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COMMONWEALTH
WAR GRAVES
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ANNUAL REPORT
2022 - 2023
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THE COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES COMMISSION

PRESIDENT

HRH The Duke of Kent
KG GCMG GCVO ADC (P)

CHAIRMAN

The Rt Hon Ben Wallace MP
until 30 August 2023
The Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP
from 31 August 2023

VICE CHAIRMAN

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KCB CBE until 3 July 2023
Vice Admiral Peter Hudson CB
CBE from 3 July 2023

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Vasuki Shastry

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The Rt Hon Philip Dunne MP

The High Commissioner for India

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Sir Timothy Hitchens KCVO
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Ms Keryn James

The High Commissioner for New Zealand

His Excellency Phil Goff CNZM

Lieutenant General Sir Ben
Bathurst KCVO CBE

Air Marshal Sir Stuart Atha KBE
CB DSO

The High Commissioner for The Republic of South Africa

His Excellency
Jeremiah Nyamane Mamabolo

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The Rt Hon Kevan Jones MP

Sir Adrian Montague CBE

Captain Jay Singh-Sohal

Julian Evans

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Director of Operations Barry Murphy

General Counsel Vincent Collins

Director of Finance and Corporate Services

Ian Hill

**Director of Global Strategy and Commonwealth
Relations** Iain Lower CB

**Director of the Foundation, Volunteering and
Outreach** Michele Jennings

Chief People Officer Martha Desmond

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HIGHLIGHTS
2022-2023
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A SELECTION OF HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE YEAR'S NUMEROUS
ACHIEVEMENTS CELEBRATED IN THIS REPORT.



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WORKING SUSTAINABLY
Our maturing approach to
sustainable maintenance



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Our work to restore an icon
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Update on the design and build
of our new cemetery in France

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PEOPLE FIRST

Supporting our
staff today and
for the future



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WAR GRAVES WEEK

Success during
our global
awareness week

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FOREWORD BY THE VICE CHAIRMAN LIEUTENANT GENERAL SIR BILL ROLLO KCB CBE

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Writing in the autumn of 2023 amidst war in the Ukraine, conflict in Gaza and tension in the Far East one can only wonder at the disappointment that would be felt by many of those we commemorate that the world cannot order its affairs better. The messages from the Commission's work have, arguably, never been more important. Those messages were wonderfully articulated by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II over the course of her long reign when she spoke of the true memorial of those commemorated lying in the way that men and women in the years to come should hold fast to their ideals and never forget those who

died for freedom. Her Majesty's visits to our sites throughout the Commonwealth, whether on the anniversary of some great event or otherwise, played a fundamental role in ensuring that their memory was kept firmly alive.

In amongst so much turmoil, it is good to report that the work of the Commission has continued unabated, and that we have largely recovered from the difficulties caused by Covid-19. Equally, the work of our charitable arm, The Commonwealth War Graves Foundation, goes from strength to strength. You will read in the pages that follow of important work on the new strategy; on improving our ability to

respond to climate change; maintaining our estate in good order including the construction of a new cemetery at Loos to deal with casualties we expect to recover from new infrastructure works in France; and to continue our work on Non Commemoration. The Volunteer programme is maturing, and our ability to tell the stories of those we commemorate should be significantly enhanced through the new Memory Anchor project. We continue to develop our workforce to ensure that we have the right skills to deal with today's and tomorrow's challenges.

In terms of governance we have benefited from the continued presence of the Rt Hon Ben Wallace MP as our chairman until August 2023, when he was replaced by the Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP, and we have welcomed their Excellencies the Hon Stephen Smith and the Hon Phil Goff CNZM as the new High Commissioners for Australia and New Zealand. I have sadly to report the death of Air Marshal David Walker CB CBE AFC who made a tremendous contribution to the Commission during his seven years as a Commissioner and who will be replaced



.....
Sir Bill Rollo with the CWGC team in Gaza War Cemetery, January 2023.
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IN AMONGST SO MUCH TURMOIL, IT IS GOOD TO REPORT THAT THE WORK OF THE COMMISSION HAS CONTINUED UNABATED...

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by Air Marshal Sir Stuart Atha KBE CB DSO. This is my last report. I hand over to Vice Admiral Peter Hudson CB CBE as the new Vice Chairman, and to Lieutenant General Sir Ben Bathurst KCVO CBE as the Army representative.

I would like to close by thanking all those in the Commission with whom

I have dealt over the last 10 years for their advice and support. It has been a tremendous privilege to serve on the Commission. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity and, in particular, to have visited so many of our sites to thank our staff personally for their work.■



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*Sir Bill Rollo on tour
in northern Norway*
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*Queen Elizabeth II was a regular visitor
to our sites throughout her reign. One of
her first official visits was to dedicate the
Runnymede Air-forces Memorial in 1953.*
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WELCOME FROM DIRECTOR GENERAL CLAIRE HORTON CBE

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Welcome to our annual report. Another year seems to have flown by and what an extraordinary twelve months it has been. Among the normal ebb and flow of activity – moments of joy, sorrow, success, and challenge – remains the constant dedication of our people (be they staff or volunteers) to get the job done and to honour those who died in two world wars.

From the launch of our new strategy and values, to the tangible progress made on our non-commemorations programme, this report is full of examples of CWGC's commitment to commemorating the

fallen and serving the needs of the wider Commonwealth. It is not my intention to go into the detail of each of those areas of work or achievement for fear of spoiling what awaits you in the coming pages, but before engaging on the many positives of the year, I want to take this opportunity to reflect on a few moments of sorrow.

In July 2022, we were sharply reminded of the importance of health and safety by the tragic loss of a colleague while at work at one of our sites in the Canada, Americas and Pacific Area. After a thorough investigation and an end-to-end review of health and safety across our global estate, we have redoubled our focus on driving a positive safety culture, increased training and retraining for everyone at every level and brought in a raft of additional measures which ensure that we all keep health and safety in front of mind as we go about our day to day activities and that our good health, safety and well-being remains paramount in all that we do.

The period also saw the loss of our beloved monarch, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. We remember fondly the many occasions when we had the honour of meeting Her Majesty on one of her visits

to the fallen at our sites. Her Majesty was a paragon of dedicated service and duty. She is sorely missed.

The Commission is certain that its relationship with the Royal Household remains strong through the close bonds we have with His Majesty King Charles III. Indeed, it was encouraging to note the series of Royal Mail stamps issued in honour of his Coronation – one of which, as part of the wider theme of Commonwealth, featured a representation of a CWGC cemetery. This very much reflects our new strategic vision for the Commission as a soft power for diplomacy. We look forward to welcoming His Majesty to our sites in the future.

I also want to take a moment to wish a fond farewell to our Vice Chairman Sir Bill Rollo. His service to the CWGC over the last decade has ensured our organisation remains true to its noble duty. I will greatly miss his support and guidance, and on behalf of the entire staff of the Commission, we say a sincere thank you.

A major focus this year has been the development and implementation of a new long-term strategy for the Commission with accompanying values.



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The Rt Hon Philip Dunne MP with Claire Horton CBE at an event to launch the strategy, Houses of Parliament, May 2023.
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: Claire Horton CBE attends the ANZAC Day dawn service at Nairobi War Cemetery,
: Kenya, with Deputy High Commissioner to Kenya Josephine Gauld and The Rt Hon
: David Lammy MP.
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Following an extensive consultative period I was delighted to have the new strategy – *Towards 2039 - The First Three Years* – endorsed and launched in March to all staff at our first ever UK-wide conference and at the UK Houses of Parliament with a drop-in event for MPs. The strategy has been embraced by colleagues around the globe. The Commission now has a clear strategic vision and a set of values that underpin our culture. Our ambition is to be a global leader in commemoration for all time and for CWGC to be an employer of choice.

One of the strategic pillars of our new strategy is Organisational Fitness. This covers many aspects of our daily work but includes a drive for innovation and efficiency, sustainability, and income generation. This is particularly significant when viewed against the backdrop of global inflation, that has placed additional pressures on our operating budgets. Together with our Member Governments we are exploring solutions but the strain on our resources is real and will remain so.

