

A Stone of Remembrance for the *Roeselare Communal Cemetery*

(of hoe de Britten het gras belangrijker vinden dan
levensbeschouwelijke gelijkheid)



Op de Oude Begraafplaats van Roeselare bevindt zich een Brits oorlogskerkhof. Daarop bevindt zich een christelijk "cross of sacrifice", maar geen neutrale "stone of remembrance" zoals op de grotere Britse oorlogskerkhoven.

Volgens ons is de gelijke behandeling van alle levensbeschouwingen echter een voorwaarde om tot blijvende vrede te komen, wat uitgedrukt kan worden door alsnog een "stone of remembrance" te plaatsen.

We stelden dit voor aan de beheerder van het kerkhof, de CWGC (Commonwealth War Graves Commission):

To the Director General CWGC Mrs. Wallace

Ghent, 12-9-2017

Dear Mrs Wallace,

In May 2018 our school will organize, in collaboration with the city library Arhus, a visual exhibition at the *Roeselare Communal Cemetery*, entitled "Towards Perpetual Peace - Artistic Signposts".

Our point of departure is that most of war art shows the horror of war, emphasizing the need for peacekeeping. Remembrance is without any doubt meaningful and necessary, but only commemorating and expressing peacekeeping wishes is not enough (as the French philosopher Alain Badiou points out in his book *The (20th) Century*: "Contrary to what is often said, avoiding repetition comes from thinking and not from memory"). It is necessary to think about how future wars can be avoided, which means to think about the root causes of war, in order to establish peace-setting political structures, but also in order to reflect on changes in our ideologies and our ways of life necessary to bring perpetual peace closer. In the exhibition we want to show a variety of "artistic signposts" to this purpose.

At the *Roeselare Communal Cemetery*, the CWGC manages a British Military Cemetery. At this cemetery there are less than 1,000 men buried, so there is a Cross of Sacrifice, but no Stone of Remembrance.

As an artistic intervention, we propose that the CWGC still erects a Stone of Remembrance at the British Military Cemetery in Roeselare.

We believe that one of the conditions for peacekeeping lies in the acceptance of philosophical diversity and in avoiding any discrimination based on religion and philosophy of life. We think this statement requires little argumentation, especially not for the CWGC, whose fourth of the "Commission's principles" reads: *There should be no distinction made on account of military or civil rank, race or creed*. The decision to erect only a christian symbol on the "smaller" cemeteries is maybe understandable in the context of 1918, but seems to us no longer defensible in our globalized world of 2018.

We think that erecting a neutral Stone of Remembrance at each cemetery would strongly express the necessity of real religious and philosophical neutrality, and could stimulate the visitors of the cemeteries to reflect on the relationship between peace and acceptance of all religions and philosophies of life.

We realize that erecting a Stone at each cemetery may not be practically feasible. Erecting such a Stone at the Roeselare Communal Cemetery, as part of our exhibition, would in any case contain a strong statement.

Is the Commonwealth War Graves Commission willing to respond to our proposal?

With kind regards,

Paul Gordyn
teacher of MSKA Roeselare (Grammar School of the Flemish Community)

Address: Guldenspoorstraat 25
B-9000 Gent
Belgium

email: paul.gordyn@skynet.be

We ontvingen een negatief antwoord:



CWGC

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Victoria Wallace

Director General

Mr Paul Gordyn
Guldenspoorstraat 25
B-9000 Gent
Belgium

19 September 2017

Dear Mr Gordyn,

Thank you for your letter of 12 September, asking the Commission to consider installing a Stone of Remembrance at Roeselare Communal Cemetery.

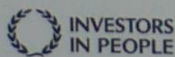
The Commission's original architects and designers gave careful thought to how cemeteries were laid out, and each one was individually planned. As you rightly note, Stones of this kind were not placed in smaller cemeteries, for reasons both of economy and of scale. Given that there are hundreds of other cemeteries around the world without the great stone, and one of our guiding principles remains keeping a uniformity of treatment, I do not think Commissioners would entertain such an application, let alone be prepared to make a planning application to change the historic nature and design of the site.

