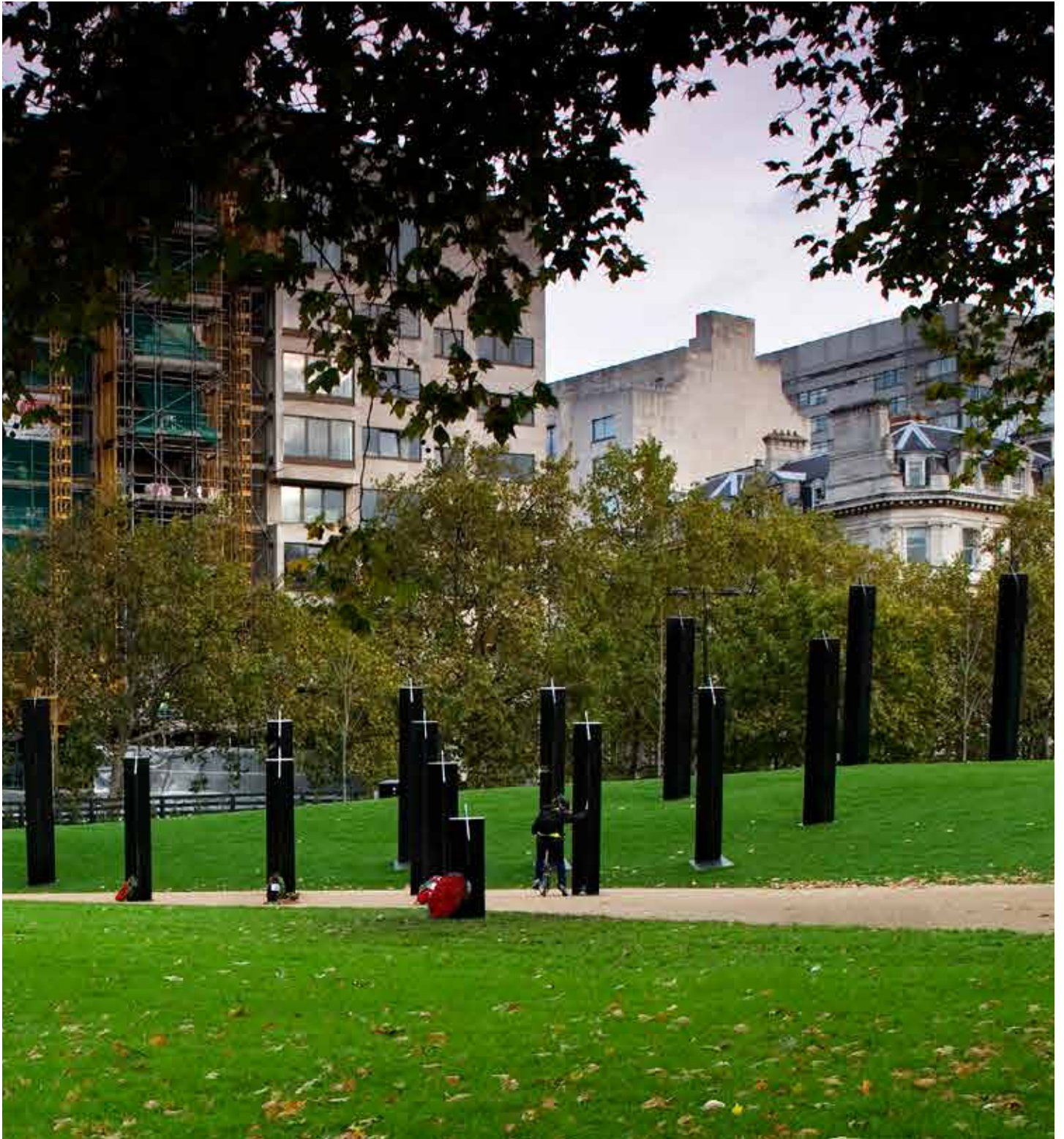


SOUTHERN STAND

The New Zealand Memorial, 2006



ONE

The New Zealand Memorial at Hyde Park Corner, in central London, is perhaps the best known of Paul Dibble's sculptures. Many of the concepts and themes within the memorial were developed over decades: Dibble's love of New Zealand icons, his interest in works that communicate with people and places, commemorating events and lives; and his work involving installations — made in the late 1970s and developed into more confident assertions in the early 1980s, all became important elements that were grafted into the memorial.