This is just one of the reasons why our charitable Foundation is so important to us – funding non-core work and

generating income we can use as a surplus to fund engagement activity.

Our charitable foundation secured several significant donations during the year – which make a real difference to our education and outreach programmes. I am delighted to welcome Michele Jennings as the Foundation’s new Director. Michele has a strong background in the charity sector and will take the Foundation to new heights.

It was also great to be able to get out and meet some of my colleagues further afield this year. Of special note was my visit to Kenya in April to see for myself the significant progress our Non-Commemoration programme has made in addressing issues of unequal treatment for African soldiers and porters following the First World War. I was accompanied by The Rt Hon David Lammy MP whose original Channel 4 documentary, *Unremembered*, broadcast in 2019, did much to draw attention to these inequalities. David’s continued interest, enthusiasm and connection to our work is greatly appreciated.

The visit was a positive opportunity to have an open dialogue with the many

affected by the warm welcome I received from everyone I met.

There is more to be done – not least on education programmes that will build a meaningful dialogue to engage young people in this history – but together we will honour those who died and were not remembered at the time.

I commend this report to you.■

Claire Horton CBE
Director General

OUR NEW STRATEGY

OUR PRIORITIES, FOR THE NEXT TWENTY YEARS, HAVE BEEN CRAFTED FOLLOWING A LONG AND HIGHLY COLLABORATIVE PROCESS.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE: CWGC STRATEGY TO 2039

The launch of our new strategy in March 2023 showcases the ambition, passion, commitment, and expertise we have as an organisation.

Our strategy, delivered against our ambition to be a global leader in commemoration, means that, in the words of our Royal Charter, we perpetuate the memory of those we commemorate and strengthen the bonds of union between all people. Our priorities, for the next twenty years, have been crafted following a long and highly collaborative process. It provides a road map to help us look critically at what we do, who we do it for, how we do it, and what else we might do to ensure our longevity, and our place in the landscape of global commemoration.

We are working from a position of strength, but there is a truth in the saying that standing still is the fastest way of moving backwards – especially so in our rapidly changing world.

There is no ignoring the fact this is a period of almost unprecedented uncertainty – geopolitical, climatic, and socio-economic. We have sadly seen the

return of armed conflict to the European continent; felt the impact of rampant inflation; and the world is coming to terms with the fact that we may have done permanent harm to our climate and eco-systems.

Maintaining and conserving our graves, records, and memorials sustainably; righting historic inequalities in commemoration; engaging global and diverse audiences and stakeholders in telling our stories; raising our profile and securing our ongoing relevance as the World Wars recede from living memory; building our charitable Foundation and educational, public engagement, and outreach programmes to inspire future generations; around reinvesting in our people and streamlining our processes, are just some of the critical factors informing our thinking.

Although 2039 might seem an age away, the timing of the strategy, as we look ahead to the centenaries of the Second World War, provides a realistic focus and timescale for us to work to. ■

The launch of our new values in France. Over the course of the year we have brought teams together to present and allow discussion about the new strategy.



OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Caring Sustainably and Safely for the graves, cemeteries, memorials, landscapes, and records of those who died.

Organisational Fitness to ensure we are well-governed and led, just, equitable, diverse, and inclusive, with our people and systems enabled to deliver our Mission.

Sharing the Stories of those we commemorate, and those who make that commemoration possible, with an ever wider and more diverse audience, across all nations.

Deepening Relations with our existing membership, public, and volunteers, while preserving and developing our value as an instrument for diplomacy and influence.



Scan the QR code to access our new strategy in full.



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CARING
SUSTAINABLY &
SAFELY
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Our Recovery team diligently uncover and search a section of First World War trench in France, recovering artifacts and human remains dating from the conflict.
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STRATEGIC PRIORITY CARING SUSTAINABLY & SAFELY

This strategic priority focuses on our operational work to ensure the last physical reminders of the human cost of the world wars are maintained in a safe and sustainable way.

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We are responsible for the commemoration of 1.7 million individuals – and care for graves, cemeteries, and memorials at 23,000 locations in more than 150 countries and territories. Our work on every continent, except Antarctica, makes us one of the world's largest commemorative and horticultural organisations.

Caring sustainably, in this context, is defined by the most effective use of the resources at our disposal (including financial), and the finite resources provided to us by our environment (stone, water). Through a conservation management approach for our unique landscape, structures, and records/ commemorations, we appreciate that we are their custodians and stewards; there is an onus on us all to pass our organisation on, fitter, stronger, and more relevant than ever before.

Read on to discover some of the projects that fall under this strategic priority. ■



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While many tasks in our sites are undertaken with the help of machines, others still require a hands on approach. Here staff carefully work the head stone borders in Dar Es Salaam War Cemetery, Tanzania.



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Indian Defense Advisor Brigadier Vikramjit Singh Gill during the launch of our new strategy at the Houses of Parliament in May.

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CARING
SUSTAINABLY &
SAFELY
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IN 2023, SUSTAINABILITY
HAS BECOME THE COMPASS
GUIDING OUR WORK.
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MAKING SUSTAINABLE CHOICES

Addressing climate change is a vitally important challenge. As a leading horticultural organisation, we've witnessed the dramatic impact of climate change on global weather patterns. Our primary objective is achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, with a pivotal milestone of transitioning to 100% renewable electricity by 2031. We are taking a holistic approach, transforming our future commitments and our current practices to foster environmental respect and biodiversity.

In 2023, sustainability has become our guiding compass. Projects like the Menin Gate restoration in Belgium and the Loos British Cemetery Extension in France are exemplars of this approach, incorporating sustainable practices from their inception to delivery. For example, at the Menin Gate, we emphasise reducing new material usage, prioritising restoration over replacement whenever possible.

Crucially, we've established a baseline for assessing our impact. Significant studies, including one with EcoSphere in France, have documented diverse plant and insect species across our sites, while others have focused on energy consumption reduction in our facilities. In embracing energy efficiency, we've introduced electric vehicles in the UK, France, and Belgium, and are looking to potentially phase out petrol lawnmowers in favour of electric alternatives.

Perhaps the most visible change in our practices is our shift away from chemical fertilisers, weed killers, and cleaning products. While beneficial for the environment, this shift affects the appearance of our stonework and lawns. We're actively working on sustainable solutions, including enzyme-based treatments to counteract stone discoloration. From October 2022 to April 2023, we treated 23,400 headstones in

France with these environmentally friendly products.

Our sites have always harboured diverse plant and insect species, and we're augmenting their habitats with bug and bird boxes, and experimenting with unmown areas to nurture meadows.

Our commitment extends beyond today. Year by year, we will deepen our understanding and continue reducing our environmental footprint. ■



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: Above: In St Manvieu War Cemetery, Normandy, the team have piloted leaving areas of the site to grow into meadow. This approach encourages bio-diversity.

: Right: Tiring the soil at our compost farm at Bedford House Cemetery in Ieper, Belgium. This compost is made from green waste taken from our sites in the local area and when it is ready, it will go back on our borders as feed for new plant life.

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SUSTAINABLE HORTICULTURE IN SOUTH AFRICA

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Following the completion of a major project in 2021/22 to address subsidence in Durban (Stellawood) Cemetery, our thoughts turned to planning a more sustainable planting scheme.

Factors such as climatic changes, water usage, sloping embankments, year-round colour, and ongoing maintenance all had to be considered. Our team visited numerous nurseries and a botanical garden to assess and handpick indigenous plant and tree species which are better suited to growing in this climate and compliment the natural beauty of the cemetery.

Included in the selection were Red Hot Pokers, Aloe, Crassula, flowering grasses and Wild Plum trees. Within a few months the plants grew well, and the team are rightly proud of their achievements.

Durban (Stellawood) Cemetery restored following major landslides.

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CARING
SUSTAINABLY &
SAFELY
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CARING FOR OUR ESTATE

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We maintain thousands of structures around the world, and every piece of our estate is important. Throughout the year our dedicated teams have diligently worked to assess, plan, and deliver projects to maintain, restore, and upgrade our global estate. A quinquennial condition survey has been completed by our staff and this has enabled us to plan and prioritise maintenance and project work over the next five years.