I wish you luck with your project, but regret this is not something we could agree to. If you are planning to use any part of the Military cemetery as part of your visual exhibition, I would be grateful if you would ensure you keep Liz Sweet, our area director, apprised of your plans. Her e mail is liz.sweet@cwgc.org

Yours sincerely

Victoria Wallace

Victoria Wallace



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SL6 7DX, United Kingdom

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Direct +44 (0) 1628 507152

Facsimile +44 (0) 1628 771208

Website www.cwgc.org

We stelden een alternatief voor: geen echte “stone of remembrance”, maar een foto ervan:



To Mrs Liz Sweet – area director CWGC *Western Europe Area*

Ghent, 22-9-2017

Dear Mrs Sweet,

In May 2018 our school will organize, in collaboration with the city library Arhus, a visual exhibition at the *Roeselare Communal Cemetery*, entitled “Towards Perpetual Peace - Artistic Signposts”.

As an artistic intervention, we proposed in a letter to Director General CWGC Mrs Wallace that the CWGC would erect a Stone of Remembrance at the British Military Cemetery in Roeselare.

You can find our proposal and its argumentation in the attached copy of that letter.

Mrs Wallace was so kind to give us a quick and friendly reply, stating: “I wish you luck with your project, but regret this is not something we could agree to”.

She added: “If you are planning to use any part of the Military cemetery as part of your visual exhibition, I would be grateful if you would ensure you keep Liz Sweet, our area director, appraised of your plans”.

We take the liberty of making a new proposal.

Would the CWGC give permission for showing temporarily, during the period of the exhibition, a replica of a Stone of Remembrance (for instance a real size photo) on the Military Cemetery?

Given the temporary and contextual nature of such an installation, we dare to suggest that the arguments for rejecting our first proposal (the principle of “keeping a uniformity of treatment” and not “changing the historic nature and design of the site”) don’t count any more, or at least don’t weigh against our original argument, being the utmost importance of making the public aware of the necessity of avoiding any discrimination based on religion and philosophy of life, for the sake of peace keeping.

Convinced that giving permission for our project would increase the actual relevance of “Commemorating the fallen”, emphasising “equality as the core ideology”, a mission so wonderfully accomplished the CWGC, we are looking forward for your reply, full of expectance.

Yours sincerely,

Paul Gordyn
teacher of MSKA Roeselare (Grammar School of the Flemish Community)

Address: Guldenspoorstraat 25
B-9000 Gent
Belgium

email: paul.gordyn@skynet.be

We ontvingen een antwoord, met het verzoek om een standaard formulier in te vullen:

Op 25-9-2017 om 9:40 schreef Louise Dujardin:

Dear Mr. Gordyn

Thank you for your e-mail requesting our participation with your exhibition at Roeselare Communal Cemetery.

To be able to take your request in consideration we wish some more information about the event.

In general, all organisations that organise events taking place on our site are asked to fill out the event form attached. This helps us understanding the scale of the event and also gives an overview of some guidelines concerning the use of the cemetery as the event location.

It would be very helpful for our Director General Mrs Victoria Wallace if you could fill out the event form and send back to me.

Also, how long would the exhibition be held?


Thank you in advance.

Kind regards

Louise

Louise Dujardin
Communications coordinator

Commonwealth War Graves Commission
Elverdingestraat 82, , Ieper, B-8900, Belgium
Tel: +32 57223636 | Ext: 4751 | Direct: +32 57224751 | Website: www.cwgc.org

 **CWGC**
Commonwealth War Graves Commission



Event Planning Form

1. **Title of Event:** Towards Perpetual Peace - an Artistic Signpost
2. **Date of Event:** from 9 may to 25 june 2018 **Approx. Start Time:** 00:00 ☐ am ☒ pm
Approx. Finish Time: 00:00 ☐ am ☒ pm
3. **Commission site(s):** Roeselare Communal Cemetery
Position within site (if applicable): _____
4. **Format of Event:** install a live size photo of a Stone of remembrance
(e.g. wreath laying, commemorative service, etc)
5. **Expected Number of Attendees:** average of 25 persons a day (?)
6. **VIP Attendance** ☐ Yes ☒ No
If yes please provide details below

On the opening night local politicians (e.g. the mayor) will be invited.
The opening event itself will NOT be held on the CWGC site.
7. **Will your event be open to the general public to attend?** Yes - Open to all
8. **Do you intend to bring any equipment or materials with you as part of the event?**
☐ Yes ☒ No
If yes please provide details. (e.g. Sound System)

9. **Do you intend to film your event?** ☐ Yes ☒ No
10. **Do you have any Special Requirements?** ☐ Yes ☒ No
If yes please provide details:
11. **Name of Lead Organiser:** MSKA Roeselare (grammar school of the Flemish Community)
Host Organisation: _____
Contact Details:

paul.gordyn@skynet.be
Paul Gordyn, Guldenspoorstraat 25 F, B-9000 Gent



CWGC
Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Website

12. **Would you like your event publicised on the Commission's website and media platforms?**

☒ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please provide description of event in English for use on our website.

