CHAPTER TWO

'A grand work of noble conception': the Victoria Memorial and imperial London

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At the beginning of the twentieth century, as at its end, Britons grieved the loss of a royal icon. In the aftermath of Victoria's death, as after Diana's, thoughts turned quickly to the question of commemoration. Only weeks after the Queen died in January 1901, a committee was established to consider a national memorial. But the plan it eventually adopted was an attempt to do more than just commemorate Victoria. The planning committee and its supporters used the occasion of the Queen's death to propose the creation of a new imperial space in London: a 'grand work of noble conception'.[1]

In the closing years of the nineteenth century, it seemed to some observers that the built environment of London was inadequate to its role as an imperial city. The Queen Victoria Memorial, which comprised both a monument to the Queen in front of Buckingham Palace and the redesign of the Mall to incorporate the new Admiralty Arch, was intended as one step towards redressing that inadequacy. As conceived and executed by its proponents and planners, the memorial is an important element in the history of London as an imperial city. Its features suggest that, for Edwardians, imperial space was a fluid concept shaped by Britons' relationship with Europe as well as with the empire. Significantly, the advocates of the memorial, who included architects, journalists, civil servants and politicians, looked chiefly to the Continent for inspiration. Moreover, as they defined it, imperial space was inextricably linked with performance and with the monarchy. By building a processional way, elevating the stature of Buckingham Palace, and enshrining the memory of Victoria, the memorial's planners inscribed the monarchy in a new way onto the landscape of London. In its representation of the Queen as a triumphant empress the memorial enshrined a vision of an imperially styled monarch. Yet while the statue of the Queen, the processional way and the triumphal arch gestured to imperial power, the significance of the colonies them-

selves was barely acknowledged in the design, despite their substantial financial contribution. Indeed, the final shape of the memorial suggests an oddly tenuous relationship between the creation of imperial space and the representation of the empire itself.

1901: commemorating the Queen and changing London

In retrospect, it seems inevitable that Queen Victoria should have been memorialised after her death in 1901. The building of monuments was a favoured means of celebrating national figures during the nineteenth century, and this fondness for permanent memorials did not abate with the dawn of the new century.[2] Military heroes, writers, philanthropists and politicians all had their statues, so it is not surprising that after her death attention quickly turned towards commemorating the Queen. Indeed, the national memorial in London was only one of many; after Victoria's death over thirty statues were erected throughout Britain.[3]

The interest in memorials to the late Queen was heightened by her unique position in turn-of-the-century British culture. She had become a ubiquitous and beloved figure, and following her death many people expressed a sense of personal loss. Moreover, Victoria's long reign was often associated by her contemporaries with stability, progress and imperial growth. One observer remarked that the news of her death 'fell upon the whole nation like a thunderclap'.[4] For many men and women, especially elites, Victoria's death seemed to heighten the anxieties occasioned by growing international competition, fears of national decline, and the war in South Africa. Lord Esher was not alone when he wrote after the Queen's funeral, 'So ends the reign of the Queen – now I feel for the first time that the new regime, so full of anxieties for England, has begun.' [5]

While the significance of the Queen's death and the affection people felt for her all but ensured her formal commemoration, other concerns affected the ultimate shape of the London memorial. Shortly after her death the new King appointed a non-partisan committee to begin organising a memorial.[6] The committee met in February 1901 and decided on the general principles that the memorial should be in London and that it should be 'monumental in character'.[7] With this decision the committee rejected suggestions from the public and some of the press that a philanthropic fund or institution should be established as a memorial.[8] Structural memorials, they argued, were 'the only things that last'. [9]

Responsibility for drawing up a plan for a such a memorial was delegated to a small executive committee, which included an architect, a

sculptor, the Lord Mayor, a representative of the King, and Lord Esher, Secretary of the Office of Works.[10] The committee considered sites near Westminster as well as the area in front of Buckingham Palace, quickly settling on the latter. In March, after consulting the Office of Works and the King, the committee presented its plan for a memorial comprising both a monument to Victoria and the redesign of the Mall.[11] To proceed, they divided the project into sculptural and architectural components. The sculptural component, consisting of a monument to the Queen in front of the palace, was placed in the hands of Thomas Brock, who had executed several statues of Victoria. The committee decided to hold a limited competition between five architects to select the final design for the space around the monument, the Mall and the entry into Charing Cross.[12] In July they announced their selection of Sir Aston Webb's entry.[13] Webb's plan involved the widening of the main carriageway through the Mall, the creation of circular 'place' at the Charing Cross end, and a semicircular enclosure in front of the palace (Figure 2).