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Windhoek Old Municipal Cemetery in Namibia following extensive restoration work.
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With the completion of the major multi-year restoration of the Thiepval Memorial in France, our attention turned to the restoration of the Menin Gate in Belgium; the building of an extension to Loos British Cemetery in France; and the design and construction of a new Memorial in South Africa. Each project presents challenges, but all are well underway, and are on target to be delivered in line with our sustainability goals.

Our day-to-day work is no less important nor indeed testing. Our tasks span from restoring walls in Belgium to installing headstones in Canada, from managing horticultural projects in Italy to addressing drainage issues in the UK. In Belgium, we've successfully completed four cemetery restoration projects, with invaluable support from the Flemish Government. In Namibia, our efforts revitalised the Windhoek Old Municipal Cemetery, resolving structural issues and

enhancing its appearance. In Iraq, we are collaborating with the United Nations Mine Action Service to ensure the safety and restoration of the Mosul War Cemetery, which had suffered extensive damage.

In France, restoration efforts focused on the ornate entrance buildings at Serre Road Cemetery No.2 and Arras Road Cemetery. Water damage had caused issues with the concrete core and stonework necessitating these essential renovations. Meanwhile, in the UK, we've undertaken significant projects, such as installing new headstone beams at Dunoon Cemetery and improving drainage at the Portsmouth Naval Memorial.

Our teams confront numerous challenges in preserving our historic estate, but their work ensures that our sites continue to stand as respectful places of remembrance for those who we commemorate. ■

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Dunoon Cemetery, Scotland, where new headstone beams have been expertly installed.
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CARING
SUSTAINABLY &
SAFELY
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YPRES (MENIN GATE)
MEMORIAL RESTORATION

In April 2023, we began major restoration work on the Menin Gate Memorial in Ieper, Belgium. Built in the 1920's, it is perhaps the best-known memorial of the First World War. Commemorating over 54,000 Australian, British, Canadian, South African, and Indian soldiers who died in Flanders fields and have no known grave, the memorial is a focal point of remembrance for communities around the world.

Throughout its life the Gate has been exposed to the weather and pollution, and now requires renovation and restoration above and beyond day-to-day maintenance. Over the last few years, we

have been undertaking inspections and carefully planning our work. We have also been communicating with our local and international stakeholders and partners, including the Last Post Association, to ensure that their daily act of remembrance continues as smoothly as possible.

The importance of the memorial to the local area as a symbol of their city and as a vital piece of the tourist trade cannot be overstated, and we have received considerable financial support from the Flemish Government to undertake this work.

Over the next two years the Gate will be clad in scaffolding to allow access to all

areas. We will be cleaning and repairing the natural stone elements and repointing the brick façades. The name panels are the heart and purpose of the memorial, and while these are in excellent condition, we will take this opportunity to clean and make repairs where required. Up on the roof a new waterproof seal will be applied, and we are looking at options to add a green eco-roof, increasing the biodiversity. Various repairs will also be carried out inside the memorial to the cellars, stair towers, ceilings, and the bronze oculi (round openings) in the main roof. ■



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: The Menin Gate under restoration.
: The scaffolding wrap uses an original
: concept drawing by the memorial's
: architect Sir Reginald Blomfield.
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THIS PROJECT IS COMPLEX AND HAS MANY
MOVING PARTS, BUT WE WILL KEEP INNOVATION,
SUSTAINABILITY, AND SAFE ACCESSIBILITY AS THE
GUIDING PRINCIPLES THROUGHOUT.

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: During Open Monuments Day the public were able to take advantage of the scaffolding
: and get up close to the roof like never before. September, 2023. © Eric Compernelle.
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CARING
SUSTAINABLY &
SAFELY
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LOOS BRITISH CEMETERY EXTENSION

Many thousands of service personnel who died during the First World War are officially still missing. Consequently, any construction work on the former battlefields carries the potential of discovering human remains. In recent years, a significant project to construct a hospital on the outskirts of the French town of Lens has indeed led to the discovery of dozens of sets of remains. Our dedicated Recovery team, based in Beaurains, has undertaken the delicate work to recover and meticulously document these discoveries. They work in close collaboration with our Head Office-based Commemorations team to support the relevant British, French, German, and Commonwealth authorities in their endeavours to identify individuals whenever possible.

While burials have taken place in several suitable nearby cemeteries, the available space in these sites has now become severely limited. In 2021, the French Government announced the start of another major construction project, which involves the excavation of a canal through an extensive area that witnessed intense



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Ceremonial laying of the first stones
at Loos British Cemetery Extension
in May, 2023.
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fighting. Given the ongoing recoveries at the Lens hospital site and the potential for hundreds more to be made during the canal construction, we made the decision to extend Loos British Cemetery.

Significant progress has already been made in a relatively short timeframe. The acquisition of land adjacent to the current cemetery was a crucial initial step, followed by a series of substantial tasks that have been completed or coordinated by our team in France including, the safe removal of unexploded ordnance, the levelling of the terrain, and the design and approval of new cemetery layouts.

In May, a groundbreaking ceremony marked the official commencement of the construction. Over the winter months, the site will be allowed to settle in readiness for horticultural work to begin in the new year.

An official dedication ceremony has been scheduled for September 2024, during which the first burials will take place.■



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The beams are installed to support and align the
headstones at Loos British Cemetery Extension, August
2023.
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DESIGNING A NEW CEMETERY

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The construction of Loos British Cemetery Extension is a significant milestone for us, representing the first major cemetery construction since Fromelles (Pheasant Wood) Cemetery in 2010.

At the core of this project is a profound commitment to respect—respect for the environment, the historic landscape, and, above all, the individuals who will be laid to rest here. The cemetery's design and construction have been planned with these principles in mind.

It will provide space for up to 1,200 burials across four plots. Rather than brick, the cemetery will be surrounded by a low hedge, and a new entrance will connect the cemetery with the adjacent Canadian Hill 70 Memorial, creating a harmonious memorial landscape. Entrances have also been made to provide access for visitors from the existing cemetery.

This remarkable project has had the support of the local authority throughout. We seek to build genuine connections with the local community and have worked to ensure they are consulted and involved. It is through these links that we will develop a sense of partnership and shared responsibility, recognising that their active involvement is integral to the future of the site.



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SAFELY
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NON-COMMEMORATION PROGRAMME

The CWGC's dedicated five-year programme to right the historic wrongs that meant service personnel who died serving the then British Empire, and were not properly commemorated after the world wars, is well-underway. We work with communities and stakeholders in 13 countries to ensure all those who served are properly commemorated.

We have been searching for names so individual commemoration can be achieved; with museums and national archives we search for documents that could lead to the discovery of the identity of service personnel. The programme has so far recorded over 9,000 names of service personnel not previously on the Commission's records.

With these names, our programme's operations teams also agreed the designation of the King's African Rifles Memorial in Zomba, Malawi, as the country's official commemoration point for

WHILE
DISCOVERING
NAMES IS
PARAMOUNT,
PRESERVING
THEIR STORIES IS
EQUALLY VITAL.

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: Meeting communities and
: stakeholders at CWGC's Kariokor
: Cemetery, Nairobi. April, 2023.
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almost 1,500 servicemen and completed a consultation in Sierra Leone, allowing us to recommend a new memorial in the immediate vicinity of the 1931 cenotaph in Freetown.

In 2023, working with the Kenya Defence Force we received an Arcadia Endangered Archives Grant, administered by the British Library, to digitise over 90 boxes of service records of the King's African Rifles, previously thought to be lost. From a World War perspective, these records will allow us to further account for the stories and possible burial locations of personnel, contributing to our ambition for

education, oral histories, as well as digital and physical commemorations.

