbelling to the parapets, deeply chamfered window reveals which exploit shadows on the elevations, and an attractive entrance/reception hall, also in brick;
- * Intactness: an early 1970s building which retains much of its original plan and fittings.

Countersigning comments:

Agreed. This case has been carefully considered, and we are fully aware of the counter claims, yet we feel the test of special interest is met. The CWGC is a hugely significant C20 institution, and this responsibly modest, yet still architecturally striking headquarters is a fitting monument to the good work of the commission. The fortress-like, courtyard design and quality brickwork together form a building of special architectural interest for its date. 23.12.2010

Annex 1

Proposed List Entry

List Entry Summary

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

Name: Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headquarters Building

List Entry Number: 1401985

Location

Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headquarters Building,
2,
MARLOW ROAD,

The building may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County	District	District Type	Parish
	Windsor and Maidenhead	Unitary Authority	Non Civil Parish

National Park: Not applicable to this List entry.

Grade: II

Date first listed:

Date of most recent amendment:

Legacy System Information

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System: Not applicable to this List entry.

Legacy Number: Not applicable to this List entry.

Asset Groupings

This List entry does not comprise part of an Asset Grouping. Asset Groupings are not part of the official record but are added later for information.

List Entry Description

Summary of Building

Headquarters for the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, 1971-3 by Fitzroy Robinson & Partners

Reasons for Designation

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission building, built in the early 1970s to the designs of Fitzroy Robinson & Partners as their purpose-built headquarters, is listed at Grade II for the following principal reasons:

- * Architectural interest: a sober and dignified courtyard plan building with striking massing, and an integrated hard-landscaping and horticultural scheme;
- * Materials and detailing: good quality brickwork (celebrated at the time) and detailing throughout including reverse corbelling to the parapets, deeply chamfered window reveals which exploit shadows on the elevations, and an attractive entrance/reception hall, also in brick;
- * Intactness: an early 1970s building which retains much of its original plan and fittings.

History

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission headquarters building (hereafter CWGC) at 2 Marlow Road, Maidenhead, was purpose-built to house the offices and records of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission which had formerly been located in central London. Maidenhead is understood to have been chosen for its communications, primarily its proximity to Heathrow airport given the international nature of the Commission's work. The site, formerly occupied by Pearce Hall, the drill hall of the Royal Berkshire Regiment, was agreed upon in negotiations with the Local Planning Authority. The building was designed by the architect GLM Rainbird with A McKenzie as project architect, both of Fitzroy Robinson & Partners (founded by H Fitzroy Robinson and now trading as Aukett Fitzroy Robinson) who were then based at 77 Portland Place, London. Articles in the RIBA Journal and Brick Bulletin confirm that the structural engineers were Pell, Frischmann & Partners and the main building contractor was Kirk & Kirk Ltd. No listed buildings are known by either the architectural firm or project architect.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission was founded by Fabian Ware who, in 1914, while commanding a British Red Cross Unit in France, realised that no-one was recording the graves of the war dead. Concerned that this information would be lost, his unit began to register and care for graves that they encountered. The unit's work was formally recognised by the War Office in 1915 as the Graves Registration Commission, metamorphosing into the Imperial War Graves Commission established by Royal Charter in May 1917. The IWGC had a broader remit than its predecessor, taking responsibility for war graves at the end of hostilities and in perpetuity. It was founded on the premise of equality of treatment for the war dead regardless of rank, religion or social status. The Commission used three architects of considerable repute - Sir Edwin Lutyens, Sir Herbert Baker and Sir Reginald Blomfield - in the design of its cemeteries, memorials and gravestones. In commemoration of the dead of the First World War the Commission erected over 500,000 memorials and this number was to grow considerably during the Second World War. It is now responsible for commemorating the 1,700,000 men and women of the Commonwealth forces who died during the two world wars, caring for their graves and curating casualty and cemetery records. In 1960 the organisation dropped 'Imperial' from its title and became the Commonwealth War Graves Commission as being more representative of its breadth of responsibilities.

The CWGC's new headquarters building at Marlow Road, Maidenhead was granted outline permission in June 1969 and detailed permission in January 1971 (planning reference 794/70). These plans and letters are held on microfiche by the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead Council offices. It is understood that the Commission's brief to the architects was functional rather than design focused, the latter being left to the architects. The Commission required reception, office and recreational space for its staff, also housing for its records and visitors and a caretaker's flat for maintenance and security. The headquarters was opened by the Duke of Kent (President of the Commission) in March 1973.

The building won an RIBA Architecture Award in 1974. Reported in the RIBA Journal, it is clear that the award was given 'for the particular excellence of the design'. The report goes on to state that 'the architects' clear understanding to the site and their urban design responsibilities have achieved a fine balance, producing a building which is interesting to be in, and to look at from a distance... The building's strong character grows from the integration of structure and services in a thickened external wall with deep reveals to openings in the beautifully executed brickwork...' The quality of workmanship is described as 'exemplary' and the report concludes that this is a 'first class, long life, low energy building, and an unusually fine example of creative partnership between architect, client, contractor and craftsman.' (The CWGC asserts that the building is not and never has been a low-energy one although Mr Rainbird for the architects informed the Commission in 1970 that the design of the external walls would provide a greater degree of thermal insulation.) The building was also reported on and praised in The Brick Bulletin of 1975, perhaps not surprisingly given the thoughtful use of this material in an era when many office buildings were constructed in concrete by preference.