In May- June 2018 the Roeselare Communal Cemetery hosts the exhibition "Toward Perpetual Peace – Artistic Signposts".

Being a cemetery with less than 1.000 graves the CWGC site on the Roeselare Communal Cemetery has a Cross of Sacrifice, but no Stone of Remembrance.

As part of the exhibition a life size photo of a Stone of Remembrance will be shown, +

13. **Contact details and/or web address for public enquires.**

We ontvingen een antwoord met verzoek om meer info:

Onderwerp: Re: completion event planning form

Tekst Variabele breedte

Op 9-10-2017 om 15:42 schreef Louise Dujardin:

Dear Mr. Gordyn

Thank you for all the information.
We would very much like to know the exact location of where the photo would be place.
And also how exactly it would be placed (equipment use? Fixation onto the ground?)

Kind regards
Louise

From: Paul Gordyn [mailto:paul.gordyn@skynet.be]
Sent: maandag 2 oktober 2017 21:43
To: Louise Dujardin <louise.dujardin@cwgc.org>
Subject: completion event planning form

Dear Mrs. Dujardin,

I suppose you've received by now our "event planning form" by post.

Points 4 and 12 are not printed completely, so I send the completion:

- point 4 reads: *temporary installation of a life size photo of a Stone of Remembrance, as part of the exhibition "Toward Perpetual Peace – Artistic Signposts" held on the Communal Cemetery*
- point 12 reads: *In May- June 2018 the Roeselare Communal Cemetery hosts the exhibition "Toward Perpetual Peace – Artistic Signposts". Being a cemetery with less than 1.000 graves the CWGC site on the Roeselare Communal Cemetery has a Cross of Sacrifice, but no Stone of Remembrance. As part of the exhibition a life size photo of a Stone of Remembrance will be shown, stressing the importance of religious and philosophical tolerance for the peace keeping process and highlighting the CWGC's concern for "equality as the core ideology", as expressed in the fourth of the "Commission's principles": There should be no distinction made on account of military or civil rank, race or creed.*

Kind regards, Paul Gordyn.

We antwoordden als volgt:

Van paul.gordyn@skynet.be >> Paul Gordyn ⭐

Onderwerp **Re: completion event planning form**

Aan Louise Dujardin <louise.dujardin@cwgc.org> ⭐

Beantwoorden

Doorsturen

Archiveren

Ongewenst

Verwijderen

Om uw privacy te beschermen, heeft Thunderbird externe inhoud in dit bericht geblokkeerd.