In Kenya – with our heritage and fieldwork team including experts from the National Museums of Kenya (NMK) - we trialled non-invasive survey techniques at selected sites, which will inform any commemorative structures we build. We agreed an important partnership with the Government and the NMK to gazette and protect Nairobi (Kariokor) War Cemetery, which will become a community centric sustainable commemoration and heritage point, in honour of the African people who served and died during the global conflicts. ■

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CAPE TOWN
LABOUR CORPS
MEMORIAL
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In South Africa, the design for the Cape Town Labour Corps Memorial by Dean Jay Architects is undergoing the final stages of development prior to tendering for a building contractor. We confidently predict that we will break ground in early 2024.

The technical team have agreed the final iterations of the timber memorial posts, which will feature etched lettering and South African Rustenburg granite bases. A final horticultural landscaping scheme has been agreed after input from local landscape architects, the City of Cape Town authorities, and our own Horticultural team.

As the project develops, it continues to receive a positive response, and we are looking forward to collaborating with partners to create a fitting opening event in 2024.

When complete, the memorial will commemorate 1,790 casualties of the First World War who served in South African Labour Regiments and who died on the African continent or at sea, and have no known grave.



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Concept visualizations for the Cape Town Labour
Corps Memorial. © Dean Jay Architects

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SAFELY
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THE HUMAN REMINDER

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The Commemorations team are at the heart of our work. The construction of the extended Canal Seine-Nord in France presents us with a unique opportunity to continue our work to recover and rebury those who died during the First World War. Detailed analysis has identified key zones where the remains of war casualties are most likely to be found. Working in partnership with French and German colleagues, the CWGC Recovery Unit will work alongside archaeologists and de-mining teams to recover discovered remains. The project will take years to complete, but we will provide an expert service which maximises the chances of finding and identifying the missing.

The canal project however is not the only area where remains are still



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Reburial of Private Joe Stevenson in Brown's Copse Cemetery, Roeux, France, June 2023.
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being found. The new hospital under construction at Lens, as well as other projects and general discoveries have resulted in the recovery of c.100 Commonwealth casualties this year. This high number has become a new normal, necessitating an upgrade to the Recovery Unit facilities at Beaurains, and the creation of an extension to Loos British Cemetery where the first burials are likely to take place in the autumn of 2024.

Alongside newly discovered remains, we continue to name those buried in existing graves. We're deeply grateful to the dedicated members of the public who submit research to us, starting the process of extensive investigations conducted by the Commemorations team and our Member Government partners. The

standard of proof required for a formal identification to be accepted is high, but around thirty cases have been judged to be clear and convincing this year. We have also undertaken sixty rededication ceremonies this year, clearing a substantial backlog that had built up during the Covid-19 lockdowns.

The work to include in our records the names of those war casualties who were missed from the lists originally provided to the Commission, and to locate their last resting place continues. Almost 2,500 new commemorations were accepted this year; around 350 being those who died of attributable causes after being discharged from the British Army, and 2,200 who died due to their service in Africa.■



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Recovery of remains from a excavated trench on the former battlefields, April 2023.
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*Rededication ceremony for seven Australian service personnel at Fromelles (Pheasant Wood) Cemetery, France, July 2023
© Eric Compernelle*
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CARING
SUSTAINABLY &
SAFELY
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WE ARE COMMITTED TO MAKING OUR ARCHIVE MATERIAL ACCESSIBLE TO AS WIDE A RANGE OF USERS AS POSSIBLE. ONE OF THE MAIN WAYS TO ACHIEVE THIS IS TO PROVIDE ONLINE ACCESS THROUGH DIGITISATION.

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ARCHIVES: UNDERSTANDING OUR PAST, GUIDING OUR FUTURE

The CWGC archive is our collective memory, and we are very proud of our heritage.

We are committed to making our archive material accessible to as wide a range of users as possible. One of the main ways to achieve this is to provide online access through digitisation. In July 2022, we launched our large-scale project to digitise over 2,000 records from our core archive collection. This has progressed immensely over the last year, and these records are now available for public access on our online archive catalogue. The next stage of the project involves relocating this material to offsite storage to safeguard it for future generations.

We are also committed to continuing to develop and enrich the archive collection. We launched a project to record a series of oral history interviews with former CWGC staff. These recordings will complement and enhance the extensive collection we already hold through the

creation of a unique and valuable oral history resource.

In January 2023, we re-established our Trainee Archivist Programme, enabling us to improve the delivery of the day-to-day service we provide and progress several cataloguing and digitisation projects. We were also delighted to welcome back our Archive Volunteers after the initiative was put on hold during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Engaging and supporting internal and external stakeholders is an important aspect of our Archive's role. In Belgium we have supported the In Flanders Fields Museum in Ieper through the provision of archive material for their "For Evermore" exhibition. Within the Commission itself, the Archive team has supported the creation of content for various communications campaigns and initiatives, including a temporary exhibition which focuses on the establishment of our Head Office in Maidenhead.

In June, we hosted an open day for International Archives Week, promoting

the importance of archives and the role of archivists in safeguarding and preserving materials. A display was set up in our Reading Room and staff took were able to take advantage of guided tours of our archive store, where the team explained how we preserve and protect the collection. ■



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Numerous items from the CWGC Archive on display at the In Flanders Fields Museum, Ieper, Belgium.
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CARING
SUSTAINABLY &
SAFELY
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OVER 2,000 VOLUNTEERS HAVE ACTIVELY PARTICIPATED, AND NEARLY 88% OF OUR UK SITES NOW HAVE A VOLUNTEER NOMINATED TO THEM.
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EYES ON, HANDS ON

The Eyes On, Hands On project has revolutionised our operations in the UK. Over 2,000 volunteers have actively participated, and nearly 88% of our UK sites now have a volunteer nominated to them. Volunteers have contributed around 40,000 hours and have inspected approximately 190,000 headstones. Most importantly, volunteers have cleaned 54,000 headstones, dramatically advancing the UK headstone cleaning programme for scattered graves.

The project's success has prompted innovations in our operations, for example the Southwest operational team piloted a

new approach that adjusts their traditional cleaning cycles. By reducing visits to sites now covered by volunteers, our works teams can focus on more skilled tasks, increasing their effectiveness and reducing their travel. We will be looking to expand this approach to all the regional UK operations teams in the coming year.

We continue to celebrate our fantastic volunteers, offering a variety of events for staff and volunteers, and we have discovered a world of amazing supporters from Orkney to Cornwall. Our volunteers are supporting the work of our skilled operational workforce right across the UK

and are helping us to raise the standards of our scattered war grave estate beyond what we have been able to achieve before.

Volunteer activity in Malta is already underway and we are looking at options for Iceland and Gibraltar. Firm plans are underway to also launch Eyes On, Hands On in Canada, where the geographical spread of war graves would lend itself to similar positive benefits seen in the UK.■

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Eyes On, Hands On volunteer and Spotlight award winner John Hardman at work in one of the North London cemetery he volunteers at.
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EOHO volunteers met in August 2023, along with local historian Tony Pringle, to photograph and clean CWGC headstones at Newmarket Cemetery.
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CARING
SUSTAINABLY &
SAFELY
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AGENCY SERVICES

In addition to our core mission of commemorating the fallen of the World Wars, we play a vital role in collaborating with governments and organisations worldwide to provide expertise, support, and skilled personnel for various projects. Each year, our Agency Services team oversees the day-to-day maintenance of nearly 100,000 non-World War graves and 168 memorials, as well as numerous other projects. Our agency work has significantly expanded, fostering stronger relationships with our esteemed partners.

Two notable success stories from the past year highlight our work with the British Ministry of Defence (MOD) and the German War Graves Commission (VDK).

Our Agency team undertakes the responsibility of maintaining nearly 20,000 graves on behalf of the German Government, with a substantial portion located at Cannock Chase German Military Cemetery in Staffordshire. Unfortunately, since the summer of 2020, the Grade II-listed buildings at this cemetery have been targeted by thieves, resulting in significant damage to the roof. Thanks to

LOOKING
FORWARD, THE
AGENCY SERVICES
TEAM REMAINS
COMMITTED
TO DELIVERING
EXPERTISE AND
VALUE TO OUR
PARTNERS

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the VDK's successful request for funding from the German Government, we are currently working on restoring and enhancing these buildings to create additional space for educational purposes. Work is set to commence in early 2024.

