

The Blue Bridge - York's Once Forgotten War Memorial”



When it comes to War Memorials they are (as they should be) the pride of the City, monuments to the proud people who fought and died for their Country, immortalised forever in stone so we can commemorate, Honour and remember these heroes.

Desecration, vandalism and defilement of these monuments or memorials is (as it should be) considered sacrilegious and disrespectful.

So! Of all the war memorials in York how is it that one could be scrapped, defiled, taken away or even forgotten (for a long time)? It's a good question and one that is hard to answer because of the times.

But for now, let's look at the information we have and look at "The Blue Bridge - York's War Memorial"

The Blue Bridge is located where the Ouse meets the Foss, it crosses the River Foss just above its confluence with the River Ouse.

In the early 1730s a section of the eastern river bank of the Ouse was improved, at the expense of the city, to create an area lined with trees along which the citizens could promenade. It proved so popular that within a few years this New Walk was extended further south past the junction with the Foss by way of a wooden drawbridge. This new bridge was painted blue and the colour and name have endured, (The original bridge on the site was built in 1738) though the bridge itself has been replaced several times, the first of these being in 1768 when a single arch stone bridge was constructed.

In 1792 the Foss Navigation Company built a wooden swing-bridge to enable boats to access the Foss and this type of bridge was used again when the bridge was rebuilt in 1834. Just after the end of the Crimean War, in 1857-58 an iron opening-bridge was built replacing the earlier wooden one, along with two stone plinths upon which stood two Russian cannons. These formed York's Crimean War

Memorial. The metal guns had been in the Museum Gardens, before being moved with much fanfare on 5 November. They had been captured at the Battle of Sebastopol in 1855 and were 36-pounders, 8 feet and 3 inches long, and weighing just under 3,000 kilograms. They were retained when the current bridge was built in 1929-30 only to be removed in 1941 when they were scrapped and supposedly reused for the war effort.

The Crimean War took place from 1853 until the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1856 and sprang from a conflict between the Ottoman Empire and Russia over territory around the Black Sea and Danube, bringing Britain, Austria and France into the war to prevent Russia controlling the Dardanelles.

In 1857 The Lord Mayor of York wrote to Lord Panmure Secretary of War suggesting that the City of York be presented with the two Russian guns and carriages as 'Trophies of the late War'. Lord Panmure agreed and two guns captured in 1855 were sent from Woolwich arriving in York by June 1857. They were placed by the council on the buttresses at Blue Bridge. The cost not to exceed £70. The inauguration took place on the 4th Anniversary of the Battle of Inkerman 5th November 1858 following a parade through the town.

The War memorial was Unveiled on the 5th November 1858 and was formally attended by the Lord Mayor of York Right Honourable John Wood



(As you can see from the above image the canons have lost their bases but the plaques can be clearly seen) – Image © York Explore

The Cannons were inscribed as part of the War Memorial as stated below:

Left bank, 3 O' Clock Face and Right bank, 9 O' Clock Face: To Commemorate / The Victories of the Allied Armies and perpetuate the memory of those Brave men connected with this City and Neighbourhood who fell during the Russian War. These Guns, captured at the fall of Sebastopol and presented to the City of York by Her Majesties Government in the Mayoralty of Edward Richard Anderson, Esquire, were placed in their present position, 1858; / The Right Honourable John Wood, Lord Mayor

LEFT BANK, 6 AND 9 O'CLOCK FACE AND RIGHT BANK, 3 AND 6 O'CLOCK FACE: Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers and Privates / From York and the Neighbourhood, who fell during the War in the Crimea / (Names of the fallen)

in 1941 the Guns and plaques were ordered to be scrapped and (Supposedly) reused for the war effort, this was carried out in April and May respectively.

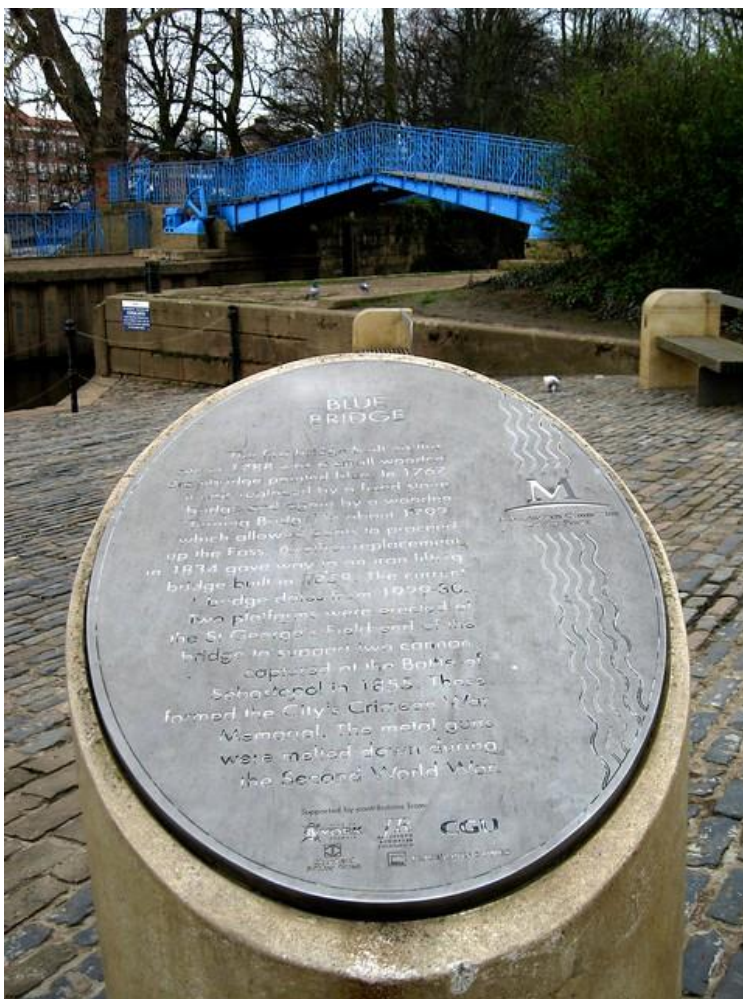


Image © Keith Seabridge

Fortunately, this once forgotten War memorial has now had a Plaque placed in place of the Cannons, however I think you must admit, it would have been a fantastic sight to see and the argument of weather this War memorial should have ever been taken down will be a long debate