Opti

Dear Mrs. Dujardin,

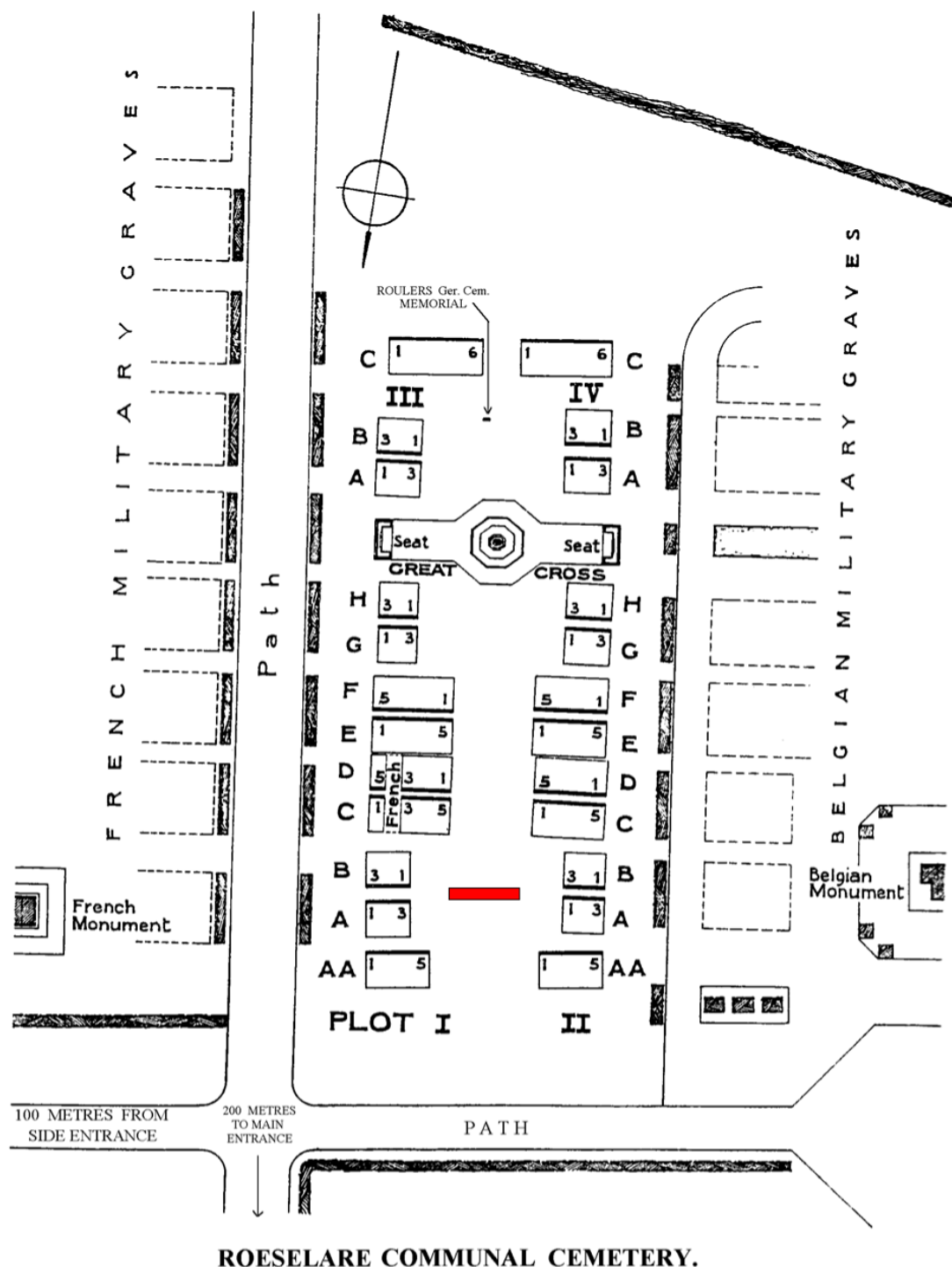
You can find a proposal for the location and construction in the attached document.

If there are objections to this proposal, please let us know so that we can look for an alternative.

Kind regards,

Paul Gordyn.

Location of photo of Stone of Remembrance (Toward Perpetual Peace - An artistic signpost)

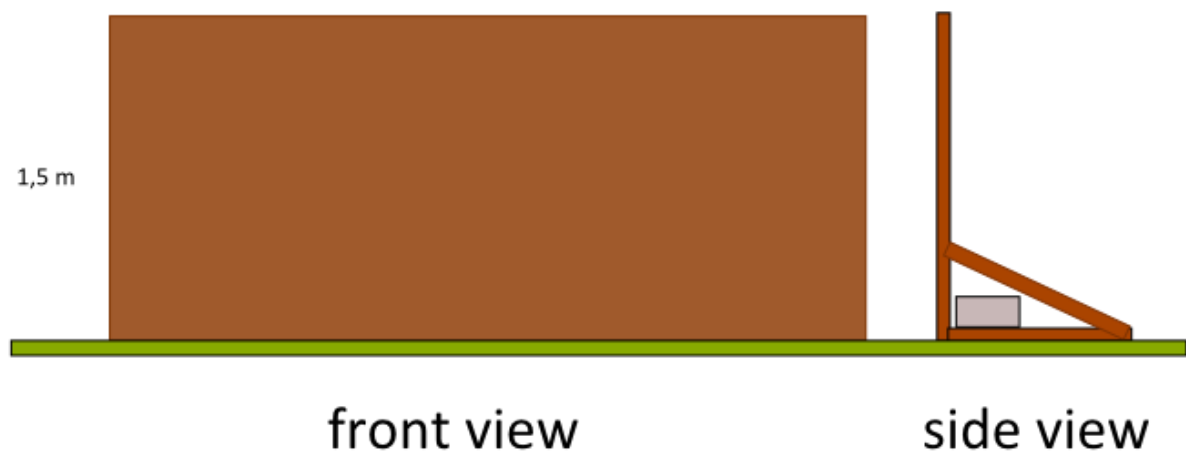


Possible constructions

wood panel



or



We ontvingen volgend antwoord, waarin de CWGC haar grote bezorgdheid uitdrukt over het gras:

Van CWGC Enquiry Support Team <enquiries@cwgc.org> ☆

Onderwerp **Exhibition at Roeselare Communal Cemetery**

Aan paul.gordyn@skynet.be >> Paul Gordyn ☆

Beantwoorden

Doorsturen

Archiveren

Ongewenst

Verwijderen

Meer ▾

13:56

Dear Mr. Gordyn

On 22 September 2017 you sent an e-mail to Mrs Sweet about a visual exhibition at the Roeselare Communal Cemetery titled 'Toward Perpetual Peace - Artistic Signposts'.

We have carefully considered your request as explained in the filled out Event Form and the proposal for location and fixation at the Military part of the cemetery.

Unfortunately, your second proposal is not something we can agree to either. Having a wooden panel with a life size photograph fixated onto the cemetery would damage the grass and would make maintenance for our gardeners on site much more difficult. Also such an installation would detract from burials and the view of the Cross of Sacrifice. These reasons have lead to the decision of not agreeing to the exhibition of a 'Stone of Remembrance' at the Military part of the Roeselare Communal Cemetery.

Thank you in advance for your understanding.

Kind regards
Louise Dujardin
Communications Coordinator, WEA
ref:_00D24K1jz._500241s8WDw:ref

We antwoordden dat we de grote bezorgdheid om het gras en het mooie uitzicht konden verzoenen met ons idee, door een andere locatie voor de foto en een andere wijze van constructie:

Van paul.gordyn@skynet.be >> Paul Gordyn

Onderwerp **Re: Exhibition at Roeselare Communal Cemetery**

Aan CWGC Enquiry Support Team <enquiries@cwgc.org>

Beantwoorden

Doorsturen

Archiveren

Ongewenst

Verwijderen

Dear Mrs. Dujardin,

Thank you for communicating your reasons for not agreeing to our former proposal.

We hope that you won't hold it against us if we give a reply.

Damaging the grass and making the maintenance more difficult can't be avoided totally, but maybe another fixation, as explained in the attachment, can limit these inconveniences to an acceptable scale.

Detracting from burials and the view of the Cross of Sacrifice can be avoided almost completely by the new location as showed in the attachment.

To avoid any misunderstanding, the following remark is necessary: the plan of the cemetery (downloaded for your website) mentions a "Roulers Ger. Cem. Memorial", but no such memorial is actually present.

Given our new proposal, we hope you'll reconsider your decision.