For the MOD, we are responsible for the maintenance of many non-World War graves. In 2019, we initiated Phase 2 of a substantial renovation project funded by the LIBOR grant. This phase concentrates on 11 MOD cemeteries and one large churchyard plot in the UK. Equally, we maintain many Battle Exploit Memorials for the MOD around the world. This year we have completed the renovation of the 7th Divisional Memorial located in



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Restoration work underway on the 7th Division Memorial with the help of a remote control crane at Zonnebeke, Belgium, January 2023.
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Zonnebeek, Belgium, and work on the restoration of the 50th (Northumbrian) Division Memorial at Wieltje is underway.

Looking forward, the Agency Services team remains committed to delivering expertise and value to our partners. In 2024, in addition to commencing work at Cannock Chase, we anticipate launching the initial phase of a significant project in Gallipoli, where we will address sea defence issues at the ANZAC Cove Commemorative site. We are also developing renovation plans for MOD sites and memorials worldwide, including Rheindahlen in Germany.■

ORGANISATIONAL
FITNESS



CWGC staff took part in a sponsored walk in Belgium in aid of the Against Cancer Charity, while CWGF Guides represented the Commission at the event in September.



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ORGANISATIONAL
FITNESS
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PEOPLE FIRST

In 2023, we have made a concerted effort to prioritise our most valuable asset: our people. We understand that the strength and effectiveness of our organisation is deeply rooted in their skills and dedication. As a result, we've undertaken several key initiatives to support and invest in our team.

To begin with, we've introduced new organisational values which highlight our commitment to the professionalism, development, and growth for our global team.

We have implemented a global HR system that has revolutionised our people processes. This system automates and centralises data, making it more accessible and secure. We have reduced the administrative burden in activities such as recruitment, onboarding, and learning and development, while online performance evaluations and goal setting provide our employees with the flexibility to manage their development from anywhere in the world. The positive impacts of this HR system are being felt across all levels.

Investing in training and skill development remains a top priority. While external courses are valuable, we've also tapped into the wealth of knowledge within our teams. The CWGC Diploma

in Horticulture programme - along with initiatives covering soil and irrigation management, machinery operations, and tree design - have been instrumental in enhancing the skills of our horticulture team. We're exploring the creation of an internal Training Academy to enhance operational efficiency and elevate our technical expertise, positioning us as leaders in the field.

One of our challenges is our aging workforce. For example, 50% of our workforce in France will retire within the next decade. We're taking proactive steps, including a remarkable partnership with Amiens University that promotes sharing of expertise and connects their graduates with our work. Additionally, our hands-on apprenticeship programs are nurturing the next generation of staff, offering them valuable experience and the opportunity to learn from their experienced predecessors. Currently, 20 apprentices are actively contributing to our mission, and more are on the way.

These initiatives collectively reflect our unwavering commitment to our people and their continuous development, ensuring that the CWGC remains a dynamic and effective organisation now and in the future. ■

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Bringing staff together for the first time since Covid-19 has been a key part of investing in our staff.
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ORGANISATIONAL
FITNESS

THESE CONFERENCES AND
GATHERINGS HAVE REINFORCED
OUR COMMITMENT TO
COLLABORATION AND LEARNING...



STAFF CONFERENCE

Bringing staff together has been a highlight of 2023. In February, we held our first UK Staff Conference and welcomed all our Head Office and UK staff, and representatives of our teams from around the world. Over three days, staff came together in one location, in an informative, educational, constructive, and social setting. We launched our new Values, the CWGC strategy and the Staff Excellence and Recognition Awards.

Our area teams took inspiration and conferences were held around the world. In Thailand, our Canada, Asia, and Pacific Area (CAPA) hosted its first management conference after the restructuring of the Areas. The team met face to face for the first time after the pandemic and discussed leadership, communication, roles and responsibilities, health & safety, work planning, technology, and processes and systems. The CAPA team also had the

opportunity to do a site visit and participate in horticultural training at both Kanchanaburi and Chungkai War Cemeteries.

In Central and Southern Europe Area (C&SEA), the team organised an operations conference in Ypres, Belgium. During the event, the operational management from the many C&SEA countries came together, along with representatives from other departments such as Finance, HR, and Communications. Top of the agenda was our holistic approach to site management, and the participants had the opportunity to visit some sites, including Bedford House Cemetery and its compost farm to see the new way of working in action.

Last but certainly not least, our France Area (FA) came together for the first time in many years at the Artois Expo convention centre in Arras. Some 400 staff attended and had the opportunity to discuss the Values, meet the senior management team and hear about the Commission's new strategy.

These conferences and gatherings have reinforced our commitment to collaboration and learning, aligning all our efforts toward our mission of commemorating the fallen. ■



Above: UK staff Conference, February 2023.
Left: French staff Conference, June 2023.

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SHARING
THE STORIES
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*Reburial of Corporal Frederick Bousfield, 43rd Canadian Infantry
at Bedford House Cemetery, September 2023.*
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STRATEGIC PRIORITY SHARING THE STORIES

This strategic priority focuses upon keeping alive the names and the memory of those who died.

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Through creative and interactive means, we source, store, and share the stories of those we commemorate with the global communities affected by their loss. We do so in the language, medium, and digital platform of their choice – taking advantage of technology that can help deliver this strategic aim.

We will also share the stories of our organisation and our people – those whose daily task it is to keep alive the memory and the names of the fallen – thereby ensuring the CWGC and CWGF are “international treasures” – recognisable with a clearly understood and valued mission; relevant, well regarded, and leaders in global commemoration.

Read on to discover some of the projects that fall under this strategic priority. ■



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Local MP for Maidenhead Teresa May was taken on a guided tour of graves in her constituency by Public Engagement Manager Megan Maltby.



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Public Engagement Coordinator Will Reed led an special session during War Graves Week that included learning about headstone badges and taking rubbings of the stones.

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During a rededication ceremony at Fromelles (Pheasant Wood) Cemetery, serving Australian personnel were joined by local school children to commemorate the fallen, July 2023@ Eric Compennolle



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Chelsea Pensioners of the Royal Hospital Chelsea visited Brookwood Military Cemetery during War Graves Week in May and were shown round by our volunteer guides.

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SHARING THE STORIES

WAR GRAVES WEEK 2023

Our annual public awareness campaign, War Graves Week, returned for its third year. In May, we invited the public to delve into the work of the Commission worldwide. This year marked an expansion of our reach, extending beyond the five European countries covered last year (UK, France, Belgium, Malta, and the Netherlands) to include an additional nine countries across the globe. For the first time, events took place in Kenya, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Egypt, Israel, Turkey, Gaza, and Italy. This broader initiative drew 5,600 visitors to over 160 sites, representing a remarkable 24% increase in visits compared to last year.

The activities were diverse, including talks, tours, demonstrations, hands-on experiences, and collaborations with various organisations,

such as archaeologists, tourism boards, municipalities, museums, and volunteers.

Beyond on-site engagement, digital visitors were encouraged to explore War Graves Week through content on the CWGC website, resulting in a notable 20% increase in users. The campaign's social media content generated an impressive 400,000+ engagements across our platforms, highlighting the significance of our digital channels in reaching wider and more diverse audiences.

In France, for three days in May we participated in the national "Printemps des Cimetières" event, organising discovery days, guided tours, and meetings with our gardeners at 19 of our cemeteries and memorials across France including Normandy and the Somme.

This event brought together 440 participants, fostering meaningful exchanges, sharing of anecdotes, personal stories of soldiers, and insights into the history of the places we care for.

Overall, War Graves Week and related initiatives have enabled us to connect with the public, both in person and digitally. We have fostered a deeper understanding of our mission and the significance of commemorating those who we commemorate. ■



Staff of Heliopolis War Cemetery welcomed visitors throughout War Graves Week, May 2023.



Our team at Kohima War Cemetery, India, with local school children during a special War Graves Week event held for the first time in the region. May, 2023.

