

CONSTANT LIGHT

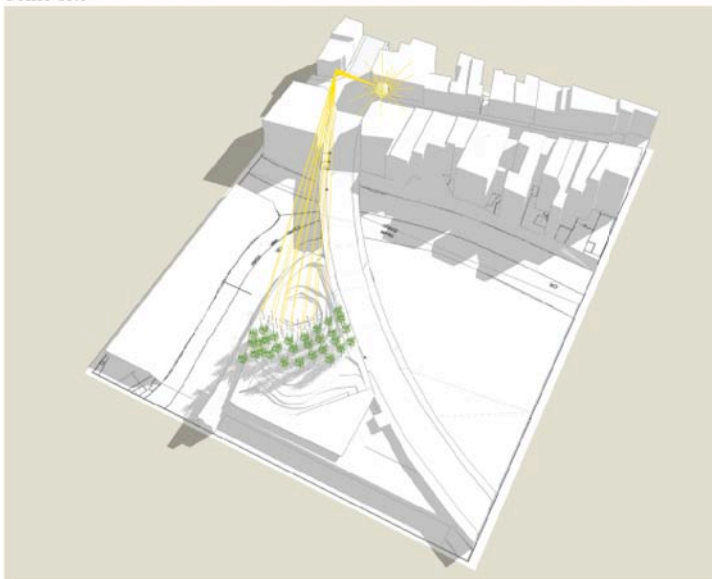
Omagh Bomb Memorial Proposal

Landscape architect Desmond Fitzgerald and artist Seán Hillen May 2007

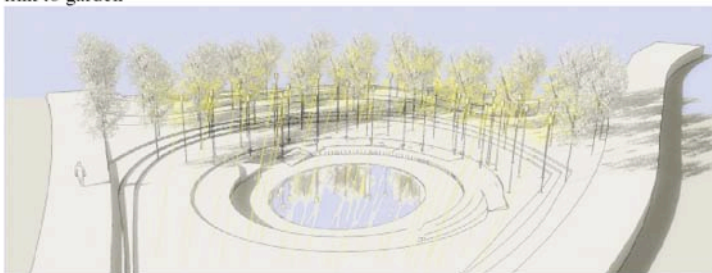
1 - THE LIGHT THAT SHINES ON US ALL



bomb site



link to garden



memorial garden

LIGHT

Light unites us all in that it makes all life possible.

The concept of "Reflecting" connects to reactions to and consequences of the atrocity.

A mirror in the memorial park tracks the sun, and pours a constant beam of sunlight onto 29 small mirrors, each etched with the name of a victim.

They are arranged to carry the light (carrying the names) down the road onto a heart-shaped sculpture at the bomb site, which is almost constantly in the shade.

The heart is cut-glass crystal apparently floating inside a pillar of glass. It will sparkle and glitter with the light. It will be a beautiful and remarkable sight.

The approach to the artwork is that it should attempt to simply, uninhibitedly and vividly express the huge outpouring of compassion for the victims.

The approach to the memorial park is to create a "GARDEN OF LIGHT" glittering and sparking as it collects, reflects and distributes the sunlight that shines on us all, in Omagh, Bundoran and Spain, the sunlight that makes all life possible.

The garden is formed by the lines of small mirrors arrayed around a reflecting pool and backed up by a grassy bank planted with silver birches and wildflowers.

The idea is a gesture towards redeeming human values in the face of the suffering and the atrocity.

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2 - GARDEN OF LIGHT

GARDEN OF LIGHT

The memorial park becomes a Garden of Light, collecting and reflecting the sunlight, thence transmitting it to the bomb site.

The design of the space also takes its cue from the concept of "REFLECTION" - a simple, meditative space, not fenced off from the street but retaining a sense of quiet enclosure by dropping down to the reinstated original site level along a series of gentle steps.