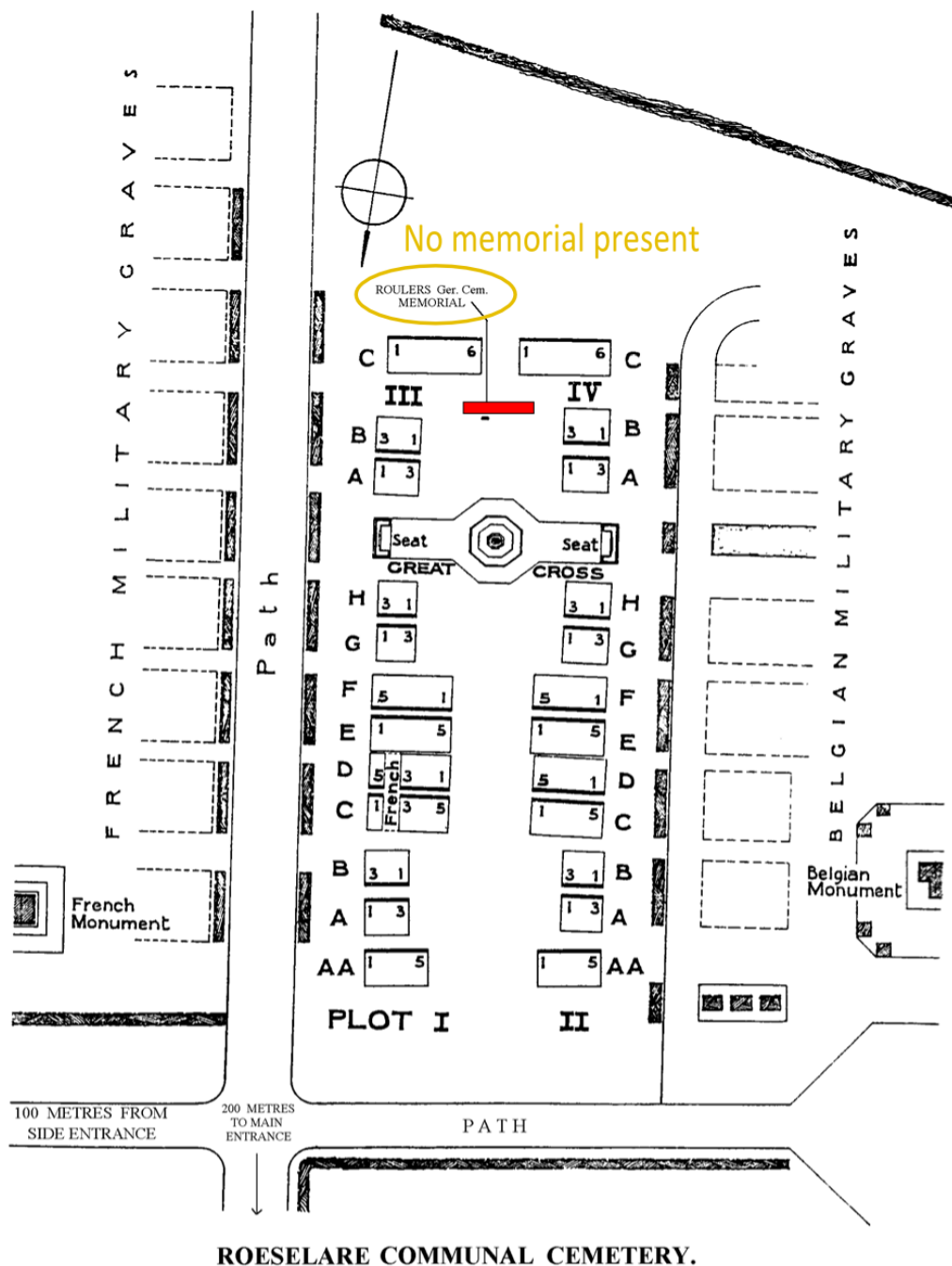
Kind regards,

Paul Gordyn.

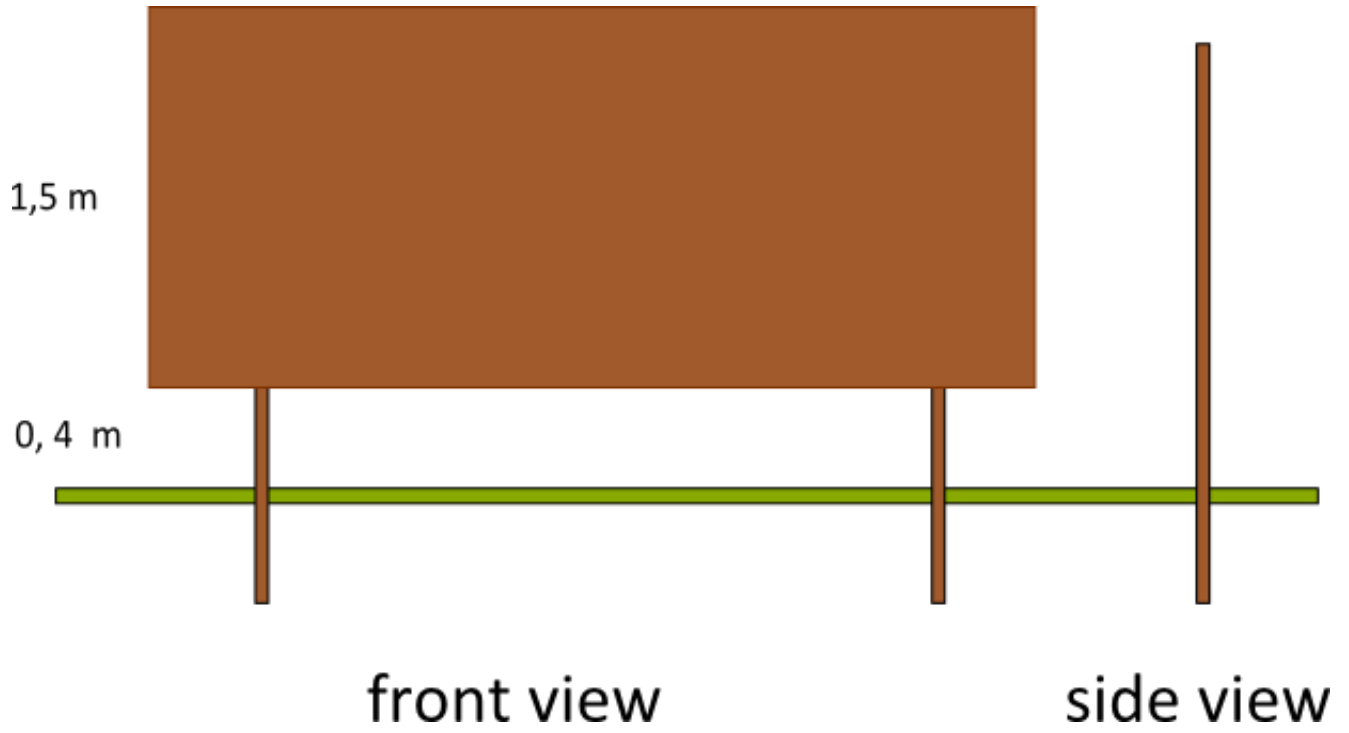
Photo of a Stone of Remembrance on the Roeselare Communal Cemetery