It is unclear who first put forward the redesign of the Mall as a suitable memorial for Victoria. Lord Esher claimed credit, and probably played a pivotal role.[14] Further elaboration of the idea was provided by the Office of Works.[15] Nevertheless, it was not an entirely original idea. As soon as the Memorial Committee announced its intention to locate a monument in London, *The Times* suggested that the Mall 'might be developed in a truly regal and Imperial manner'.[16] Indeed, in choosing this project, the committee was attaching the memory of the Queen to a long-advocated city improvement.[17] The Mall's history stretched back to the seventeenth century, when it had replaced Pall Mall as the favoured place for royal and aristocratic recreation.[18] Evolving into a tree-lined boulevard popular for promenading, it ended unassumingly at Spring Gardens. By making an opening into Charing Cross, advocates believed, they could substantially relieve traffic in Pall Mall and even Piccadilly.[19] Such a change would also provide an outlet from

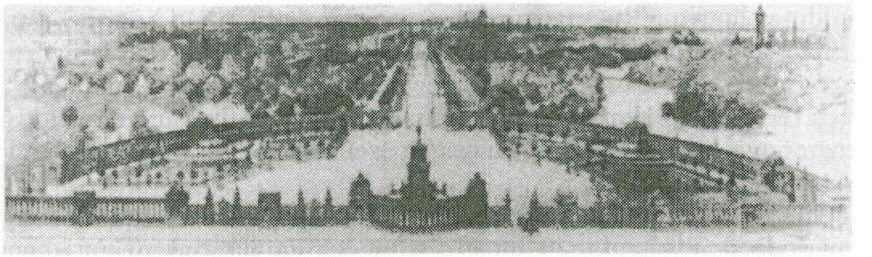

Figure 2 Aston Webb's plan for the Queen Victoria Memorial and reconstruction of the Mall. *The Builder*, 2 November 1901

Trafalgar Square, a move which was advocated by the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1897.[20] Opening up the Mall had aesthetic implications as well as practical advantages. Also writing in 1897, the editor of *The Builder*, H. H. Statham, noted that opening the Mall into Charing Cross would bring 'the vista of the long avenue of trees into connection with one of the most crowded corners of London'. But Statham also noted pessimistically that improvement of the Mall was an idea 'still being talked about and nothing done'.[21] The popular support for a memorial to Victoria finally provided an opportunity to accomplish this project, using public subscriptions to do so.

The decision to incorporate a redesigned Mall within the Victoria Memorial was made in the context of wider concerns over planning and architecture. To many critics, London seemed to fall short of what a great city should be. There were ongoing fears that the metropolis's increasing traffic and crowding would lead to paralysis.[22] In addition, there was increasing embarrassment over the metropolis's 'dowdiness and disorder'.[23] This dissatisfaction grew in tandem with admiration for the wide avenues and grand government buildings of Continental cities, such as Rome, Paris and Vienna. Although the city had its defenders, it seemed to many Londoners that, in an era of growing international competition, their city was losing ground to Continental cities.[24] In H. H. Statham's opinion, the metropolis was almost 'entirely devoid of the qualities of spaciousness and stateliness'. Without these qualities, London was 'not so much like a capital city as like a very large and overgrown provincial town'.[25]

In the last decades of the nineteenth century shifts in government policy facilitated some architectural improvement of the city.[26] In 1888 the metropolis's first municipal government, the London County Council, was inaugurated and undertook a handful of major projects.[27] Then, in the 1890s, a 'flourishing treasury' combined with a strong Ministry prompted the government to embark on an extensive building programme.[28] These efforts were shaped by a growing self-consciousness of London's imperial role. As M. H. Port suggests, the great buildings housing the machinery of government – including the War Office, the Admiralty and new Public Offices – were all designed during this period to reflect a renewed sense of imperial grandeur.[29] Even the new London County Council, which was driven largely by a progressive agenda, was also 'eager' to execute projects in an 'imperial spirit'.[30]

The sense of London as an imperial city was, however, a fluid concept. Indeed, it is hard to define just what contemporaries meant when they described London as 'imperial'. Certainly there was a growing consciousness that the city was the centre of a huge empire, and that

its public architecture needed to reflect that role. At the same time, the 'imperial' concept was used to invoke less tangible qualities, which had to do less with London's role as capital than with its historic world position. The writer and Indian administrator Lepel Griffin suggested, for example, that a city's rank as 'imperial' depended primarily on its 'antiquity, and world interest, and the fact of being today, or having been in the past, the centre of national, intellectual, political and social life'.[31] While London's imperial position was important, its boosters believed that the city had a significance beyond the empire. London after all was, according to *The Times* and many others, 'the greatest city of the world'.[32]

When the Victoria Memorial Committee embarked on its project in 1901, it provided one answer to the question of what imperial London should look like. The memorial was envisaged both as a central point in a vast empire and as lying squarely within a European context. Yet, while it was to be an imperial monument and space, the question of how to represent the empire proved problematic. The planning, eventual design and subsequent use of the memorial shed light on the various ways in which Edwardians imagined their imperial city.