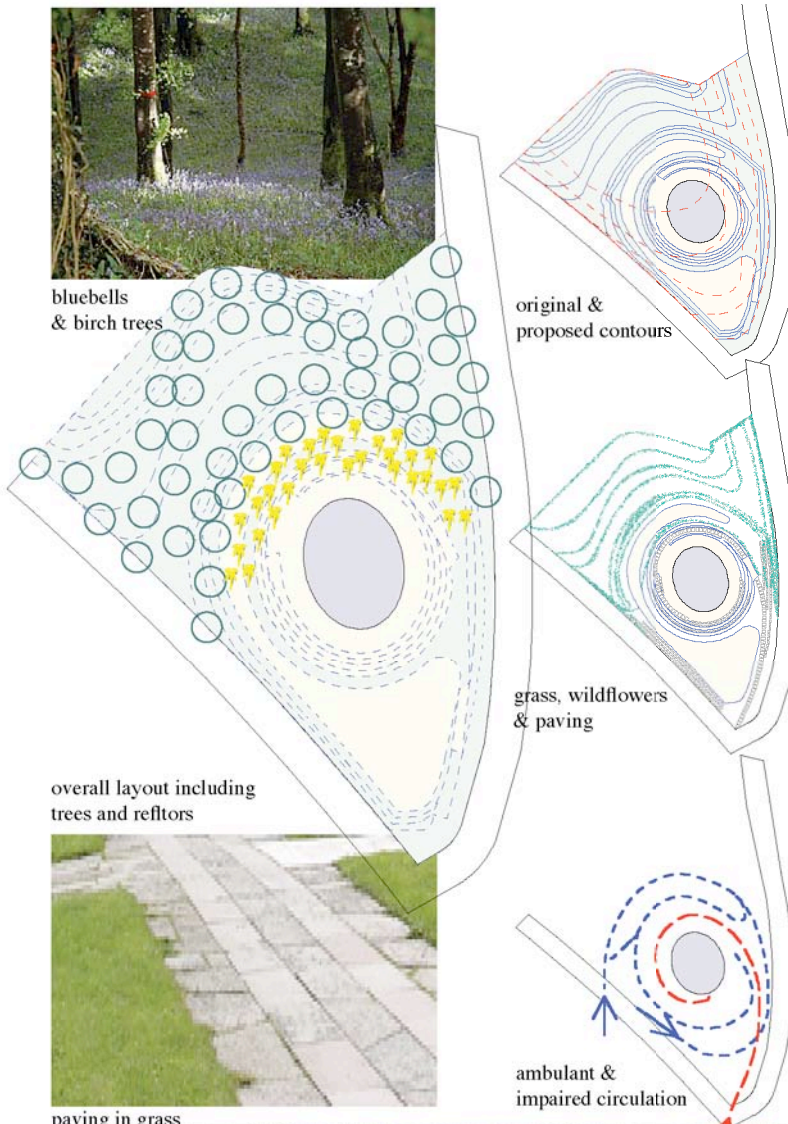
The design language takes its cue from the austere classicism of Great War memorials and the powerful archaic quality of grass and stone in the more ancient survivals from mediaeval and celtic Ireland.

Paving is of bright granite flag stones set out so that grass and herbs will grow through the joints. Planting is simple - the much loved silver birch (a pioneer species always among the first trees to grow in disturbed land) and grassy banks which will include swathes of bluebells in spring and poppies in summer. The grassed areas will include areas maintained as lawn for walking and lying down as well as the areas maintained as wildflower meadow. Maintenance regimes are altogether undemanding. A strip at the north boundary of the site is left to go wild to make a home for birds and wildlife.

Contour lines, patterns in the grass, planting layouts, paving patterns and circulation focus in a gentle spiral to a reflecting pool which is the centre of the scheme. The levels are laid out in such a way as to accommodate those with impaired mobility in an unfussy way. The granite flags at stepped areas are designed to double as casual seating. Open paved spaces around the pool and at the southern end of the site allow people to gather for ceremonies and commemoration.



