

1. ~~Refused~~ Yes. Class II No 6.

We already have a draft which was being looked at in relation to Lornthle grant - w. Gal. Police Fund & Army Bandet Fund as well as other issues.

2. Mr Clement - x¹⁰
Private Secretary to Secretary of State

Miss J. Kenny

End
As file

C. 9/10

SOMME COMMEMORATION, JULY 1976 - PROGRESS REPORT

1. Following the Secretary of State's approval in principle of the revised proposals for a commemorative pilgrimage to the Somme (Mr Huckle's minute of 11 April 1975 refers), detailed planning of the commemoration has been proceeding.

2. A representative meeting was held on 2 June 1975 at which a Somme Commemoration Committee was set up under the chairmanship of General Sir John Anderson. A sub-committee to be chaired by Colonel J Hughes was also formed to carry out the detailed planning. A copy of the minutes of that meeting is attached (annex A).

3. I visited the headquarters of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission on 13 June and discussed with the Director-General, Mr Pallot, and his staff the condition of the Ulster Memorial at Thiepval and our proposals for the 1976 Commemoration. The Commission have given us much useful advice and their offer of assistance included the use of their local office and the help of their staff in France.

4. A booking has been made with British Midland Airways for the charter of a Vickers Viscount aircraft (73 seats) to transport the main party of the pilgrimage from Northern Ireland to France. The quotation of £3122 is based on present rates and the contract includes a clause which affords protection against any unreasonable increase in the agreed charges. Two other companies were asked to quote. The British Midland quotation was easily the lowest.

~~Midland~~

We need a valid
this of estimates
There has been some
extension
for the region a SE?

25/9/76

5. The Commemoration Committee considered that a preliminary visit to France was essential and a party of 4, including General Anderson and Colonel Hughes, visited both Paris, where discussions included the British Embassy, and the Somme area. During the visit arrangements for accommodation, meals and transport were made and contacts with the municipal authorities, police, French ex-service organisations, etc established. In the light of this information an estimate of the cost of the pilgrimage from the time of arrival in France is being compiled.
6. The reconnaissance party received great assistance from the British Embassy, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and the French authorities, for which they are very grateful.
7. The sub-committee has now drawn up a draft programme for the commemoration (see annex B) and this, together with a report on the reconnaissance, will be submitted to the main committee at its next meeting on 21 October.
8. The Ministry of Defence have undertaken to send the band of the Royal Irish Rangers to our ceremony from BAOR and to bear the cost. Field Marshal Sir Gerald Templer has accepted an invitation to attend the ceremony and is to be invited to take a prominent part in it.

D C B HOLDEN

Department of Finance
STORMONT

Copies PS to Lord Donaldson
Sir Frank Cooper
Mr Leamy
Mr Kidd ✓
Mr Montgomery
Mr Thomas

24 September 1975

/BB

Annex A

SOMME ANNIVERSARY

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD AT 3.30 PM ON MONDAY 2 JUNE IN ROOM 207,
PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS, STORMONT

1. Present:-

Sir David Holden KBE CB ERD (Chairman)	- Department of Finance
General Sir John Anderson GBE KCB DSO DL	
Colonel J Hughes CBE TD	
Sir Francis Evans GBE KCMG DL	
The Rt Hon Sir Norman Stronge BART MC HML JP	
Lt Col Robin Charley	- Representing RUR Association
Lt Colonel H K T Chavasse MBE	- " Royal Irish Rangers
Major G McMeekin	- " GOC
Major A Boyne JP	- " RIF Association
Major H E Thrupp	- " R Innisk Association
Major I B Gailey TD	- Chairman RUR Association
Major R W Connell MBE	- Regtl Secretary Royal Irish Rangers
Captain O W J Henderson	- Representing Irish Guards Association
Flight-Lieutenant F Belfitt DFM	- The Royal British Legion
Mr John Saunders	- Secretary 36 (Ulster) Div Association
Mr J Hogg	- Deputy Town Clerk
Mr William Gill	- Representing Royal Eng Assoc 36 Div
Mr M Trotter	- " " " " " "
Mr H McRoberts	- " " " " " "
Mr W E W Montgomery MBE	- Central Secretariat
Mr E L L M Thomas MBE	- " "

2. Apologies: Lt General Sir Frank King KCB MBE

Mr W J Johnston FCA (Town Clerk)

Sir Cecil Bateman KBE

3. (a) Sir David Holden welcomed those attending the meeting and in outlining its purpose said that General Sir James Steele had been in touch with him some time ago regarding a commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the Battle of the Somme in 1976. He in turn had approached the Administration but due to the political changes delays had occurred in securing the necessary approval. However the Secretary of State and the Administration have now agreed to an Act of Commemoration and financial provision would be made to support it but on

more modest lines than the 50th anniversary in 1966 with priority for 1914-18 Ex-Servicemen at the expense of VIP's. The Ministry of Defence has agreed that the Pipes, Drums and Bugles of the 2nd Battalion, the Royal Irish Rangers at present serving with BAOR would attend at public expense.