New proposal

*Location of photo of Stone of Remembrance
(Toward Perpetual Peace - An artistic signpost)*



Construction



We ontvingen volgend antwoord, waaruit blijkt dat het gras primeert:

Van CWGC Enquiry Support Team <enquiries@cwgc.org>★

Onderwerp **Re: Exhibition at Roeselare Communal Cemetery**

Aan paul.gordyn@skynet.be >> Paul Gordyn★

Beantwoorden → Doorsturen Archiveren Ongewenst Verwijderen Me

Dear Mr Gordyn

Thank you for your e-mail of 17 October.

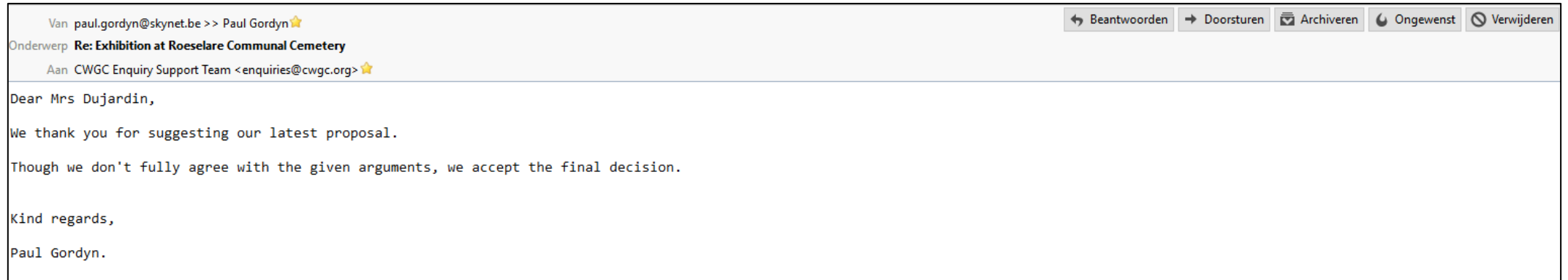
I have taken the liberty of suggesting your latest proposal to Mrs. Liz Sweet, Director of External Relations for Western Europe Area.

Unfortunately I am afraid we will not be able to grant permission to install the photographic Stone of Remembrance at Roeselare Communal Cemetery, as we do not see any way of installing it without damaging the site. Also it is not allowed to insert into the ground any kind of material to hold up the installation. As you may understand, all underground elements at the cemetery must remain untouched as much as possible.

I hope you can agree with this decision and understand the reasons for our point of view.

Kind regards
Louise Dujardin
Communications Coordinator, WEA

We zagen in dat verdere correspondentie weinig zin had en antwoordden:



Ons besluit:

als de CWGC geen “stone of remembrance” op de Roeselaarse begraafplaats wil, omdat het gras beschadigd zou worden, is de eeuwige vrede nog veraf.

Herdenken doen de Britten wel, d.w.z. het verheerlijken van hun overleden helden; denken over wat nodig is voor blijvende vrede (over hoe zij en wij vandaag de dag onze waarden moeten aanpassen, in het bijzonder wat betreft levensbeschouwingen) doen ze liever niet.