The elements of an imperial space

Advocates of the Victoria Memorial regarded it first and foremost as embodying the qualities which they admired in Continental cities, especially Paris. Prime Minister Arthur Balfour, who sat on the organising committee, hoped that instead of 'a mere monument to the Queen' the committee could effect 'some great architectural and scenic change'. Balfour described the chosen plan as 'of a kind of which other nations have shown examples, which we may well imitate and easily surpass'.[33] Supporters in the press looked to the avenues of Paris as the ideal to which the redesigned Mall should aspire. The *Daily Mail* wrote that 'by these designs London has at last an opportunity of creating a noble thoroughfare almost Parisian in its depth and beauty'.[34] More confidently, the *Pall Mall Gazette* predicted that, once finished, the Mall 'will have no reason to fear comparison with the Champs Elysées'.[35]

For architectural critics the lack of vistas was one of London's key problems. Commentators hoped that the memorial would 'stand where it can be seen from a distance'.[36] Although London possessed imposing buildings, it was often noted that there were no impressive approaches to them. Art critic M. H. Spielmann complained, 'we approach buildings sideways ... you cannot drive straight up to the ... Mansion House, to the Bank'. He praised Aston Webb's winning sub-

mission for 'bringing a fine road straight up to the great feature to be viewed'.[37]

This desire for grand vistas reflects the value that nineteenth-century European elites had long placed on the theatricality of their metropolises. In her examination of Regency London, Deborah Nord suggests that urban improvements resulted in 'not only a more easily navigable city but a city more easily viewed as an enormous stage'.[38] At the end of the century the association of London and spectacle still flourished, albeit in new forms. Lavish spectacle thrived in theatres across London, in the West End's new commercial spaces and in the streets themselves, with events like the Diamond Jubilee.[39] Like Regent Street and the Parisian boulevards, the Mall was in part conceived of as a stage, one on which the power of the British empire could be displayed for mass spectatorship, and indeed the whole world. [40]

While the redesigned Mall would give London a space comparable to the avenues of European capitals, planners hoped that the central monument would rectify another of London's defects. Great cities, they implied, must physically embody their history. Yet London, despite dozens of statues, lacked the sort of impressive architectural memorials found on the Continent. 'No metropolis in Europe,' one writer complained, 'is so poverty-stricken in the matter of ... impressive monuments as the centre of the British empire.'[41] Speaking in favour of the Victoria Memorial, William Harcourt noted that 'though this nation has not been poor in great characters, it has not been distinguished in the manner in which it has commemorated them.' He continued that he 'hardly [knew] of one even in this great metropolis – the greatest City in the world – which is deserving either of the greatness of the Empire or the greatness of this City'.[42] There were exceptions to this, most notably the Albert Memorial in Hyde Park and Nelson's Column in Trafalgar Square.[43] But, for inspiration, commentators and advocates looked again to the Continent. Amid doubts that British sculpture was up to the task, the memorial committee even hinted, in vain, that the sculptor Thomas Brock might travel to see the 'great examples of monumental sculpture of Europe'.[44] In the press grandiose European memorials, such as those to Frederick in Germany and Catherine the Great in Russia, were discussed as possible models.[45] M. H. Spielmann suggested that inspiration could be found in the memorial to Vittorio Emanuele II under construction in Rome, 'the most noteworthy of all modern monuments'. [46]

The inscription of national and imperial history onto the urban landscape was intended to involve more than a monument to the Queen. There was some thought in the planning stages that the Mall might be a suitable site for a large number of statues, and various subjects were proposed. One of the architects competing for the commission, Rowan Anderson, included statues of Queen Elizabeth, William the Conqueror and King Alfred in his plan.[47] Another architect suggested statues up and down the length of the Mall.[48] Eventually the committee decided that extra statuary should depict the expanse of Britain's empire. There were to be four groups in the Mall, one each representing India, Africa, Canada and Australia. Together these would be a visible representation of the empire in the city's centre.[49] This decision was significant because it was an attempt to relate the memorial specifically to Britain's imperial possessions. As one advocate argued, the 'Empire must have a capital, and all citizens whether they belonged to the United Kingdom, to India, or to the colonies ... ought to be proud of that capital, and try and ensure that it had monuments in it of that which was great and memorable in the history of the Empire.' [50]

Among those involved with the memorial, the Colonial Secretary, Joseph Chamberlain, perhaps felt most strongly the need for some physical expression of imperial unity. Chamberlain, the pre-eminent advocate of imperial federation, had first proposed a memorial which would consist of a group of chapels, each built by a different colony.[51] Although his idea was rejected, Chamberlain remained a vocal supporter of the memorial. Speaking at a memorial meeting, he emphasised 'the extraordinary, the unparalleled position which Queen Victoria occupied in ... the Empire.' It was 'impossible', Chamberlain claimed, 'to overestimate the influence which was exerted by the character and the personality of the Queen in securing the unity of the Empire'. [52]

