



Civic Voice is part of a partnership called the First World War Memorials Programme which has been set up to help communities discover, care for and conserve their local First World War memorials.

Case study

Marple Civic Society rallies the troops

Marple's war memorials project began with a workshop held by Civic Voice in November 2016. Marple Civic Society helped to bring together an enthusiastic crowd of its own members, as well as people from all denominations of churches in Marple and Marple Bridge, and members of other local societies including Marple Historical Society, Hawk Green Residents' Association and Friends of Memorial Park, Marple.

It was in the town's War Memorial Park that the survey workshop then took the group out into field work. Gathered around the stone statue mounted on a granite plinth, the group learned how to examine the various parts of the memorial for signs of weathering or decay, where pointing or repair might be needed, or where cleaning would reveal inscriptions obscured by surface dirt, and whether the memorial had an appearance of care or neglect. The survey forms provided at the workshop gave us a standard list of features to note, including the type of design of the memorial, its setting, whether it was free standing or inside a building, materials were used for its construction, and what inscription was displayed on it including the names of those who lost their lives in the First World War, and in later conflicts. The workshop finally showed us the best way of taking photographs of the memorials we discovered, and how to upload these on to the War Memorials Online website.



The Marple volunteers © Marple Civic Society

At the completion of the workshop session the participants scrambled to decide who should deal with the memorials with which they were most familiar depending on their affiliations listed above. In total, there were thirty or so memorials identified in the district of Marple and Marple Bridge. Most of these were associated with local churches but one to two were in public places cared for by Stockport Council.

With their new knowledge of obelisks and bases, shafts and plinths, capitals, columns, and pedestals, the volunteers began their task armed with proformas and cameras. There was a fascinating variety of memorials to be discovered. In the churchyards there were Celtic crosses on sound plinths with the names of soldiers clearly legible. Inside the churches there were many brass plaques and in one case a painted and framed decorative painting with names. In another, a marble plaque was found in the domestic garage of a private house having been saved when the chapel in which it was located was converted to a dwelling!

Outcomes and achievements

Most war memorials were constructed in the years immediately following the First World War and the survey of their condition forms part of the commemoration of that conflict. The survey conducted by the volunteers in Marple, and coordinated by the Civic Society, lasted for the first three months of 2017. Most of Marple's memorials were found to be in good condition. Those outside buildings enjoyed a condition of benign neglect, but because of their location sequestered positions, usually in churchyards, they were found to be sound and requiring only minor repair. One which had a somewhat complicated and delicate design had suffered weathering from wind and rain. Those inside buildings were cared for and appeared to be respectfully cleaned from time to time.

A number were considered suitable for listing as buildings of architectural and historic interest and they are now under consideration by Historic England. Marple Civic Society said of the project,

“It was regarded by all participants as a worthwhile exercise to place the condition of these important memorials on national record and to ensure that their purpose as a commemoration of the loss of lives of men of the Marple and Marple Bridge district continues.”