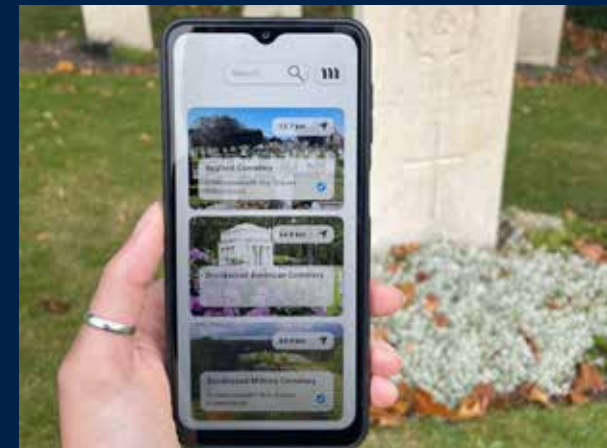


Visitors to the Arras Memorial were able to enjoy music from the Orchestre des Jazzdiniers, while learning more about our work. May, 2023.

MEMORY ANCHOR

To further enrich the visitor experience and provide deeper insights into our sites and the stories of those we commemorate, we introduced CWGC sites to the Memory Anchor app. This app harnesses augmented reality to provide curated tours.

Through the app, visitors can use their phone to access interactive content, historical information, and immersive narratives that brings the past to life. This innovative technology enhances the educational and emotional impact of our sites, making them more engaging and accessible, furthering our mission to commemorate the fallen and share their stories with global audiences. It was launched at 11 UK sites this year and tours will be expanded to more international locations during 2024.



The Memory Anchor App can help guide visitors round our sites and provides augmented reality stories of the people commemorated.

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SHARING
THE STORIES
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THROUGHOUT SEPTEMBER,
WE DELIVERED 90 TOURS IN 38
DIFFERENT LOCATIONS TO OVER
1,300 PEOPLE.
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While our volunteer tours in the UK continue to go from strength to strength, we have been growing our volunteer network overseas. Here volunteers in Belgium give tours of Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery.
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VOLUNTEERING

Volunteers have quickly become a vital part of our work, supporting both our maintenance and outreach efforts around the world. We now have over 2,250 volunteers giving up their time on a wide range of tasks, from cleaning and inspecting headstones to giving tours in cemeteries.

First and foremost, we would like to thank all our volunteers for their dedication, professionalism, and hard work over the year. THANK YOU. You have given up your time to clean, inspect, present, guide, organise, administer, and mediate for us, and we couldn't have done it without you.

The largest group of volunteers we have undertake work with the Eyes On, Hands On (EOHO) programme. Over the course of the year over 190,000 headstones have been inspected across the UK and some 54,000 cleaned by hand. We are now looking to expand overseas and have Canada and Malta in our sights.

While EOHO had a head start on some of our other volunteering activity, were now making great strides. Volunteers delivered over 630 talks to approximately 25,000 people, sharing the many stories of those

we commemorate and highlighting the importance of our global task. Importantly, volunteers spoke at many school and youth groups, reaching some 5,500 young people.

Our volunteers have also been out and about in the cemeteries throughout the year, giving some 81 public tours to 2,200 people. Come rain, sun and snow, visitors are always welcomed with a smile and leave having discovered something new about our work and the people commemorated.

War Graves Week sees a major effort from staff and volunteers around the world. 2023 was no exception and 104 volunteers were present at over 100 cemeteries and memorials, providing information and activities, and 166 guided tours to over 1,600 visitors.

Last but not least, we were delighted to welcome back to our Head Office in Maidenhead, following a Covid hiatus, the archives volunteers who undertake vital work to preserve our history in the CWGC Archive. We were also happy to welcome new volunteers in Maidenhead who have been supporting the many administrative tasks of the Commonwealth War Graves Foundation.

All this hard work deserves recognition and throughout the year we spotlight individuals who go above and beyond. So far over 30 volunteers have received the prestigious Spotlight Award badge.

Our volunteers have also received external recognition. Two of our Spotlight Winners, Malcolm Hodgson and David Mowatt, based in Fife, received a Parliamentary Motion congratulating and commending them from Scottish Minister Alexander Stewart. Also, our amazing team of 60 Eyes On, Hands On volunteers in the Greater Manchester region were presented with a Special Recognition Award by the High Sheriff of Greater Manchester showing our volunteers are recognised externally too.

We look forward to working with all our volunteers next year.■

SHARING THE STORIES

REMEMBRANCE IS 2022

While we work all year round to commemorate the fallen, Remembrance is still an important period for us to connect with communities to highlight our work and the people we commemorate. For Remembrance 2022, we continued our campaign entitled #Remembrancel, exploring what remembrance means personally to the public, our staff, and our volunteers.

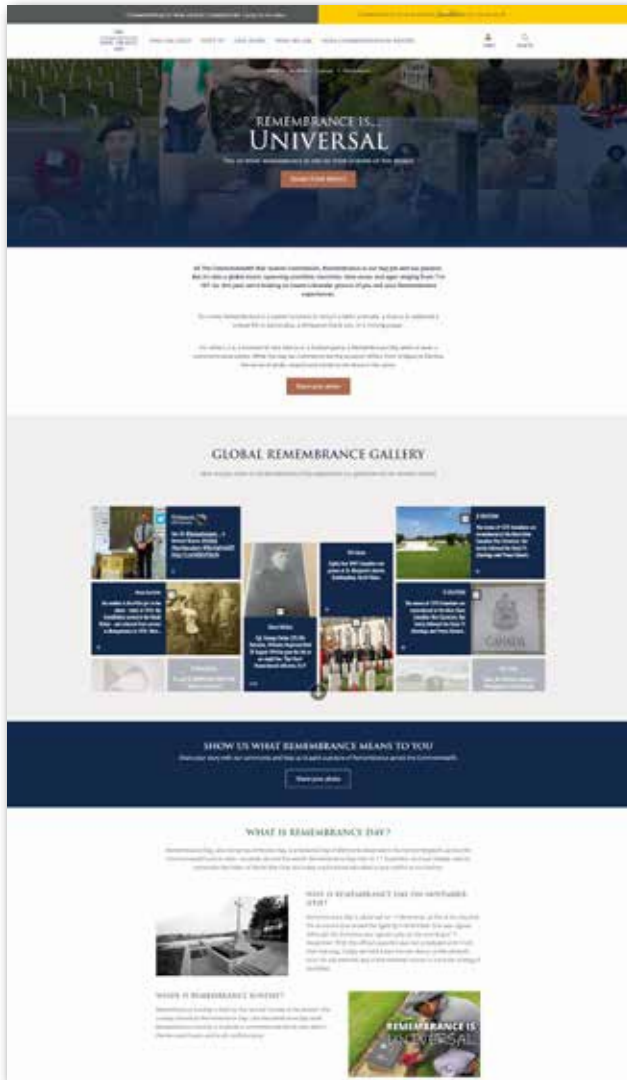
Through social media, we invited people to share images that captured their individual interpretations of Remembrance. This call to action resonated deeply, resulting in over 1,400 photo submissions, many accompanied by heartfelt and poignant comments, showcasing the emotional depth of Remembrance.

The response was remarkable, with a 170% increase in content submissions

compared to the previous year. Across our social media platforms, there were over 1 million engagements, marking a nearly 10% rise. Furthermore, website views surged by an astounding 240% compared to the previous Remembrance period.

This engagement was not just digital. The campaign reached the England women's football team, the Lionesses, who shared a message and image underscoring the importance of collective remembrance.

Overall, the #Remembrancel campaign not only encouraged personal reflection but also deepened the connection between us and the communities we serve. Through the power of imagery and heartfelt participation, the campaign succeeded in honouring the significance of Remembrance in diverse and meaningful ways. ■



Our dedicated web area for Remembrance 2022 allowed the public to share what remembrance mean to them.



One of the most remarkable posts during the campaign came from Andrew who posted the picture of Australian troops in East Timor sending a fallen comrade home.