Chamberlain's assertion of the importance of the Queen for imperial unity underscored a significant aspect both of the memorial plan and of the imagined contours of imperial London. In several ways the planners of the memorial attempted to enshrine a particular vision of the monarchy. In location, purpose and design the memorial reified a ceremonial monarch at the heart of the empire. By opening the Mall into Charing Cross, by widening it, and by embellishing it architecturally, the Memorial Committee transformed what had been a fashionable promenade into a regal procession route. Moreover, in choosing to locate the memorial at Buckingham Palace, the committee elevated the importance of the London residence of the monarch. The palace itself had little historical importance, dating back only to George III, who had built it as a private residence. In the 1820s George IV had ordered it to be rebuilt, but Victoria had been the first monarch actually to live in the new palace. Even after reconstruction the palace was widely criticised. *The Times* referred to it as the 'shabbiest Royal

Palace in Europe'.[53] The Queen herself had never especially liked the palace, far preferring to spend time at Windsor, Osborne House or Balmoral. Yet the Victoria Memorial Committee gave the palace greater prominence, remaking it as a focal point for the metropolis and connecting it symbolically with Trafalgar Square and Whitehall.

The Memorial Committee also designated a new purpose for the Mall and the palace. The success of the great ceremonial events in the latter part of Victoria's reign – especially her two jubilees – had convinced officials and royals not only that such grand ceremonies were popular but also that they could be used to celebrate the imperial idea. Bringing troops from each part of the empire together for the first time, the Diamond Jubilee seemed to many to have been a triumphant expression of imperial unity. Yet London was ill prepared for such massive demonstrations. Its narrow streets provided neither adequate room for crowds of spectators nor a grand setting for spectacle.[54] Lord Esher, secretary of the Memorial Committee, would have been keenly aware of this fact, since he had participated in planning the London celebrations of the Diamond Jubilee.[55] In addition, both he and King Edward, who took an active interest in the memorial, had great appreciation of ceremonial spectacle. June 1897 loomed large in the minds of many others as they remembered the Queen in 1901. In the climate of anxiety occasioned by – among other things – the South African War, the memory of the Diamond Jubilee seemed especially poignant. One writer compared 'the "tumult" and the "shouting"' of 1897 with 1901's 'war and khaki, sickness, wounds and death'.[56] It was in this context that the committee conceived of the new Mall and its monumental centrepiece as both a stage and a backdrop to further grand performances.

As the memorial's creators enshrined the memory of the Diamond Jubilee, they also shaped the memory of Victoria to reflect a particular vision of empire. Throughout the last years of her life the Queen was repeatedly depicted in two idealised images.[57] The first was of a resplendent monarch, shown in allegorical drawings and staged spectacles of grandeur. In the year of the Diamond Jubilee this Victoria was often the centre of an imagined scene of imperial unity in which colonial soldiers paid tribute to the throne. A second, more common image, however, portrayed Victoria as humble, kindly and maternal. This motherly queen was celebrated in poetry and popular biography, and in countless illustrations and advertisements which showed the Queen comforting her subjects or enjoying domestic pleasures. Both images of the Queen were equally idealised: in the latter, her compassion was exaggerated to superhuman proportions, while the former image bore little if any resemblance to the small woman who in reality eschewed the trappings of royalty.

Both the regal and the domestic Victoria found their way into Thomas Brock's statuary. Dominating the memorial was a huge and regal empress-queen who stared sternly down the length of the Mall. But behind and at the sides of this figure were three allegorical arrangements intended to represent 'those qualities which made our Queen so ... much beloved.'[58] At the sides, mythical winged women represented Truth and Justice, while at the back a young, seated woman with children at her knees and an infant in her arms represented Motherhood (Figure 3). Allusions to Truth and Justice were common in public statuary, but the figure of Motherhood was more unusual, and was found in only a handful of monuments, including those dedicated to Victoria in Manchester and Sheffield. By including this figure in the London memorial Brock imported a sentimental, domestic scene into an imperial space. While it alluded directly to Victoria's alleged nature and 'great love for her people', it also served a wider purpose.[59] For late Victorians and Edwardians, ideas about motherhood were central to ideas about imperial strength.[60] Moreover, the image of the Queen as motherly ruler was one which imperialists often used to naturalise the empire by describing it as a family.