(b) Sir David suggested that the administrative structure should consist of a main committee to be known as the Somme Commemoration Committee with an executive sub-committee and he was glad to report that General Sir John Anderson had agreed to be Chairman of the main committee and Colonel James Hughes had agreed to be Chairman of the sub-committee. While it was for the Chairmen to work out the roles of the committees' it seemed that the main committee would act as a sounding board for the sub-committee's ideas and give guidance on important matters of principle while the sub-committee would carry out the day-to-day work making the necessary decisions on various matters as they arose. General Sir James Steele who had been closely involved with the 50th anniversary had kindly agreed to act as consultant. The membership of the committees was discussed and Sir David said that he would consult Sir John and Colonel Hughes after the meeting and then issue invitations.

(c) Sir David said he proposed to visit the Commonwealth War Graves Commission on Friday 13 June to discuss any special work which it might be necessary to carry out at the memorial.

(d) It would also be necessary for a reconnaissance of the ground to be made in France by General Sir John Anderson and Colonel Hughes accompanied by a small party so that contact could be made with the British Embassy, the French Authorities at central and local government level and the local representative of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

(e) The outline programme for the commemoration would most likely be that the party, numbering about 70, would fly to France by charter flight on the 30 June returning on the 2 July. Accommodation would be arranged in convenient hotels for the 30 June and 1 July and the ceremony would take place on 1 July.

(f) Sir David then invited those present to express their views on the project particularly in relation to:

(i) co-ordinating the Commemoration with the Civic Ceremonies in Belfast;

- (ii) Whether there should be a financial contribution by those taking part in the pilgrimage;
- (iii) the likely response from 1914-18 ex-servicemen; and
- (iv) any special factors to be considered in view of the age of those taking part.

and also asked the meeting for general endorsement for the Commemoration and the plans which he had outlined.

4. (a) Major Boyne asked if the party would be restricted to those who had served at the Somme or open to any 1914-18 ex-servicemen; he felt that if the party would only number 70 it would have to be restricted to men who had served at the Somme. Colonel Hughes felt that the first priority should be men who had actually served on the 1 July and the second priority should be men who had served at other times during the battle which commenced on 21 March; these should take up all the available places. This was agreed.
- (b) Major McMeekin suggested that the Royal Air Force should be asked if they would provide an aircraft to fly the party over. Sir David replied that at the time of the 50th anniversary this had been gone into very carefully and had been turned down as the RAF could not guarantee the availability of an aircraft so far in advance; it was therefore necessary to make a firm booking with a civilian charter company.
- (c) Sir Francis Evans pointed out that a contribution of £5 per head to the cost had been made by those attending the 50th anniversary. It was agreed that contributions should be made on this occasion either by individuals or their associations on their behalf.
- (d) Colonel Hughes asked how those attending the 50th anniversary had been selected. Major Boyne replied that this had been done by circulating the details to the British Legion and Regimental Associations throughout the United Kingdom with the selection being made on a first come, first served basis subject to a fitness test, with a reserve list. Mr Gill said that the Royal Engineers association had drawn the names of their representatives out of a hat.
- (e) Colonel Hughes asked what sort of fitness test had been applied on the

last occasion. Major Boyne replied that each applicant had been asked to provide a doctors certificate. Sir David said he felt the programme should not be too arduous and Sir Francis Evans considered there should be a medical presence at the Commemoration. Sir David agreed and hoped this might be provided from BAOR. Sir John Anderson thought it would be necessary for a Doctor to travel in the plane with the party.

(f) Sir David asked Mr Hogg if the proposed commemoration in France would have any undue effect on the ceremony at the Cenotaph in Belfast. Mr Hogg outlined the form of the ceremony at the City Hall and said that in view of the reduced size of the party travelling to Thiepval there should not be any serious clash between the two events. The ceremony at the City Hall could still be effectively carried out.

(g) Sir David enquired if there would be any complications regarding the service at St Anne's Cathedral. Major Connell replied that it would be held at 3.00 pm on the 4 July and it was hoped that the Archbishop of Dublin would attend. If the party returned from France on the 2 July there should be no difficulties.