SHARING THE STORIES

WESTTOER

The battlefields of the First World War are enduringly linked to the conflicts that once consumed them. Over a century has passed, allowing time to slowly heal the deep scars etched into these landscapes. Today, many undertake visits, seeking to connect with the events and individuals who shaped this history. They are still able to explore the landscapes where these historical events unfolded, touch the weathered concrete bunkers, and pay tribute at the cemeteries and memorials.

As time passes, maintaining this intimate connection becomes increasingly challenging. Urbanization and agriculture have reclaimed former wastelands, while the collective memory of past events gradually fades away.

In 2023, we partnered with the Westhoek region's tourism board in Belgium to rekindle visitors' ties to the Ypres Salient battlefields through the theme of 'The Landscape Testifies'. Local and international organisations collaborated to create engaging displays, events, and activities.



As custodians of over 124 cemeteries in the region, we emphasized the importance of visiting these sites to remember the fallen and discover their unique architectural and historical significance. While the cemeteries share a unified style, each preserves a distinct story, often connecting visibly with the past through their design.

Having secured significant funding, we installed an interactive digital screen in our Ieper Information Centre. This technology allows visitors to explore our history, the immense effort required to maintain our sites, and to plan their battlefield visits with an interactive map. Complementing this, we developed informative cemetery and memorial cards, delving into the sites' stories, the conflicts they preserve, and their often-overlooked historical ties,

Sabien Lahaye-Battheu Provincial Deputy of Tourism for the Province of West Flanders (left) and Zuhair Demir Minister of Tourism for Flanders, unveil our new interactive interpretation screen at the Ieper Information Centre in May, 2023. © www.greatwar.be

from sightlines of battlefield features to shell hole-inspired grave layouts. Finally, we have recorded several downloadable podcasts. Each is designed to speak to different audiences, to help visitors at the start of their journey to the battlefield.

Throughout 2023, we wholeheartedly support this initiative, inviting visitors to engage with the region's rich historical legacy. ■



Our new cemetery tour cards help visitors discover our sites in Belgium, highlighting unique features that are often overlooked.

SHARING THE STORIES

MENIN GATE MOMENTS EXHIBITION

One of the most innovative and impactful projects we've undertaken this year is the Menin Gate Moments exhibition, designed to support and compliment the restoration efforts at the Gate in Ypres, Belgium.

With the Menin Gate under scaffolding, we wanted to take the opportunity to provide visitors with the opportunity to explore its history in a new and engaging way. At the heart of this exhibition are eight original pieces of art created by artist Tom Cole in collaboration with CWGC historians. The exhibition takes visitors on a journey through time, beginning with the Gate as an entrance to the town, its transformation during the war, and ultimately its evolution into the focal point of remembrance it is today.

Designed to be as engaging as possible, particularly for a younger audience, Tom's unique style has beautifully brought to life the history of the Menin Gate like never before. The work visually showcases why the memorial holds such immense importance, and why the work to preserve it is vital.



The exhibition will remain on the ramparts beside the Gate for the duration of the restoration work. Having explored the artwork, visitors can also learn more about the ongoing restoration before being directed to visit our nearby information centre where exhibition merchandise is available as a souvenir in support of the CWGF. ■



Left: Carl Decaluwé Governor of the Province West Flanders (centre) and Emmily Talpe Mayor of Ieper (left) unveil the Moments exhibition with CWGC Director General Claire Horton CBE. June, 2023.

Above: South African Defence Attaché Rear Admiral (JG) Nomonde S. Gogi-Gumede during the launch of the Moments exhibition. June, 2023.



Moments artist Tom Cole (left) and Interpretation Officer Max Dutton unveil the Menin Gate Moments art exhibition on the ramparts beside the Menin Gate. June, 2023.

SHARING THE STORIES

MEDIA

Our work is of national and international importance and is regularly reported by media outlets around the world. The Media team maintains positive relationships with key people in the media and is responsible for reputation management, crisis communications, and media/public relations (PR). PR is about persuasion - by writing press releases, pitches and speaking to our contacts, the team secure important media coverage that results in the right messaging on the right channels. These stories are vital in growing awareness of the Commission and its work.

The Media team amplify the CWGC's brand voice and grow our awareness, through storytelling and content to interest journalists and their audiences.

Over the last year, our Media team has been particularly successful, reaching a huge number of people through newspapers, magazines, television, radio and the internet with more than 6,500 news stories written or broadcast about the Commission. The team reached 261 million people through traditional media such as print newspapers and magazines. Nearly 150 million people around the world read stories about the CWGC on their mobile devices.



Head Gardner Ibrahim Jaradah highlights the grave of Second Lieutenant Boughey VC in Gaza War Cemetery during his interview with BBC News in January, 2023.

The Commission appeared in all the national newspapers such as the Times, as well as on national television stations BBC One and ITV. Regional radio stations and newspapers up and down the country also covered the work of the Commission.

News stories about the Commission appeared in major media outlets in dozens of countries around the world. Our teams in France, Belgium and Italy also secured tremendous coverage in their national newspapers and on national television. ■



Our work renovating the horticulture at Cassino War Cemetery was highlighted by Italian newspaper Metro.

SHARING THE STORIES

WE ARE IMMENSELY PROUD OF THE CONTINUED GROWTH AND ENGAGEMENT OF OUR ONLINE COMMUNITY

GROWING DIGITAL AUDIENCES

We are thrilled to report a year of remarkable growth and engagement across our social media channels as we continue to extend our reach to wider audiences through the development of compelling content. Over the course of the reporting period, our efforts have resulted in impressive achievements.

One of our most notable achievements is the significant increase in our follower numbers, which has now reached 277,000, representing a remarkable overall growth of 42%. Notably, our Facebook community has expanded to 166,000 followers, marking a substantial increase of 62% compared to the previous year. Our Instagram following has grown to 32,000, with a noteworthy increase in interactions from the 30-45 age group, attributable to our extensive use of the short video “Reel” function.

Throughout the year, we’ve invested in enhancing our YouTube video series, “Silent Cities,” providing our online audience with an immersive journey into the rich history of the CWGC and the scope of our global efforts. A standout moment was the release of an episode commemorating the 80th anniversary of the ‘Dambusters’ raid, which garnered over 46,000 views. Another highlight was the

Director General’s heartfelt interview with Ibrahim Jaradah at Gaza War Cemetery, a touching tribute to a family with over a century of combined service to the Commission.

A key driving force behind our success is our commitment to spotlighting our dedicated operations teams across the globe. Sharing images of our staff at work has resonated deeply with both our long-standing supporters and newcomers to our mission. For instance, our coverage of the Director General’s visit to Kenya showcased the outstanding work of our colleagues in Africa, including the introduction of a new Book of Remembrance in Sierra Leone. An inspiring Facebook reel featuring Catania and Agira Canadian War Cemeteries Head Gardener Nicola Quaceri and his nephew and fellow gardener Francesco captured the hearts of our audience, amassing an impressive 294,000 views.

We are immensely proud of the continued growth and engagement of our online community. It is a testament to the enduring interest our mission and the unwavering dedication of our supporters and staff worldwide.■



This post on the CWGC Facebook page highlighting our team in Thailand gained almost 30,000 likes.



OUR CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

The past year has been marked by significant growth and achievements for the Commonwealth War Graves Foundation (CWGF). We were delighted to welcome Michele Jennings as the new CWGF Director in the spring, bringing fresh energy to our mission.

Over the last year we have secured continued financial support for our volunteer speaker and Eyes On, Hands On programs, thanks to the MacRobert Trust and Princess Anne's Charities. We have even expanded to have volunteer guides who lead tours at CWGC cemeteries across the UK, sharing stories and history.

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In March we launched the Foundation in Scotland with a special event at Edinburgh Castle.

Telling the stories of the fallen lies at the heart of the CWGF's mission. To preserve the memory of those who served, we have received funding from the Post Office Remembrance Fellowship to create an online stories portal. This digital platform allows individuals, communities, families, and researchers to contribute stories and photos, creating a dynamic repository of personal narratives, set to launch in October 2023.

We have also been hard at work running events throughout the year. From our inaugural Carol Service at the Guards Chapel in London to the official registration of the CWGF in Scotland celebrated with an event at Edinburgh Castle, to the successful musical evening at Brookwood Military Cemetery in Surrey, and a spirited cricket match at Windsor Castle.