Just as the figure of Motherhood was idealised, so was the figure of Victoria on the front of the monument. The manner in which this was done was not pleasing to all eyes.[61] George Bernard Shaw, for example,

Figure 3 'Motherhood' detail from the Queen Victoria Memorial London, Thomas Brock

complained that the Queen was 'represented as an overgrown monster'.[62] But for the sculptors who executed public memorials to the Queen a 'literal personal resemblance' was less important than the overall effect.[63] Like Brock, George Frampton had portrayed Victoria several times. He believed that a 'statue of the Queen should be ... a symbol of her exalted position, and of the greatness of the realm over which she ruled'.[64] By changing her proportions, and making her appear regal, sculptors like Brock and Frampton gave body to a vision of imperial grandeur. On Brock's memorial, symbolic ornamentation heightened the impact. Mermaids, tritons, and figures representing the navy, the army, Peace, Progress, Labour, Agriculture and Manufacture adorn the fountain and steps which surround the central monument. Towering over the arrangement is a gold figure of Victory. The effect of the whole memorial was to transform the diminutive and dowdy Queen into an empress triumphant.

The transformation of Victoria was further accentuated by the architectural style of the setting. Aston Webb's winning submission, as well as the other competition entries, reflected the ascendancy in the late 1890s of neoclassical styles for public buildings in Britain, such as the War Office and the new Public Offices.[65] Neoclassical styles were also used for major colonial buildings, including the Union Buildings in Pretoria, the Victoria Memorial in Calcutta and the buildings of New Delhi.[66] For these buildings, and for London's Victoria Memorial, classical forms evoked a connection with the Roman empire. As Thomas Metcalf explains in his study of imperial architecture, 'classical styles ... were the architectural medium through which Europeans always apprehended empire'.[67] Metcalf also notes, however, that it was equally important to British architects that their style should seem authentically national. To this end, Edwardian architects used baroque forms which harked back to Christopher Wren and his school.[68] In the Victoria Memorial, Webb used neoclassicism, drawing especially on baroque and eighteenth-century styles, to provide an ideal backdrop to the ceremonial enactments of empire.[69]

For its planners and its advocates the Victoria Memorial provided an opportunity to carve out an imperial space in the heart of London. Its salient features lay in its similarity to the avenues of the great Continental cities, its evocation of imperial grandeur, its theatricality and its reification of a ceremonial monarchy. Like a great stage set, the long processional route was styled with allusions to classical Rome and presided over by an imposing empress-queen. Depictions of the empire's different regions, which were imagined united in their devotion to her memory, were also intended. Yet, while planners had imagined an imperial space, the actual execution of their plans involved a

less direct means of representing the empire. Nor did they foresee what the real focal point of the space would become.

1911: the monument unveiled

The main components of the Victoria Memorial were completed in only ten years. Edward, who had been an active proponent of the project, did not live to see its completion in 1911. Instead, the memorial was finished just in time to serve as a processional setting a month later at the coronation of George V. Meanwhile the metropolis also hosted a conference of colonial Premiers and, at the Crystal Palace, the 'Festival of Empire and Pageant of London'. [70]

The coronation of George V was, in many ways, the ideal event to launch the Victoria memorial as an imperial space. George, like Edward before him, embraced the pomp and ceremony which Victoria had disdained. Travelling in a gilded state carriage, the new King passed the great statue of Victoria and processed down the Mall on his way to and from Westminster Abbey. Participating in the procession were colonial troops and ornately uniformed Premiers. Observers declared the new Mall and monument a great success as the backdrop for the pageant of the coronation. The *Illustrated London News* highlighted the moment when George V passed by the statue of Victoria with an elaborate illustration captioned 'George the imperialist at the memorial to Victoria the Good' (Figure 4).[71]

It had been only a month since the central monument was unveiled amid similar pomp, but that event had a different emphasis. A large crowd heard the King speak of Victoria as the 'most honoured woman and beloved queen'. The monument, he asserted (reading a speech written for him by Esher), served 'to revive for us and convey to our descendants the lustre and fame which shine upon that happy age'. Voicing the hopes of the Memorial Committee, he depicted the memorial standing 'for ever ... to proclaim the glories of the reign of Queen Victoria, and to prove to future generations the sentiments of affection and reverence which Her People felt for Her and Her Memory'.[72] He then knighted Thomas Brock for his accomplishment.

