

HISTORICAL CASES OF NON-COMMEMORATION PROGRESS REPORT

REPORT NUMBER 1
SEPTEMBER 2021



The Commonwealth War Graves Commission

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HEADLINES

Since the publication of the Special Committee report into historical cases of non-commemoration on *22 April 2021*, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) has actively taken steps to right those historic wrongs and establish a roadmap to deliver upon the committee's ten recommendations.

- CWGC has established and resourced a dedicated working group that will oversee and manage what will be an extensive programme of works over the next five years and beyond.
- An initial budget of £5.2 million has been allocated to the project from within CWGC's existing resources (NB This does not include any additional monies that may be required for the construction of major new commemorative sites).
- Priority has been given to the search for those not commemorated – work that will have implications for the wider project.
- To date, **5,890** names of men predominantly from East Africa have been found in The National Archives and are in the process of being checked and accepted for commemoration.
- A newly revised Commemorations policy is now being used that provides greater flexibility for adjudicating these cases.
- Third-party memorials in Africa have been identified that include names not currently recorded by CWGC and we are progressing the legal steps necessary to partner with local stakeholders to secure their ongoing maintenance and care. These new names will be added to CWGC's global casualty database.
- Partnerships in Africa, India and the United Kingdom are already delivering on the promise of engaging communities with the culture, heritage and stories of those not commemorated as well as the wider contribution of those who served.

We are under no illusions that the road will be long and challenging and that these are just the first steps in righting historic wrongs. But we are also confident that this is a promising start, that we are already making a difference, and that every name found is a small victory on the journey to remember ALL those who served and died in the World Wars.

SPECIFIC PROGRESS AGAINST THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE'S TEN RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Ongoing commitment to continue the search for the unnamed war dead and those potentially not commemorated:

The search for the names of those not commemorated stands at the core of this project. Until we know how many names we may or may not find, it is difficult to quantify what our physical or digital commemoration programme might look like, new names have been discovered and we are hopeful more will come to light.

- **Three additional UK research** posts have been created to drive the search for names. They are managing partnerships with overseas research teams and carrying out research within UK archives.
- In Kenya, we are working in partnership with National Museums of Kenya and have recruited a skilled local team to begin searching the Kenyan central and regional archives.
- In Tanzania, the British Embassy, British Council and the University of Dar es Salaam, have facilitated access to archives and documents held by the Tanzania National Archives and the Tanzanian People's Defence force.
- In Zimbabwe, we have worked with local students to recover from the central archives in Harare the names of men of the Rhodesia Native Regiment who are not currently commemorated.
- In India, we have commenced work with the Indian Army and the Royal United Services Institute of India, to begin the search for names there.
- In the UK, the Imperial War Museum has offered us access to archive material and this is being pursued.
- To date, we have discovered **5,890 names**. These are in the process of being accepted for commemoration.
- As an interim measure, accepted names of newly commemorated war dead will be recorded online and physically in Rolls of Honour to be held at CWGC's Head Office and in the countries to which they relate, pending discussions with local communities as to what form and location physical commemoration might take.

2. Flexibility in evidence criteria for specific non-commemoration cases:

- A new, more flexible policy and set of guidelines has been approved by CWGC's Executive and Member Governments and introduced to process these specific cases in a timely and considered fashion.

3. Establish an Expert Advisory Panel:

The benefit of external expert voices was proven by the work of the Special Committee.

- Since the publication of the report, CWGC has **received more than 150** offers of assistance from individuals, institutions and associations. Each has been assessed for their level of interest and potential benefit to the project and many are now actively involved in our work – be it on a research or community engagement level. Others will be contacted during the coming months as we establish our widening activities and identify needs.
- An expert, diverse and global panel is in the process of being identified, approached and convened – with terms of reference agreed and several individuals and institutions already recruited.

4. Community engagement and education:

- **Within 12 months** we will produce a report and education plan detailing how CWGC will engage communities in the oft untold stories of Commonwealth service and sacrifice.
- We have **recruited two community engagement posts in West Africa** to aid with both the delivery of our commemoration programme and community engagement activity with those affected by the report's findings.
- **Within 24 months** CWGC will deliver an Education and Engagement Strategy, that will actively...
 - increase awareness of our global memorial sites and the stories and histories of the people commemorated by them.
 - working with international communities and enabling them to discover, create and tell their own stories of the conflicts and the people in them.
- Additional specialist resources are likely to be required in this area and will be fully scoped and recruited in the coming **six months**.

5. A commitment to transparency online:

- Work has been completed to change text on the CWGC website at www.cwgc.org – including a fuller and more transparent discussion around the CWGC’s history.
- A series of “historical alerts” – text pop-ups on individual cemetery and memorial web pages that provide more detail about the site’s history and any issues – have been created and implemented across the CWGC website.
- These quarterly reports and other updates as they arise, will be published on our website.

6. Digital rather than physical commemoration:

CWGC is implementing a developmental approach to all our work and is committed to co-creating with affected communities, digital and physical commemorative resources, spaces, and structures. The form and scale will, to a large degree, be dictated by the search for names but even so...

- ***Over the next 12 months***, CWGC will deliver a plan on how the stories of those not commemorated, as well as the wider stories of those who served, might be captured, stored and promoted across our digital channels.
- This will be embedded in all future CWGC education activity – ***including Remembrance 2021***.

7. Context panels for existing memorials:

- A review of all existing CWGC memorials to the missing will be ***completed within 18 months***. Any that do not meet the stated core principles of the organisation, that cannot be corrected, will have their historical flaws fully and honestly explained on contextual panels.
- The work will be phased and ***completed by the end of 2024***.

8. Inscription of recovered names on existing memorials:

- A **new Operational Manager position has been created** to oversee and coordinate this work.
- The names of **933 individuals** – predominantly Sierra Leone casualties who died while serving with British forces during the First World War – will be added to a ***new memorial within the next 24 months***.
- In the interim, the names have been added to a Book of Remembrance – copies of which will be made available in Sierra Leone and at the CWGC in Maidenhead and online at www.cwgc.org
- The Iraq Roll of Honour, containing the names of more than 40,000 Commonwealth war dead and currently held in book form at CWGC's Head Office, will be digitised and made available online.

9. Adoption of third-party memorials:

- ***By Autumn 2022***, CWGC will seek and establish clarity of the ownership of the third-party memorials with the aim of partnering with the relevant local stakeholders and permanently preserving them. Work has already started to ascertain the legal ownership of the Kings African Rifles Memorial at Zomba in Malawi.
- At Mwele Ndogo in Kwale of Kenya, a memorial to **14 members** of the Arab Rifles, previously not commemorated by the CWGC, has been identified and is in the process of adoption.
- CWGC has engaged with the local village elders at this remote location, with a view to securing the long-term future of the memorial and capturing the oral histories of the events which led to its creation.
- **The names of the 14 men have been accepted for commemoration and added to CWGC's records.**

10. New memorials or commemorative structures:

Where there are new memorials required, such as Sierra Leone, the CWGC will design and build these in conjunction and collaboration with local communities. Discussions on these and existing CWGC projects in Cape Town in South Africa and at Kariokor in Kenya are progressing.

DATE OF NEXT REPORT: December 2021