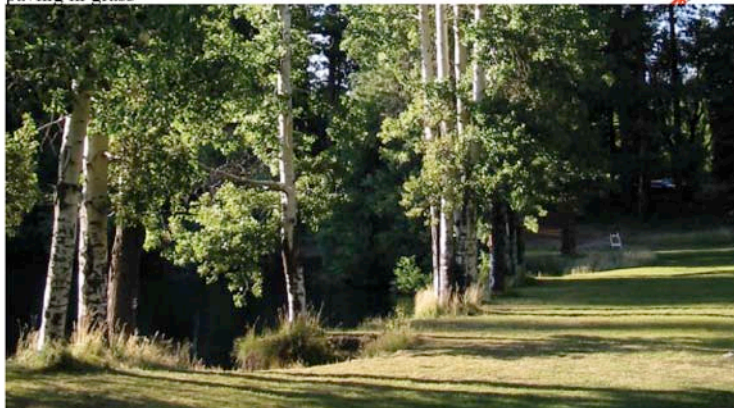
bluebells & birch trees



overall layout including trees and refiters



paving in grass



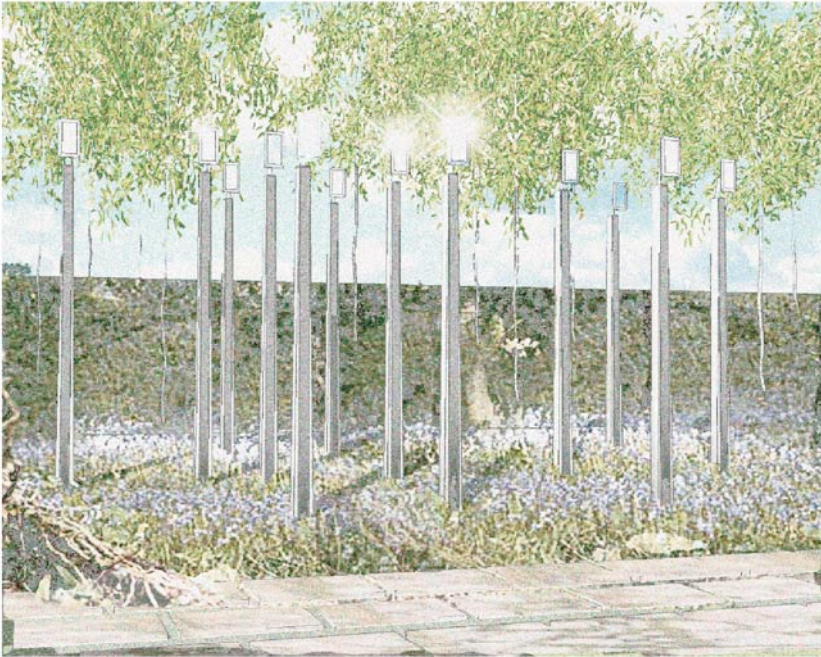
birch trees and grass

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3 - REFLECTING THE LIGHT



DETAIL & MATERIALS

The technical and constructional issues involved in the proposal are twofold :

1/ applying the already existing technologies of solar tracking and reflection to this brief and location.

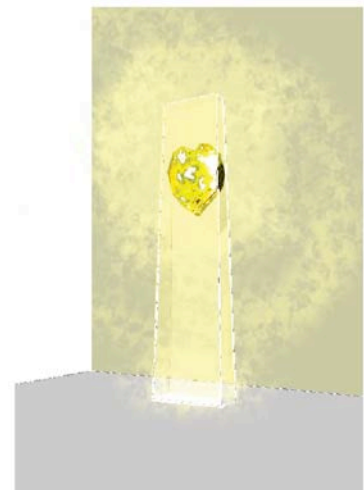
2/ finding the right materials, forms of expression, contextualization and detailing for the elements that reflect and channel the light - and indeed for the landscape / garden elements.

Page 4 outlines the strategy for dealing with solar tracking and reflection.

This page addresses the issue of the materials and detailing of the more conventionally "sculptural" elements.

Keywords are DURABILITY and SERENITY.

At this early stage in the design process there are still more questions than answers - the images on this page show the sort of feeling that the proposal is intended to evoke and the sort of character that the objects and spaces aspire to have.

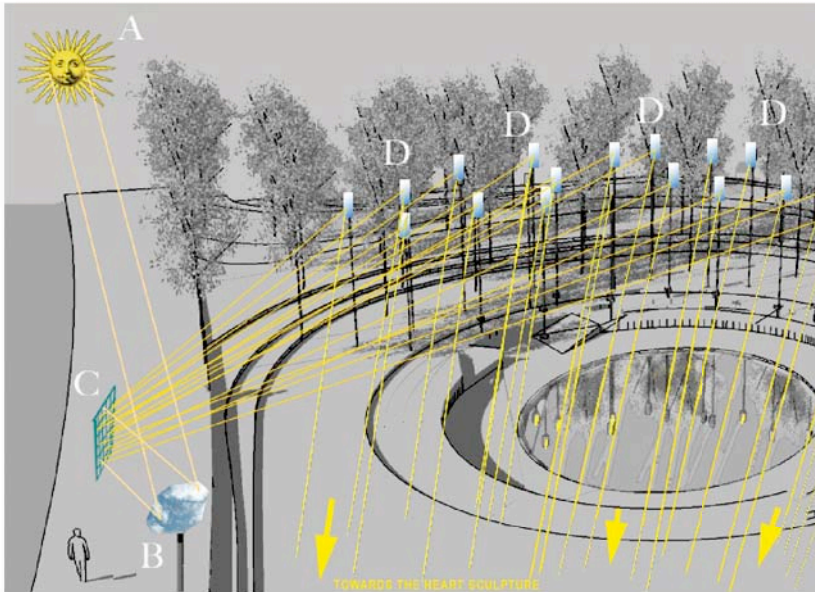


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4 - CONSTANT LIGHT



CONSTANT LIGHT

The sun (A) is tracked by a heliostat - a computer controlled sun-tracking mirror - (B) which throws a constant patch of sunlight 1 m² onto a gridded array of 29 small mirrors (C).

Each of these is set at a slightly divergent angle, arranged to send the beam to one of the 29 mirrors on pillars (D).

In turn each of these is positioned by adjusting grub screws to point the light onto the sculpture, probably via a secondary mirror mounted on a nearby building or lamp standard.

The sculpture consists of a tall glass object whose design is derived from the traditional memorial forms of obelisk and cenotaph.

It contains a cut glass heart shaped object the number of whose many facets might correspond with the number of those wounded by the bomb.

To deliver the piece successfully the following technical issues will need to be addressed :

- Fine tuning the light paths

- Construction of the glass pillar

- Durability and heat dissipation

- Ensuring the optimal levels of light intensity

Following discussions with expert professionals and scientists we are confident that elegant and affordable solutions can be developed.