The press, for the most part, praised both the statue and the King's words. *Lloyd's Newspaper* declared that the speech was a 'call to the nation ... a voice from the Queen who will never die in the affection of the English-speaking races, bidding us make our lives worthy of the high position to which we are called by divine providence'.[73] Both the King and the press also portrayed the memorial as truly imperial. It was, in the words of the *Illustrated London News*, 'a great imperial and national ideal wrought in marble'.[74] 'The Dominions and Colonies'

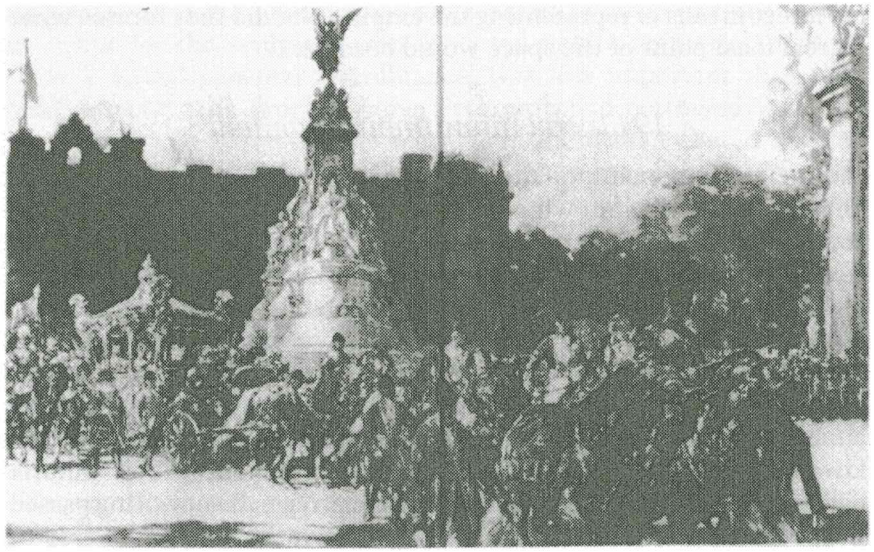

Figure 4 The coronation procession of King George V: 'George the imperialist at the memorial to Victoria the Good'. *Illustrated London News*, 1 July 1911

had, the King claimed, 'united to enshrine Her Memory; and this Monument represents races and regions more various than have been combined before upon a common purpose'.[75]

Despite the King's declaration, the colonies did not have a high profile either in the monument itself or at its unveiling. Although illustrations of the day echoed depictions of the Diamond Jubilee, the cast of players was very different (Figure 5). Neither colonial Premiers nor troops took part in the ceremony. Instead, the guest of honour was the Queen's grandson, Kaiser Wilhelm II. Indeed, in the context of tense relations between Britain and Germany, his presence in London was deemed the most newsworthy aspect of the day. Even an ardent supporter of the empire, who was visiting from Canada, reported that 'the most memorable incident ... was that of the placing of a wreath at Queen Victoria's feet by her grandson, Kaiser Wilhelm'.[76]

The focus on the Kaiser's attendance serves as a reminder that London's imperial spaces, and its imperial performances, were defined and understood within the context of Europe as well as of the empire. Moreover, the final form of the memorial suggests that the planners did not regard the details of the representation of the colonies as an integral part of marking imperial space. By the time the Victoria Memorial was completed, the committee and the architect, in fact, had

Figure 5 George V and Kaiser Wilhelm II unveiling the Queen Victoria Memorial, London. *The Graphic*, 20 May 1911

made significant changes to their original designs. The changes were in part related to funding problems, but they also reveal much about how the planners imagined imperial space in London.

Funding had been an important factor in planning the memorial from the outset. As with most memorials to Victoria, the committee chose to raise money from the public by subscription.[77] This method presented practical problems, since committees had to begin planning before knowing how much money they could spend. The Victoria

Memorial Committee dealt with the handicap by scaling down some of the architectural embellishment which Webb had proposed for the space around the monument. More significantly, they delayed the execution of some stages of the monument, in particular the groups of statuary on the Mall, by which Webb had proposed to represent the colonies.[78]

When the committee chose, early in the process, to build an imperial memorial to Victoria, they also decided that the empire should bear some of its cost. This was one way in which the committee distinguished the memorial as imperial rather than national; as representing, in the Prime Minister's words, the loyalty of 'the citizens of this great Empire, whose growth ... has so mightily expanded during the course of [Victoria's] reign'.[79] While the desire to include the colonies was no doubt genuine, the committee may have been motivated by the need to raise the large sums required to complete the plan. With this in mind, the planners pressed colonies to donate by announcing that any colony which did not contribute would not be represented on the memorial. Colonial governments responded by contributing about £130,000, nearly a third of the total cost of the memorial.[80]

Despite the substantial colonial contributions and, ultimately, a budget surplus, the colonies did not feature prominently on the monument itself. Initial plans called for groups of statuary on the Mall but specified few details. In the end, the colonies were represented either by urns or by cherubs carrying shields and national symbols, which surmount gateposts surrounding the monument.[81] These gateposts were the last portion of the monument to be completed, in 1924, and formed a small and inconspicuous part of the memorial layout. Moreover, a significant part of the empire was omitted entirely. As the Viceroy, Lord Curzon, had decided to build an Indian Victoria Memorial rather than contribute to the London fund, India was not directly represented on the memorial at all. This was a striking omission, given that the popular image of Victoria as mother of the empire prominently included India as one of her charges. Indeed, the figure of Victoria as mother-empress alluded to the presence of India among her 'children'. Yet the absence of India from the colonial iconography highlights the contradictions which emerged in this attempt at creating imperial space for an empire with little coherence.

