

**MEMORANDUM FOR MEMBERS OF THE
ANTIQUITIES ADVISORY BOARD**

DECLARATION OF THE CENOTAPH AS A MONUMENT

PURPOSE

To seek Members' advice on the proposal to declare the Cenotaph at Statue Square, Central as a monument under section 3(1) of the Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance (the Ordinance) (Cap. 53).

HERITAGE VALUE

2. The Cenotaph at Statue Square, Central is the earliest and the only memorial formally constructed to commemorate the dead of the First World War. The Cenotaph was unveiled by the then Governor Sir Edward Stubbs on 25 May 1923. It is an exact replica of the Cenotaph in Whitehall, London,¹ which was designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens and unveiled in 1920, two years after the end of the First World War. Sir Edwin Lutyens's design was used in the construction of many other war memorials in the United Kingdom, Canada, New Zealand and Bermuda.

3. The Cenotaph at Statue Square, Central was originally built to commemorate the victims of the First World War. Initially, it was simply inscribed with the words "The Glorious Dead" and the years of the First World War, i.e. "1914-1918". The years "1939-1945" were subsequently added to honour victims of the Second World War. In the 1980s, eight Chinese

¹ The Cenotaph in Whitehall was initially built of wood and plaster for the first anniversary of the Armistice in 1919. It was soon decided that a permanent and lasting memorial should be constructed in response to the devotion of the people to this national shrine. Thus a cenotaph built with Portland stone in the same site was unveiled in 1920.

characters “英魂不朽 浩氣長存”, meaning “May their martyred souls be immortal, and their noble spirits endure”, were carved on one side of the Cenotaph corresponding to the inscription “The Glorious Dead” to make it clear that the Cenotaph commemorates all who fell, especially those who fell in the defense of Hong Kong.

4. There used to be three Remembrance Day ceremonies held on the Sunday nearest to 11 November each year (Remembrance Sunday) in the Hong Kong Zoological and Botanical Gardens, Statue Square and St. John’s Cathedral. Since 1981, the three ceremonies were combined into one which was then held annually at the Cenotaph.

5. Since 1998, the official ceremonies have been held annually on Chung Yeung Festival at the Memorial Shrine of the City Hall, attended by the Chief Executive and senior officials. Meanwhile, the Hong Kong Ex-Servicemen’s Association continues to hold commemorative activities on Remembrance Sunday at the Cenotaph.

6. The architectural style of the Cenotaph is Classic Revival, based on formal symmetry and principles of pure Roman and Greek forms, founded on archaeological studies and scholarship. The memorial is built of dressed ashlar blocks situated in the centre of a stepped rectangular granite platform approached by cruciform paths and surrounded by neatly mown lawns and a dwarf granite wall, posts and railings. The memorial is designed with a stepped plinth and the upper part diminishes by offsets to culminate at the top in a rectangular sarcophagus upon which rests a stone wreath. Ornamentation is confined to stone mouldings to the plinth and sarcophagus, carved wreaths on the top and two sides, and six permanently attached bronze flagpoles. The apparent simplicity of the Cenotaph is based on exquisite refinement of classical principles. The sides of the Cenotaph are not parallel, and if projected upwards, it would meet at a point 1 000 feet above ground. The horizontal surfaces are sections of a sphere whose centre would be 900 feet underground. The Greek technique of entasis, in which curved surfaces create the illusion of linearity, was applied.

7. The social value of the Cenotaph is obvious as a memorial and reminder of those who gave their lives in the two world wars. It is a landmark in Central, being a component of an architectural and historical complex in the

old City of Victoria, where a number of declared monuments such as the Old Supreme Court, Flagstaff House, Former French Mission Building, Government House and St. John's Cathedral are located.

8. A heritage appraisal and photographs of the Cenotaph are at **Annexes A and B** respectively.

GRADING AND DECLARATION

9. The Cenotaph was accorded with a Grade 1 status by AAB at its meeting held on 18 December 2009.

10. At its meeting on 26 November 2008, AAB endorsed the establishment of a formal relationship between the statutory monument declaration system and the administrative grading system for historic buildings. Under the endorsed arrangements, Grade 1 buildings, defined as “buildings of outstanding merit, which every effort should be made to preserve if possible”, will serve as a pool of highly valuable heritage buildings for consideration by the Antiquities Authority as to whether some of these may have reached the “high threshold” of monuments for statutory protection under the Ordinance.

11. The Antiquities and Monuments Office considers that with its significant heritage value as explained in paragraphs 2 to 8 above, the Cenotaph has reached the “high threshold” to be declared as a monument and protected permanently under the Ordinance.

ADVICE SOUGHT

12. Members are requested to advise whether the Cenotaph should be declared as a monument under section 3(1) of the Ordinance. The proposed boundary of the declaration is shown in **Annex C**.

NEXT STEP

13. If Members support the proposal to declare the Cenotaph as a monument, we shall take this forward in accordance with the provisions of the Ordinance.

Antiquities and Monuments Office
Leisure and Cultural Services Department
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