(h) Colonel Hughes asked if anyone knew of any particular problems which had been encountered in 1966. Major Thrupp said that Major Dickie had prepared a detailed report and he would obtain a copy.

(i) Major Thrupp wondered if 2 nights in France would be long enough as he thought the party had enjoyed the visit so much on the last occasion that they would have liked to have stayed longer. Sir David replied that in view of the financial constraints he felt it was better to use the funds available to take the maximum number of people rather than fewer for a longer period. The meeting agreed with this view.

(j) Sir David asked the meeting to bear in mind that some form of hospitality would probably have to be provided for local dignatories in France.

(k) Mr Gill said that the experience which has been gained in 1966 would be a guide to what should be avoided this time. Sir David assured the meeting that the Commemoration would be very carefully planned and he envisaged the production of a shortened version of the Brochure which was printed on the last occasion.

(l) Mr Saunders raised the question of the times of the flights to and from France as people would have to be given time to make their way to and from Aldergrove and it might be necessary in some cases to provide overnight accommodation. Sir David said that this would have to be looked into but he thought it should be possible to arrange the flights so that sufficient time was available.

(m) Major Connell asked if the Band of the Royal Irish Rangers could be made available as well as the Pipes, Drums and Bugles and Lt Colonel Charley said that a company should also be provided as a Guard of Honour. Sir David said he would take soundings on these two points.

5. (a) It was agreed that a press statement regarding the commemoration should be issued.

(b) Sir David concluded the meeting by thanking everyone for coming, for the very helpful advice which had been given and for the general endorsement of the proposals.

PROGRAMME FOR COMMEMORATION OF SOMME 1976

30 JUNE - 2 JULY

Wednesday 30 June

9.00-9.15	Pilgrims assemble at Aldergrove	<i>Legion march etc to help with transport.</i>
9.30	Check in at Aldergrove	
10.30	Depart Aldergrove on British Midland Charter - Flight BD801/30	<i>lunch on plane</i>
13.30 <i>Arrive Beauvais</i>	Arrive Beauvais.	
13.30-14.30	Collect baggage, customs check. Reassemble and embus,	
14.30	Depart Beauvais.	
15.45-16.00	Arrive Amiens - allocate hotels and rooms according to schedule.	
16.00-17.30	Free	
17.45	Embus for Reception by Mayor of Amiens.	
18.00-18.30	Welcome plus vin d'honneur.	
18.30-19.00	Band plays in courtyard.	<i>2nd Lt Royal Linn Raigner</i>
19.00-19.30	Final drink.	
20.00	Evening meal in hotels: Staff to brief pilgrims for next day.	

Thursday 1 July

07.00	Reveille	
07.45	Breakfast in hotels.	
08.30	Embus and leave for Ulster Tower.	<i>2 pauses at vantage points to see battle field</i>
10.00-10.15	Arrive at Ulster Tower	<i>2 cup of tea per van</i>
10.30	All to be seated.	<i>perhaps a lunch band too</i>
10.30-11.00	Band concert and arrival of VIP'S.	
11.00-11.40	Ceremony.	
11.40-11.45	Address by Field Marshal Sir Gerald Templer.	

11.45-12.00	Prepare to embus.
11.50	French VIP's depart.
12.00-13.00	Journey to Rancourt with commentary by couriers.
13.00-14.30	Lunch at Le Prieuré, Rancourt. <i>Restaurant.</i>
14.30-15.00	Move to French cemetery at Rancourt by bus and re-assemble.
15.00-15.45	French ceremony. <i>French Vow to keep it short.</i>
15.45-16.00	Reassemble and embus.
16.00-17.15	Journey to Amiens
19.00	Dinner in hotels.
Evening	Free
20.00	VIP dinner for 30 - to thank Mayors etc.

Friday 2 July

07.00	Reveille.
08.00	Breakfast.
08.30-10.30	Free for shopping.
10.45.	Prepare to embus.
11.00	Depart for Albert.
12.00	Arrive Albert.
12.00-13.30	Vin d'honneur and possibly a snack provided by Mayor of Albert.
13.30	Depart Albert. <i>1/2 hr, packed lunch.</i>
15.45	Arrive Beauvais.
15.45-16.30	Check in baggage etc.
16.45	Depart Beauvais - British Midland charter - Flight No BD802/02. <i>? meal.</i>
17.50 <i>BST.</i>	Arrive Aldergrove.
18.00-18.15	Prepare to leave Aldergrove for home. <i>Porter begin again</i>