Details

Headquarters for the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, 1971-3 by Fitzroy Robinson & Partners

MATERIALS: Buff-brown Flemish bond brickwork (bricks by Williamson Cliff); plate glass teak-frames windows.

PLAN: Courtyard plan with four ranges around a central courtyard. Entrance gateway off Marlow Road to the W. Ground floor reception area to E range, across courtyard from entrance gate. Five storeys (with a sixth partial floor housing plant) plus a basement carpark accessed from the N. All principal rooms are in the E park-facing range. Original planning drawings and further plans in The Brick Bulletin allow an understanding of the concept layout: ground floor reception entrance hall and conference rooms in the east range for external relations and records stores, the registry, and a caretaker's flat in the south-west corner. First floor: offices of the Vice Chairman, Director General and secretariat with a noticeably wider corridor to their W than on other floors, and accommodation for further external relations and records and the legal branch. Second floor: personnel and finance. Third floor: works division including horticulture. Fourth floor: staff restaurant and kitchen, lounge and games room. Top floor, a partial floor only, housing the plant room. Both the third floor offices and fourth floor staff recreational accommodation have access to roof terraces.

EXTERIOR: The building is located E of Marlow Road at its roundabout junction with Bad Godesberg Way, occupying a prominent corner position. E of the building is the town's Kidwells Park. Its solid massing and form is immediately striking. Rising to five storeys in part (six if including the roof-top plant room) its different elevations are articulated to give the impression of separate blocks or structures around a central courtyard, joined to form a homogenous whole. Good quality brickwork in Flemish bond. Eaves levels are detailed in brick with reverse corbelling to parapets behind which are roof terraces to some ranges. (Safety railings added to the roof in the early C21 are not of special interest.) Plate glass teak-framed windows, with concrete lintels, deeply recessed in splayed reveals. Elevations employ both set-back and projecting bays to add external interest.

W entrance elevation: blocks of differing heights flanking set-back entrance off the Marlow Road. The Commission's name and crest displayed on an over-sailing enclosed pedestrian bridge which forms the flat-arched head to the gateway. Bronze gates. Courtyard surface patterned in coloured paviers and slabs - the design perhaps best appreciated from above - with original planters as part of an integrated horticultural scheme. Further decorative brick and concrete planters can be found on the W, Marlow Road elevation. Creepers in the courtyard and on the S elevation are also part of the original concept. Steps down to basement carpark at SW corner.

S elevation: three blocks of differing heights with a blind off-centre block set forward, and to its W a set back bay through which the ground floor Caretaker's flat is accessed. To SE building is 'cut-out' above a single-storey flat-roofed corner which is dwarfed by the junction of the full-height S and E ranges.

E elevation: the tallest range overlooking the park with a pavilion roof (the sixth floor plant room) and asymmetrical fenestration. N range: more modest three-storey block with five-storey 'tower' formed by end of E range at its E end. Entrance to basement carpark with position of former turntable (removed in the late 1980s) evident in the ashphalt.

INTERIOR: The courtyard plan and parkland setting of the CWGC allows many offices to overlook either the courtyard or green space to the east and south. Services largely hidden in the depth of thickened external walls.

Basement: underground carpark with ground floor supported on concrete piers. Electricity substation in SW corner. Lifts (refurbished in the 1990s) and main staircase towards N elevation. Additional storage provision adjacent to lifts inserted soon after the building's opening. Back stairs in W of building.

Ground floor: entrance/reception hall accessed through brick lobby. Hall has exposed brickwork to walls and glazed brick floor. Later reception desk. Although not purpose-designed for the building, there are wall mounted plaques and other Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) related items, mostly in the reception area, including a wall-mounted bronze sword, of a form used in many CWGC memorials. Also a replica of a bronze tiger of a type affixed to the Indian Army Memorial in the Heliopolis War Cemetery in Egypt, and explanatory plaque. Two elaborate gilded wall plaques commemorating the First World War dead in both English and French. Small and large conference rooms to E (all principal rooms are in the E of the building) both with original wood panelling to walls. Adjoining wall of folding doors to allow flexible use of space. Large conference room ceiling supported on chamfered columns. Although not fixed, original furniture including tables and sideboards, remain. Former projector room to S of Large conference room with projector hatch in N wall. Former Caretaker's flat in S range (ceased to be such in the early 1990s) has been refurbished for later staff use including modernised bathroom and kitchen but retains original features including slatted doors to in-built wardrobes. Circulation corridors to all floors, some overlooking central courtyard. Ablutions to the S on all floors.