TWO

The erecting of war memorials was an international movement in the early years of the 21st century carried along by an overwhelming interest by a new generation in the collective memories of war. Thousands of young people, often wearing their grandparents' medals, attended Armistice and Anzac Day ceremonies, and new memorials began to be built worldwide. In London, memorials for each of the Commonwealth countries were erected in the central parks. The Australian memorial was unveiled in 2003 at Hyde Park Corner and New Zealand secured the corner opposite, one of the busiest places in central London.

THREE

One consideration with the memorial design was the site: a busy, bustling corner adjacent to several lanes of traffic essentially a giant roundabout. Not the sort of place for introspection. The solution to this was to build a 'hill' that would both shelter the memorial from the noise of the nearby roads and create a space that it could spread across. The hill also raises the memorial up higher into the London skyline.

FOUR

The memorial needed to be completely different from other memorials and to reflect the concerns of New Zealand. The design steered away from portraying a wall. A wall wouldn't reflect the young land of New Zealand which is a county of thin fences, stakes and wood. The idea of stakes was developed, staggering down the raised bank. The hill created, rising some four metres, as well as being a protective enclosure, makes a clearly defined area. This place became the New Zealand Memorial, staked out in the same way someone might casually mark a piece of ground and very different from the static monuments classically used as memorials. Instead, it becomes an area where people interact at face level, encouraging people to approach and be part of it, to move amongst, touch and read it — to feel themselves part of the artwork.

FIVE

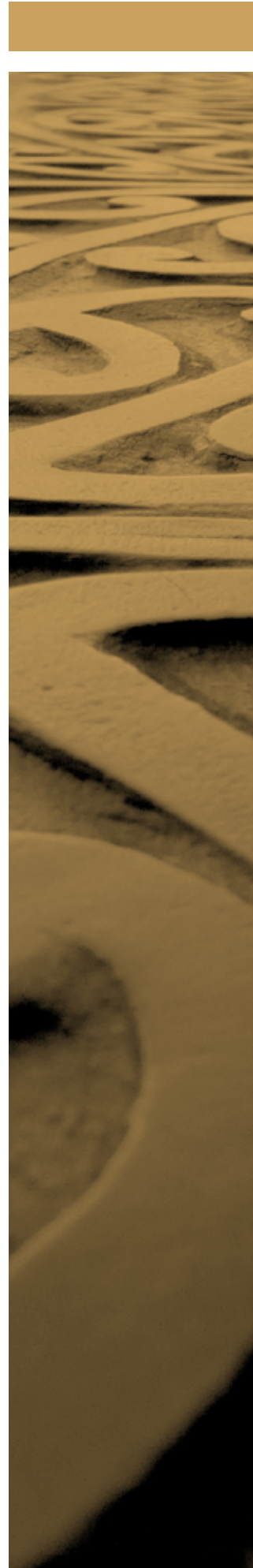


The use of markers to denote an important site rather than a single monolithic statue that people stand before, is the older of the two methods. It can be found in the old pre-Celtic and Celtic stone markers, remains of which are found throughout Britain, and in the pouwhenua (marking posts) used by Māori to mark ancestral boundaries or places of significance. It can also be seen in fenced farming enclosures, encompassing ideas of more contemporary and everyday use — in surveying and building and making settlements. Eventually 16 stakes, or ‘standards’ as they became termed, were included in the design, with their tops cut on the diagonal.