While the representation of the colonies shrank to near invisibility in the finished memorial, in other ways the memorial as a whole became more imperial as building progressed. Among the many construction projects undertaken by the government in the last years of the nineteenth century were new offices to house the Admiralty. Beset with problems, this large project had advanced slowly. This fact was

turned to the advantage of the Victoria Memorial when the planners arranged to include a great arch as part of the Admiralty offices. They had earlier discussed erecting an arch leading from the Mall into Charing Cross but had found it too expensive. By integrating an arch with the Admiralty buildings, the memorial's planners found a way to have the government pay for it.[82]

The Admiralty Arch, which was also designed by Aston Webb, further added to the sense of the Mall as a processional route. Echoing other triumphal arches, such as the Arc de Triomphe in Paris, it formed a grand entry into the redesigned Mall. Looking from Buckingham Palace, it provided a visual endpoint to the long avenue. The concept of the arch, combined with Webb's use of neoclassicism, prompted *The Builder* to praise the project as 'essentially Roman'.[83] The connection with the ancient empire was underscored by a Latin inscription dedicating the arch to Victoria's memory. As with the monumental sculpture at the far end of the Mall, the arch, adorned with figures representing Gunnery and Navigation, cast Victoria in the role of triumphal empress-queen.[84]

For some observers the Victoria Memorial seemed like the first step towards the remaking of London as the capital city of a new imperial federation. Encouraged both by George V's coronation and the belief that the empire was 'inevitably tending' towards federation, *The Builder* published a plan for 'Imperial London' in January 1912. This plan called for the development of an Imperial Quarter comprising a new imperial parliament, palace and processional way. The Victoria Memorial was to be pivotal, with avenues radiating out from it, and the Mall forming the 'principal approach' to a new imperial palace.[85] Of course, neither imperial federation nor the rebuilding of London took place. Nor did the Mall become the prime location for memorials which some of its planners had envisioned. A few monuments with imperial significance were placed in close proximity to the Admiralty Arch. A statue of Captain Cook sponsored by the British Empire League was unveiled in 1914, and memorials to those killed fighting in South Africa and China were erected by the Royal Marines and the Royal Artillery.[86] But in the wake of the First World War, the major memorials to the nation's dead were located in Whitehall or at Hyde Park Corner rather than the Mall.

One last addition to the Victoria Memorial was made in 1913 when the facade of Buckingham Palace was reconstructed. Throughout the planning stages, and after completion of the memorial, many observers commented upon the architectural inadequacy of the palace. With surplus funds, the Memorial Committee commissioned Aston Webb to

design a new facade, which he executed in the same style as the Admiralty Arch. Although advocated by *The Builder*, this change foreshadowed a different focus to the Mall than the one they, or the planners, envisaged. Once imagined as a backdrop to the memorial, the palace itself became the focus of attention.

Significantly, King George V insisted that the new facade should leave the central balcony open to public view.[87] It had been from this balcony that he had waved to the crowds on his coronation day. Rather than a mere backdrop, the palace balcony became the stage on which the King and Queen appeared at moments of national crisis and celebration, most notably the eve and end of the First World War. For these events the nation – rather than the empire – was represented by huge crowds which filled the area around the monument to Victoria. Although the growing symbolic importance of the palace and its balcony did not entirely overshadow the Mall, which remained the route of royal processions to and from Westminster, the connection of the whole project with Victoria's memory was largely forgotten. Moreover, the central monument to the Queen faded into a kind of prominent obscurity. While still embodying imperial glory, it came to serve chiefly as a vantage point from which to peer into the domestic abode of the late twentieth-century monarchy.

Notes

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1 *Art Journal*, quoted in Elizabeth Darby and Michael Darby, 'The nation's memorial to Victoria,' *Country Life*, 16 November 1978, p. 1648.
2 See Benedict Read, *Victorian Sculpture* (New Haven CT, Yale University Press, 1982); Alison Yarrington, *The Commemoration of the Hero, 1800–64: Monuments to the British Victors of the Napoleonic Wars* (New York, Garland, 1988); Rodney Mace, *Trafalgar Square: Emblem of Empire* (London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1976).
3 See Elisabeth Susan Darby, 'Statues of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert: A Study in Commemorative and Portrait Statuary', Ph.D. dissertation, Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London, 1983; Victoria R. Smith, 'Constructing Victoria: The Representation of Queen Victoria in England, India and Canada, 1897–1914', Ph.D. dissertation, Rutgers University, 1998.
4 Selina (Lady) Southwark, *Social and Political Reminiscences* (London, Williams & Norgate, 1913), p. 283.
5 Esher to his son, *Journals and Letters*, in Maurice Brett (ed.), *Journals and Letters of Reginald Viscount Esher* (London, Nicholson & Watson, 1923), p. 278.
6 The committee members included the Marquess of Salisbury (chairman), Aretas Akers-Douglas (First Commissioner of Works), A. J. Balfour, Lord Balfour of Burleigh, Joseph Chamberlain, Sir Henry Fowler, Lord George Hamilton, Earl Cadogan, the Earl of Kimberley, the Earl of Rosebery and the Lord Mayor of London. Arthur Bigge was originally the secretary, but he resigned and was replaced by Lord Esher, secretary of the Office of Works.

