



History Nugget for September 2016 : The Mitcham War Memorial

Mitcham was late in planning for a war memorial. In January 1919 the Mitcham Advertiser wrote:

War memorials are very much in the air at present. Schemes have been launched in all the adjoining districts or are about to be launched, but Mitcham for some reason or other is once more dragging behind. Why is it? A town's meeting should have been convened...

On February 12th a meeting was convened at the Vestry Hall, attended by about 50 people. They discussed what type of memorial should be built. Some suggested a hall at the Fair Green, onto which a plaque would be placed. One person even suggested replacing the jubilee clock, which he described as a 'monstrosity'.

Letters to the press continued the debate and stressed that the memorial should be central, either at the Fair Green, cricket green or Lower Green. However, the committee chose to place a memorial in the parish churchyard, and in May 1919 the Mitcham Urban District Council gave approval for its construction.

Although the Armistice was signed by Germany on 11th November 1918, the Treaty of Versailles wasn't signed until June 1919. The British government declared a Peace Day on 19th July 1919. Mitcham council took part, and a temporary memorial was placed onto the Lower Green.

Mitcham Cricket Green Community & Heritage
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This temporary memorial proved to be more popular than the official one in the churchyard. Major Bidder wrote to the council in July 1919 suggesting that a permanent memorial be placed where the temporary one was. He also suggested that the flag pole be retained. The council said he should be referred to the Common Conservators.

The Mitcham & Tooting Mercury wrote in August 1919:

Chains are taking the place of ropes round the temporary war memorial on the Lower Green, and are a great improvement. The numbers of floral tributes which appear fresh day by day are striking and speak of the popularity of the site. Many people passing through Mitcham have stopped their conveyances on noticing the cenotaph and walked over to the spot, which is already becoming sacred to the hearts of Mitcham people. One can only hope the permanent memorial will be erected there in the sight of all men, rather than in the recesses of the churchyard.

The War Memorial Committee met on 31st October 1919 and decided to have a permanent memorial built on the site of the temporary one.

Stephen Chart had announced in May 1919 that the committee wanted names for the memorial, and forms would be sent to all residents. After a second appeal in November, the total number of names came to 588.

The memorial was unveiled on Sunday 21st November, 1920.

In 1962, Mitcham Borough Council contracted a company called Neonore Stone Cleaning Co. to give the memorial a face-lift, and also to add two inscription plaques for those who died in the second world war and other conflicts. The Mitcham News & Mercury reported in August 1962 that some of the names had faded and would have to be re-cut. In some cases, initials had become unreadable. No records have been kept of which names were affected, and so it is possible that some initials have been changed, for example an 'E' might have been re-cut as an 'F'.

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