Our membership has grown to 1,681 (Aug 23), and we greatly appreciate our members' support. We continue to engage members with a magazine and newsletter, and we look forward to our second members open day at our Head Office in October. We were also delighted by the many and varied submissions for the CWGF calendar this year on the theme of wildlife in our cemeteries.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our members. Your unwavering support and commitment are the cornerstones of our success. Together, we ensure that the memory of those who served during times of conflict endures, standing as a testament to their sacrifices and the enduring spirit of remembrance.■



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Foundation staff greet visitors at An Evening at Brookwood concert in July. CWGF staff have attended events across the UK, raising awareness, and selling merchandise and membership.

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CWGF GUIDES

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We were delighted to welcome back guides to the Western Front after a two-year hiatus due to COVID-19. This flagship CWGF-funded programme offers young people the opportunity to spend three months working at our sites in France and Belgium. When we opened applications late in 2022, we were overwhelmed with applications.

Following a selection day in February, we chose 24 guides, and since Easter they have been working at Thiepval and Tyne Cot, warmly welcoming visitors, providing informative tours, conducting research, and deepening their understanding of our work and the history of the First World War.

This unique programme offers an unparalleled experience, and we continue to be inspired by the dedication of our young guides, who tirelessly share the stories of the fallen, and become some of our most ardent supporters. We eagerly anticipate the arrival of another group of guides next year.



CWGF Guides have a moment of contemplation at Grandcourt Road Cemetery on the Somme, during their training in France. August 2023.

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LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

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Our work is a profound testament to the enduring commitment of humanity. It embodies the sacred duty to honour and commemorate the fallen, preserving their memory for generations to come. Guided by our new strategy and our Care Values—Commitment, Ambition, Respect, and Excellence—our future is on solid foundations.

Through meticulously maintained cemeteries, memorials, and a wealth of historical records, we will continue to ensure that the sacrifices of over 1.7 million individuals are never forgotten.

This endeavour transcends borders, reminding us of the shared humanity that unites us all. It stands as an enduring symbol of remembrance, respect, and gratitude, and a poignant reminder that even in the darkest times, the light of compassion and remembrance can shine brightly.

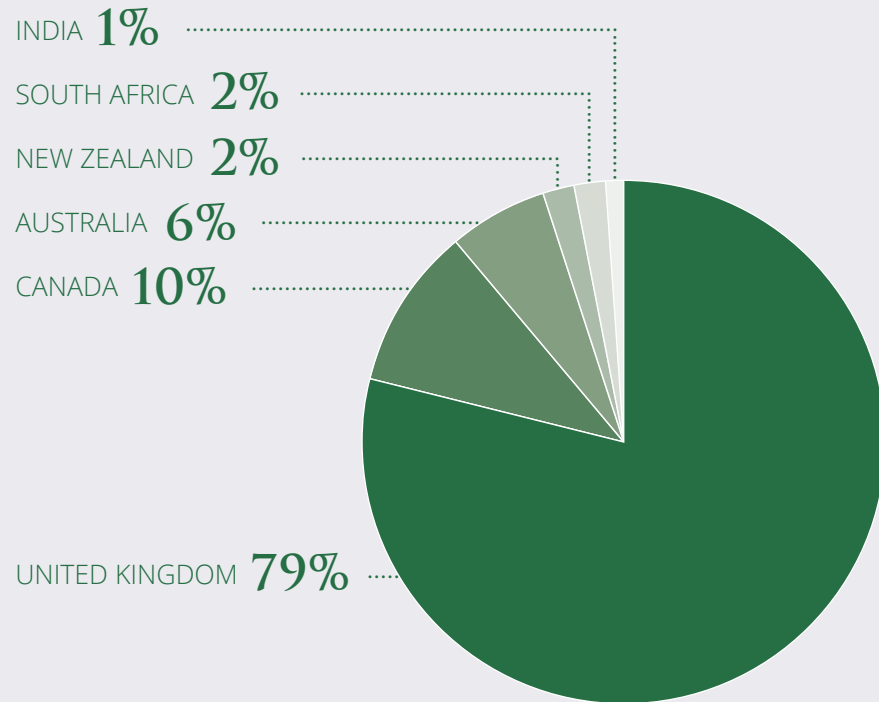


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CWGF Guide Alex Rootes takes members of the Scottish Rugby team support staff on a special tour of the Thiepval Memorial, France.

CWGC FINANCIAL SUMMARY

£78.4M

TOTAL CONSOLIDATED INCOME
FOR THE YEAR ENDED MARCH 2023



PERCENTAGES OF CONTRIBUTIONS
BEING MADE BY
PARTNER GOVERNMENTS

£78.9 million was spent during the year in ensuring the 1.7 million war dead were commemorated in accordance with the obligations set out in the Commission's Royal Charter. The money was spent ensuring that cemeteries and memorials were maintained 'in fit provision'. Our member Commonwealth countries contribute to the funding of the Commission in proportion to their respective number of commemorations graves shown in the chart.

The Commission's income for the year ended March 2023 was £78.4 million. Member governments' funding comprised £67.2 million (86%).

The Commission's consolidated spend during the year was in line with expectations at £78.9 million, this represents a year-on-year increase of 6%.

The financial outcome for the year, before pension scheme adjustments, was therefore almost breakeven with a small deficit of £0.6 million.

The Commission's consolidated balance sheet position reported a net surplus balance of £8.3 million. The pension scheme deficit decreased by £14.3m from £27.6 million at March 2022 to £13.3 million at March 2023. In place is a long-term funding plan agreed by the Commission with the pension scheme trustees which continues to fund the pension scheme's agreed actuarial deficit.

Our full accounts are available on the website at www.cwgc.org

OUR COMMITMENT

BREAKDOWN OF NUMBERS OF WAR DEAD BY FORCES

Nationality	1914–1918 War		1939–1945 War		Both Wars		Overall
	Identified Burials	Memorials	Identified Burials	Memorials	Identified Burials	Memorials	Casualty count
Australian	39145	23,196	28,604	12,092	67749	35284	103033
Canadian	45,614	19389	37322	8066	82936	27455	110391
Indian	8238	65813	18,228	68,798	26,466	134611	161077
New Zealand	11,774	6,296	9,040	2,886	20,814	9,182	29,996
South African	6,775	4918	10,058	1,856	16,833	6774	23607
United Kingdom	481717	413186	245100	138805	726817	551991	1278808
Total	593263	532794	348352	232503	941615	765297	1706912 *

* As a result of our investigations into historical cases of non-commemoration, this figure is likely to change

There are 217,757 unidentified graves of the First and Second World War in CWGC care, including 4,251 of non-Commonwealth casualties.

The names of 68,152 civilians of the Commonwealth, whose deaths were due to enemy action in the Second World War, are commemorated in the Civilian War Dead Roll of Honour, held at Westminster Abbey, UK.

The CWGC also cares for the graves of non-Commonwealth casualties from the First and Second World Wars on behalf of their governments. In addition, we maintain the graves of service casualties from other conflicts on an agency basis for the United Kingdom Ministry of Defence.

Figures will vary on a daily basis as individuals are accepted for commemoration as war casualties, as human remains are recovered from the former battlefields for burial in a newly created CWGC grave; existing graves are identified; and as casualties who have been named have their official point of commemoration moved from a Memorial to the Missing to the headstone marking their grave. Numbers may not be directly comparable i.e. some counts are for each individual, whilst others represent more than one individual. For example, a collective grave may be counted as a single grave but is the resting place of multiple individuals.

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.....

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If you would like to get in touch with the CWGC, please visit www.cwgc.org/contact-us.

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COMMONWEALTH
WAR GRAVES
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FRONT COVER IMAGE:

*Band of the Grenadier Guards play at a Last Post ceremony at the Menin Gate during its restoration, July 2023.
© Eric Compernelle.*

WITH THANKS FOR IMAGES

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission would like to thank all those who have contributed to the production of this annual report with information and/or images. Your help is greatly appreciated.

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