



# M332 Design for a war memorial

## Introduction

This is one of a group of speculative designs made by Mackintosh for the town-planner Patrick Geddes. It may be connected with Geddes's work in India.

**Authorship:** The drawing is inscribed with Mackintosh's name and is unmistakably in his hand.

**Status:** Unbuilt

## Chronology

### 1915

12–31 July: Summer Meeting held at King's College, London, co-organised by Patrick Geddes. <sup>1</sup> Mackintosh is given temporary work by Geddes, which involves drawing unspecified plans and elevations. <sup>2</sup>

5 August: Mackintosh writes to William Davidson that he has been attending Geddes's lectures and expects to stay with him until the end of the month. <sup>3</sup>

## Description

This design for a war memorial is one of a group of drawings by Mackintosh in the archive of the Scottish polymath Patrick Geddes; the others are for a memorial fountain and a range of lamp standards. <sup>1</sup> They were almost certainly made for exhibition or demonstration purposes rather than as working drawings, and they may have been produced in connection with Geddes's town planning work in India. <sup>2</sup> Two drawings of arcaded buildings in The Hunterian, University of Glasgow, are captioned and inscribed with Mackintosh's name in exactly the same way, and evidently belong to the same group. <sup>3</sup>

Geddes wrote that 'in every urban community what makes an aggregation of buildings something more than a mere aggregation is the presence of an appeal to the sense of beauty, the feeling of a common life, and the prompting of noble aspirations.' <sup>4</sup> As Volker Welter has pointed out, the war memorial and fountain are sites of public assembly, reflection and ritual, and therefore suitable illustrations of this lofty concept of urban design.

The war memorial is square in plan, and stands on a much larger stepped base 30 feet (9.14 m) square. All four sides were presumably to be treated in the same way, but only one elevation is shown. It recalls the monument to Rev. Orrock Johnston, designed by Mackintosh in 1905: the square inscription panel is set in an oval frame, with a bird – perhaps the same dove of peace that features on the Orrock Johnston monument – hovering above it. The curved upper edge of the oval serves as the bird's outspread wings. On the inscription panel, the words 'in France' are visible, confirming that this is a memorial to the dead of the Great War. Carved below is a pair of mysterious eye-like shapes, and at either end of the oval are relief carvings of mourning women, their heads inclined inwards. <sup>5</sup> They are echoed by four free-standing square columns at the outer corners of the steps, carved with similar figures.

The commemoration of the fallen was already under discussion while the First World War was still being fought: in May 1916 *The Times* reported that a colonnade containing memorials to 'the Indian heroes of the war' had been suggested as a focal point for the capital, New Delhi. <sup>6</sup> After the armistice of 1918, memorials became an important source of work for sculptors and architects. The fireplace incorporating flags of the warring nations, which Mackintosh designed for the Willow Tea Rooms in 1917, was a war memorial of sorts, although decorative and celebratory rather than concerned with loss of life. <sup>7</sup> He later jotted down in his sketcher's notebook the address for obtaining competition particulars for the Beverley war memorial in Yorkshire, though it is not known if he entered a design. <sup>8</sup> Although the Mackintoshes were childless, the carnage of the war touched them personally when Henry Steele Davidson, youngest son of Mackintosh's patron William Davidson, was killed in 1915. <sup>9</sup>

## People

### Clients:

- Patrick Geddes

## Documents

## Images

## Bibliography

### Published

- James S. McGrath, 'Mackintosh Drawings in the University of Strathclyde', *Charles Rennie Mackintosh Society Newsletter*, 50, Winter 1988–9, pp. 9–11
- James S. McGrath, 'Geddes and Mackintosh', *Charles Rennie Mackintosh Society Newsletter*, 53, Spring 1990, p. 5

### Notes:

- 1: Glasgow, Strathclyde University Archives: T-GED 3/12/18.
- 2: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: letter from Philip Mairet to Murray Grigor, 2 March 1967, GLAHA 52373.
- 3: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: letter from Mackintosh to William Davidson, 5 August 1915, GLAHA 52538 and GLAHA 52536.
- 4: Glasgow, Strathclyde University Archives: T-GED 22/1/1413.2, T-GED 22/1/1413.3.
- 5: The Geddes archive contains another speculative design for a war memorial clock tower and fountain for Indore, by a firm of Bombay architects (Strathclyde University Archives, T-GED 25/2/13).
- 6: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: GLAHA 41282 (M329-001), GLAHA 41283 (M329-002).
- 7: Patrick Geddes, Gilbert Slater, *Ideas at War*, London: Williams & Norgate, 1917, p. 194, quoted in Volker M. Welter, 'Arcades for Lucknow: Patrick Geddes, Charles Rennie Mackintosh and the Reconstruction of the City', *Architectural History*, 42, 1999, pp. 316–32.
- 8: A pair of female figures in similar poses accompanied by disembodied eyes appear on the hangings designed by Margaret Macdonald for the bedroom of The Hill House, c. 1902–3.
- 9: *The Times*, 24 May 1916, p. 24.
- 10: Roger Billcliffe, *Charles Rennie Mackintosh: The Complete Furniture, Furniture Drawings and Interior Designs*, Moffat, Dumfriesshire: Cameron & Hollis, 4th edn, 2009, pp. 295–6.
- 11: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: Sketcher's Notebook, GLAHA 53015/31.
- 12: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: letter from Mackintosh to William Davidson, 5 August 1915, GLAHA 52536.

## Mackintosh Architecture: Context, Making and Meaning

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