SIX



The standards call to mind ‘waratahs’ (the three-sided steel posts used in farm fences, named after the company that patented them, and often called Y-posts). Having four sides on the standards mean the stakes, when cut on the diagonal at the top, are seen at ground level as forming the shape of a cross. This cross shape and its instant solemn association with the markings for the fallen become obvious symbols. The grouping of repeated lines of identical crosses reflects soldiers’ cemeteries and smaller, simple groups of crosses in town cemeteries. The crosses on the standards are painted at the top edge an enamelled white, so that from afar they appear to hang in the air, giving them a ghostly quality.



SEVEN



To make the crosses at the tops easier to see the standards are tilted slightly forward; the tilt being towards the south, as if to point to home. This slight tilt creates a tension, giving a more emotionally charged atmosphere than would a balanced vertical. This is the same posture that people assume when standing firm to defend a site; the same lean as when you raise a gun to your shoulder or when warriors perform a haka. It also suggests a protective stance, to defend a place. Ten standards are aligned in a semi-grid formation, as if soldiers in procession, creating a pattern and rhythm. The six standards at the back are placed in the shape of the Southern Cross. These six standards are different from the rest in that the sides are even in length, so the cross produced at the top edge is more of a star shape than a crucifix. Onto these cross-sections, LED lights are attached so that at night the icon of the southern sky can be recognised as a symbol of home in the London sky.

EIGHT



The standards are positioned as if moving down over the hill, diminishing in size as they come forward.

At the back the standards are nearly five metres high and, being on a hill, they seem to tower up into the sky. At the front of the formation, the 'leader' is the smallest at just over a metre, roughly the height of someone kneeling. The diagonal cut of the top of the standards line up so it looks as if they have been sliced with a gigantic scythe. As the formation rolls down the hill it spills over a wide pathway that has been built to give access through the park, encouraging the intermingling of people with the memorial

NINE



The standards are seen differently depending on the vantage point of the viewer. From far away they look as if they are plain markers, possibly large, extruded steel units, perhaps a symbolic small forest. And just as when you enter a forest and no longer notice the whole trees, when you move amongst the standards it is the details and textures that capture attention; the surface embellished with quotes and imagery of New Zealand and referencing its shared culture with Britain.

TEN



The quotes on the standards are, in the first instance, taken from primary sources, allowing voices from the past to assert their presence. But the sources also extend to an eclectic array, not just letters from soldiers or pictures of ships but poems and entries from well-known writers, pieces of history, South Seas patterning, icons and flora and fauna. When quotes are used, the fonts and scripts are intentionally varied to give the words their own personality. Some sections of the standards are cut out, giving peepholes and views to the standards behind.

ELEVEN



Standard 3, Treaty, Call to Arms, Wainohu address. Standard three is dedicated to recognition of the Māori contribution to the war effort.

It has various manaia (carvings where the face and sometimes the body of the Māori mythological creatures are shown in profile) carved in different tribal styles at the bottom and the Māori Pioneer flag represented at the top. Three of the statements on the standard are in effect rallying cries, encouraging the Māori troops and supporting enlistment.

TWELVE



Standards four and ten, Birds New Zealand has a rich and diverse birdlife, with many species endemic to the country. Species range from seabirds: New Zealand parrots and parakeet; to a large number of perching birds and nectar-feeders that contribute much to the songs heard in the forest. Dibble frequently used birds in his sculptures, often as wise and iconic figures looking down onto the landscape. Some of his studies have featured the ruru or morepork, a New Zealand owl, as reference to the place he grew up, a small rural community called Waitakaruru which translates as ‘where the owl sits on the water’.



THIRTEEN



Standard 4 depicts a sentence from a painting, “We are the hull of a great canoe.”

Colin McCahon is New Zealand’s most significant modern artist, and standard four incorporates a piece of script from one of his paintings. The design-work on the standard is significantly different to the McCahon painting which inspired it, with the shape of the canoe hull formed around the words, but it still bears a copy of the original line from the painting. ‘We are the hull of a great canoe -- Matire Kereama’ is a water-based crayon and wash on wallpaper made in 1969. In this was the year McCahon established a studio at Muriwai, a coastal community northwest of Auckland. This coast is where Māori souls were said to pass over on their way from life to death, jumping from here to Spirits Bay at Cape Reinga.

