Cemetery Architecture

A presentation to be used by teachers to introduce students to the many styles and shapes of headstones we see in our cemeteries.
Capped Stone

- The capped-stone form of memorial is one of the oldest to be found in our cemeteries.

- The style often features two sentinel stones or light houses on either side of the main inscription stone and an urn mounted on top.

- The style of headstone was often carved in limestone but can also be found in granite in later headstones in this style.
EXAMPLES OF THE CAPPED STONE SHAPE
Broken Column

- Broken columns were deliberately made structures that indicate a life unfinished when cut short by death at an early age.

- They are easy symbols to interpret because they were frequently used when the deceased or the family breadwinner had died at a young age or had met an accident.

- Broken columns can often be found decorated with a wreath of flowers symbolising the untimely death of a woman.
Obelisk

- Obelisks are four sided tapered columns
- Capped with a pyramidal shape
- Crafted from a single piece of stone.

- The shape originated in ancient Egypt
- Pairs were placed in front of temples of the Sun God Ra.
- They were symbols of everlasting life fertility and regeneration.

- Obelisks also represent status and position of the deceased as they stand out in our cemetery landscape.
- They are commonly found and were most popular in the 1890s.
- They are usually made of granite but can also be found in limestone.
Examples of the pedestal Shape Type
**Latin Cross**

- The Latin cross has a longer upright than cross bar.
- It is the shape of cross on which Christ was crucified.
- For this reason it is used to symbolise the death of Christ.

- The Latin Cross is one of the most common symbols to be found in our cemeteries.
- Often a Latin Cross is mounted on three steps. These steps represent the Christian virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity.
Celtic Cross

- The Celtic cross has a single cross bar with a circle or solid wheel at the intersection of the bar and upright.

- A Celtic cross is usually very tall. Some are plain while others are ornately decorated with Victorian symbolism or carved with Celtic interweaving designs.

- Celtic crosses pre-date Christianity by several hundred years. It is a symbol usually found on the graves where the deceased originally came from Scotland or Ireland.
Examples of the Cross Shape
Coped Stones—Ledgers & Tablets

- Alter tombs are flat inscribed slabs of stone supported on raised brick or cement walls, or sometimes on solid blocks of brick or stone.

- These tombstones were fashionable before 1900 and are unusual after that time. They are often difficult to maintain as they can easily break with soil subsidence.
STELE

- Stele are a very traditional shape of cemetery memorial having been used as funerary markers in the time of ancient Egypt.

- Stele can be found in many shapes and sizes from rectangular with domed, arched, pointed or curved tops and are of an even thickness.

- Stele were generally erected upright.
- There is normally only one side of a stele that bears the inscription about the deceased.
- The shape allows for considerable scope for a variety of decoration.
Wall Plaque

- The wall plaque became a popular feature in the cemetery from about the time of the First World War.
- It was a plain structure, more in keeping with changing attitudes values of the times.
- Most did not feature any decorative motifs. Concrete was a commonly used material.
**Nameplate**

- The nameplate has always been a popular choice for headstones from the earliest days of our cemeteries.

- A great variety of materials have been used for the nameplate including concrete, granite and marble.

- There is usually no decoration with the nameplate or information.

- The nameplate is often used in association with other designs especially the ledger or tablet design or pedestal where it is set into the plinth.
**PLAQUE**

- A plaque is normally fixed to a grave horizontally. Some may be tilted on a slight angle. The plaque also provides more information about the deceased than the nameplate.

- Many plaques are later additions to older family headstones or later commemorations where there has never been a headstone or it has been destroyed.

- Plaques are usually unadorned.
Block

- The black or grey granite block or alternatively a concrete block with granite plaque insert has become the dominant form of memorial headstone from the mid 1920s until recent times.

- The style has brought a considerable uniformity to our later cemeteries.