7 *The Times*, 28 February 1901, p. 9.
8 Many members of the public and some members of the press advocated memorials which would reflect the Queen's compassionate character. The *Pall Mall Gazette*, for example, argued that a philanthropic memorial would symbolise Victoria's 'love for and interest in the people' (12 February 1901, p. 2).
9 A. J. Balfour, memorial meeting reported in *The Times*, 27 March 1901, p. 8.
10 Besides Esher the committee members were Lord Windsor, Lord Redesdale, Edward Poynter, William Emerson, Sidney Colvin and Arthur Ellis.
11 The King was reported to have visited several possible sites (*Pall Mall Gazette*, 5 March 1901, p. 2). The plan was approved by the full committee on March 19 (*The Times*, 20 March 1901, p. 9).
12 The press, architects, and sculptors criticised the limited nature of the competition: see Darby and Darby, 'The nation's memorial', p. 1647.
13 *The Times*, 27 July 1901, p. 14
14 Esher, letter to his son, 26 February 1901, *Journals*, p. 287.
15 A draughtsman, Richard Allison, drew up plans: M. H. Port, *Imperial London: Civil Government Building in London, 1850–1915* (New Haven CT, Yale University Press, 1995), p. 24.
16 *The Times*, 28 February 1901, p. 9. The *Pall Mall Gazette* concurred, favouring the Mall over some 'remote corner' near the House of Lords.
17 In the 1850s Albert had advocated some sort of route through St James's Park to meet the needs of the growing population in the area: Port, *Imperial London*, p. 20.
18 Steen Eiler Rasmussen, *London: The Unique City* (London, Jonathan Cape, 1937), p. 95.
19 *The Times*, 27 July 1901, p. 14.
20 Port discusses their proposal, which focused on opening the square into Whitehall: *Imperial London*, pp. 22–3.
21 H. H. Statham, 'London as a jubilee city', *National Review*, 29 (1897) 594–603 (quote from p. 599).
22 James Winter, *London's Teeming Streets, 1830–1914* (London, Routledge, 1993).
23 *Ibid.*, p. 20. Port notes that London's architectural journals began advocating more Parisian-style planning in the 1860s: *Imperial London*, p. 13. See also Donald J. Olsen, *The Growth of Victorian Cities* (New York, Holmes & Meier, 1976).
24 Lepel Griffin, 'An imperial city', *Pall Mall Magazine*, 1 (1893) 656–68.
25 Statham, 'London as a jubilee city', p. 595, quoted in Felix Driver and David Gilbert, 'Heart of empire? Landscape, space, and performance in imperial London', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 16 (1998) 11–28 (quote on p. 16).
26 An early project was the Thames embankment, completed in 1870: Port, *Imperial London*, p. 13; Winter, *London's Teeming Streets*, pp. 27–33.
27 See Susan Pennybacker, *A Vision for London, 1889–1914: Labour, Everyday Life and the LCC Experiment* (London, Routledge, 1995).
28 Port, *Imperial London*, p. 16.
29 *Ibid.*, pp. 2–3, 233–51.
30 Frederic Harrison, quoted in Driver and Gilbert, 'Heart of empire?', p. 20.
31 Griffin, 'An imperial city', p. 657.
32 *The Times*, 23 June 1897, p. 9.
33 *Ibid.*, 27 March 1901, p. 8.
34 *Daily Mail*, 28 March 1901, p. 1.
35 *Pall Mall Gazette*, 23 August 1904, clipping. Public Record Office, London, Work 20/20.
36 *Ibid.*, 5 March 1901, p. 2.
37 M. H. Spielmann, 'On the Queen Victoria Memorial', *Royal Institute of Great Britain Proceedings*, 17 (13 May 1904) 540–6 (quote from p. 542).
38 Deborah Epstein Nord, 'The city as theater: from Georgian to early Victorian London', *Victorian Studies*, 31:2 (1988) 159–88 (quote from p. 165). While the planners of the Victoria Memorial looked to Paris for inspiration, the redesigners of Paris had emulated the development of Regent Street.