FOURTEEN



Standard 4 shows poppies.

The quote about poppies is the transcription of a quote made by a soldier. The poppy emerged as an emblem during World War I after soldiers at the Western Front noticed that red poppies were the first plant to grow in the muddy no man’s land. At Ypres in 1915 a Canadian doctor, Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae, hastily scrawled a poem on a scrap of paper which began: “In Flanders fields the poppies blow...”. It was published in Punch, and by the end of the war the poppy had become a familiar symbol.” As a fragile flower, with its rapid transient bloom, the poppy quickly became associated as a symbol describing the tragedy of the loss of young lives.

FIFTEEN



On standard five is a representation of the ship the Dunedin. Its voyage in 1882, with the first shipment of frozen meat, marked a point in New Zealand's relationship with Britain that offered the country a new source of wealth. For the next hundred years New Zealand's main export earnings came from meat and dairy goods, the products of grass from its established farmlands.

SIXTEEN



Standard 8 is devoted to Rugby. Rugby is New Zealand's national game and is avidly followed by much of the population. So much so that the black jersey and the silver fern have become emblems of the country. Dibble's town of Palmerston North is the home of the New Zealand Rugby Museum, which contains a raft of information and memorabilia associated with the game and its history (the Museum supplied the text of the origin of the game in New Zealand). The game was introduced in the early 1870s and the country's first Home Test was played in August 1904. In 1905-6 a group of players left to play in the United Kingdom under the title of the Colonials. They were a group of men of mixed professions including a freezing worker, a foundryman, a miner, a bank officer, a civil servant and farmers. Apart from the loss of the game to Wales (which is still to this day disputed), they won every match. Thus, they were given the title 'The Invincibles', and when they arrived home the team had a new name – the All Blacks.

SEVENTEEN



Standard nine is dedicated to the beach, signalling New Zealanders' love of the sea and coast. Where many a Christmas holiday is celebrated, and making up an integral part of our island nation. Pipi and small toheroa shells placed in a spiral are lined up to spell out the word ANTIPODES – an early term used in Britain to refer to New Zealand and Australia on the other side of the world. This rendering is also a tribute to the New Zealand folk art practice of gluing shells onto lamp stands, picture frames or plaques, or arranging them under sheets of glass to decorate coffee tables. Here, this naïve play is made grand by the casting of the commonplace into bronze. Papis are one of the least elaborate and humblest of shells. They represent beaches everywhere, where many New Zealanders have memories of looking in the sand for the shellfish to take home to cook.

EIGHTEEN



“Where Pohutakawa flames, Against Hauraki skies.”

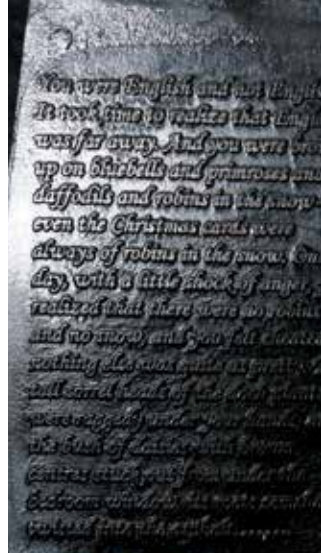
This piece of text on standard nine has the feel of someone lying back on a sailboat, a day out on still water, with a clear sky and bright sun. It sums up sun and holidays and, for us in the southern hemisphere, Christmas. The pōhutakawa is thought of as the New Zealand Christmas tree, with its bright red bottlebrush-like flowers. The Hauraki Gulf is the stretch of water on the eastern side of Auckland, known for its calm seas and picturesque islands. Really the quote is about missing home, day dreams and memories. Written by an unknown soldier from a POW camp it was found as part of an illustrated poem published in the Tiki Times Issue 23: 8 January 1945.



The short phrases represented on standard 10 atmospherically describe the wonder of the forest.