First floor: principal offices, for Director-General and Vice-Chairman, in E range with floor to ceiling height wood panelling, in-built cupboards and shelves. Again much original furniture although not fixed. Corridor to their W is wider than on other floors.

Flat roof terrace accessible from the third floor offices.

Fourth floor: remodelled former staff canteen and facilities, now a lounge and bar area (remodelled in the 1990s but retaining original features such as 1970s lighting.) Further roof terrace accessible from this level.

Fifth floor: partial floor only housing plant in a roof pavilion.

Some alterations to interior including office partition walls, both added and removed, to modify the accommodation. Some inserted ceilings. Air conditioning units installed in the early 1990s have resulted in modifications to under-window units with an added veneer casing detail, and some inserted modern ceilings and lights. Both main and back staircases with original metal balustrades and hand-rails with timber edging to the risers although the treads have been re-tiled. Internal doors are largely 1970s solid wood with matching architraves.

HISTORY: This headquarters building was purpose-built to house the offices and records of the CWGC which had formerly been located in central London. Maidenhead is understood to have been chosen for its communications, primarily its proximity to Heathrow airport given the international nature of the Commission's work. The site was formerly occupied by Pearce Hall, the drill hall of the Royal Berkshire Regiment, and agreed upon in consultation with the Local Planning Authority. The architects were Fitzroy Robinson & Partners (founded by H Fitzroy Robinson and now trading as Aukett Fitzroy Robinson) who were then based at 77 Portland Place, London. GLM Rainbird was the partner-in-charge, P Mlodzianowski was the design architect and A McKenzie was the project architect during the build. Articles in the RIBA Journal and Brick Bulletin confirm that the structural engineers were Pell, Frischmann & Partners and the main building contractor was Kirk & Kirk Ltd. Fitzroy Robinson worked extensively in the City of London in the 1970s including collaborations with others such as the National Westminster Tower (with Richard Seifert & Partners) and at the Stock Exchange (with Llewelyn-Davies and Weeks). They also designed a number of bespoke London office buildings at this time including their work for Manufacturers Hanover Trust, 7-8 Princes Street (1970-2), Brown, Shipley & Co, No. 2 Moorgate (1970-5), Credito Italiano, No. 17 Moorgate (1970-5) and the slightly later Watling Court, Nos. 41-53 Cannon Street (1977-81).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission was founded by Fabian Ware who, in 1914, while commanding a British Red Cross Unit in France, realised that no-one was recording the graves of the war dead. Concerned that this information would be lost, his unit began to register and care for graves that they encountered. The unit's work was formally recognised by the War Office in 1915 as the Graves Registration Commission, metamorphosing into the Imperial War Graves Commission (IGWC) established by Royal Charter in May 1917. The IGWC had a broader remit than its predecessor, taking responsibility for war graves at the end of hostilities and in perpetuity. It was founded on the premise of equality of treatment for the war dead regardless of rank, religion or social status. The Commission used three architects of considerable repute - Sir Edwin Lutyens, Sir Herbert Baker and Sir Reginald Blomfield - in the design of its cemeteries, memorials and gravestones. In commemoration of the dead of the First World War the Commission erected over 500,000 memorials and this number was to grow considerably during the Second World War. It is now responsible for commemorating the 1,700 000 men and women of the Commonwealth forces who died during the two world wars, caring for their graves and curating casualty and cemetery records. In 1960 the organisation dropped 'Imperial' from its title and became the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) as being more representative of its breadth of responsibilities.

The CWGC's new headquarters building at Marlow Road, Maidenhead was granted outline permission in June 1969 and detailed permission in January 1971 (planning reference 794/70). These plans and letters survive and are helpful in understanding the original concept including the hard landscaping and horticultural component of the design. It is understood that the Commission's brief to the architects was functional rather than design focused, the latter being left to the architects. The Commission required reception, office and recreational space for its staff, also housing for its records and visitors and a caretaker's flat for maintenance and security. The headquarters was opened by the Duke of Kent (President of the Commission) in March 1973.

The building won an RIBA Architecture Award in 1974 in the highly contested category for the Southern Region (now RIBA South) in recognition of regional buildings recognised as 'excellent of their kind'. Reported in the RIBA Journal, it is clear that the award was given 'for the particular excellence of the design' with 'the architects' clear understanding of the site and their urban design responsibilities have achieved a fine balance, producing a building which is interesting to be in, and to look at from a distance...' The building was also praised in The Brick Bulletin of 1975.

Modifications from the 1990s refurbishment and later are not of special interest.

SOURCES: Tyack, G, Bradley, S & Pevsner, N, The Buildings of England: Berkshire (2010), 379
The Brick Bulletin, The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (1975), 4-10
RIBA Journal, Architecture awards 1974 (1974), August 1974, 17-22

A History of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, CWGC information leaflet.

CWGC website: www.cwgc.org containing information on the Commission and its work [accessed 19 July 2010]

Plans and letters relating to the granting of outline and full planning permission (planning reference 794/70), held by the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead Council on microfiche.

Selected Sources

None.

Map**National Grid Reference:** SU8856281308

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