They are taken from the poem 'The Passing of the Forest', written by William Pember Reeves in 1898. The poem is about his sadness at the loss of the New Zealand bush after vast tracts of forest were cleared for farming. This had a huge impact on the face of New Zealand, creating a country that even now is seen as vast and green but which is very different to the natural environment before European settlement. With recent interest in conservation and retention of uninterrupted bushland, the poem is strangely modern and topical.

Oddly, although Pember Reeves in his poems sums up a love for New Zealand, he actually wrote it while living overseas, as New Zealand's representative in London (first as Agent General then scaled up to High Commissioner), only returning to New Zealand for a short trip in 1925-6.



A quote on standard 7 is taken from the famous novel *The Godwits Fly* published in 1938, by Iris Wilkinson. (under the

penname Robin Hyde), an autobiographical account of her life. Hyde noticed the ambiguous hunger, which she also shared, of New Zealanders for England, the 'motherland'. She described New Zealanders as 'human godwits', bearing the same compulsion to make the long migration north, as the godwits do to Siberia.

In Hyde's books, there are also accounts of landscapes depicting scenes in New Zealand that could be some place in England, due to a number of plants settlers brought with them into the new land.

From the diaries of Katherine Mansfield, another New Zealander who lived in England, on standard seven is a description of the New Zealand countryside.



In Māori tradition, the meeting house is regarded as the body of an ancestor, and is part of preserving the whakapapa (genealogy) of the people it belongs to. The

heke, or ribs, which are the inner rafters of the house are often decorated with kowhaiwhai patterns. These patterns have been added in strips along the lengths of two standards four and five. The style used is one known as the hammerhead shark pattern.

The kowhaiwhai, as well as conceptually marking this out as a New Zealand memorial, is instantly recognizable to New Zealanders and stands out as a beacon in a foreign land.

To further extend this, and as a way of uniting the group of structures, individual koru and single hammerhead shark icons (on standards three, four, six, eight and nine), are cut out of the sides to produce silhouettes.

TWENTY TWO



A full side of one half of standard eight is made up of a rendered tapa cloth.

This demonstrates New Zealand's position as an island in the South Pacific. It recognises the large portion of the country's population of island origin (Samoan, Cook Island and Tongan among others), adding a rich dimension to the culture.

The style and design of the cloth represented is a concoction of styles and not based on any actual tapa. The thin diagonal lines in the inner edge at the bottom look like a version of a Tongan motif. The triangles and the four-petal flowers are more like parts of Samoan cloths. The long, pointed, elliptical form is without precedent and is solely made up. But as a blend it achieves a pattern that gives a flavour of Pacifica.

On standard 10, in the midst of the quote, is a small fern. This is taken directly from a Fijian motif.

TWENTY THREE



The standards that make up the 'Southern Cross' formation at the back of the procession have some differences to the other standards. As well as having lights on the top, they are wider on the sides so that cross-sections of the standards are more like stars than crosses. Also, they have no bases – the shafts come straight out of the ground.

These standards are not modelled and contain no quoted text. Rather they are decorated with crude patterns made using welded lines. This has the effect of looking almost like tattooing. Some are repeated patterns, some motifs of fish or spirals, others are broader lines as if from navigational charts or survey lines. Their rugged quality is in contrast to the front standards.

There is some writing bluntly rendered. One has the short 'NZ' abbreviation of the country, on another is 'South Seas' with an arrow pointing south. One standard has a list of 21 New Zealand cities.

TWENTY FOUR



The opening of the memorial. This involved the Defence Force sending both of its 220-seat Boeing 757 jets, with a 140-strong royal tri-service guard, a band, 20 members of the cultural party, support staff and senior officers. There was the attendance of old soldiers, chosen by ballot, and a full list of Royals and Queen Elizabeth II.

TWENTY FIVE



The memorial has evolved into a gathering place for Kiwis in London. Often images are shared of it as a picnic site or with lain wreaths or at different times of the year, including in winter in the snow.