

Commonwealth War Graves Commission Visitor Information Panels

1. SUMMARY

Information has been received from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission regarding work they are undertaking on Islay, and about an event they will be hosting in October. Members are asked to note the information submitted, and to consider the invitation made by the CWGC.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. Members are asked to note the invitation which has been made by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and to nominate members of the Area Committee to attend the event due to be held on Islay on 6th October 2014.

3. DETAIL

- 3.1 Communication has been received from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in regards work they are undertaking across Scotland placing plaques at cemeteries where servicemen who lost their lives in both World Wars are buried. This work is underway and includes plaques being put in place at many Argyll and Bute cemeteries.
- 3.2 In addition to this generic work, the CWGC have intimated that there are several war graves on the island of Islay, including a plot at Bowmore cemetery, and that there are two cemeteries on Islay which contain only war graves.
- 3.3 In recognition of these specific sites, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission plan to unveil visitor information panels at Kilchoman Cenetery (CEM224) and at Kilnaughton Cemetery (CEM 217). Appendix 1 to this report provides an image of what the panel will look like, each panel includes a QR code which will link to a micro web site giving details of individual casualties who are buried in each cemetery.

- 3.3 It is the intention of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission to unveil these panels on Monday 6th October 2014, which is an anniversary of the troop ship Otranto sinking off Islay in 1918, when more than 400 lives were lost, with those recovered being buried at Kilchoman. The unveiling event will be used to inform the public about these graves and of course the significance of these events in WW1 history, and media outlets will be briefed before all unveilings in the hope of publicity for the sites and the panels.
- 3.4 The Commonwealth War Graves Commission have requested attendance from elected representatives of the Council at the planned unveiling on 6th October, and the Leader of the Council has indicated that he feels there should be local representation, and, if possible, representation by the Council's Military Champion. To that end, the Area Committee is requested to consider the invitation made by CWGC and to agree which MAKI members should attend the unveilings on 6th October 2014.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The unveiling of information panels by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission at two cemeteries on Islay is recognition of the importance of the sites and the serviceman who are buried there. The Area Committee is invited to nominate local members to attend and represent the Council at the event.

5. IMPLICATIONS

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| Policy - | None. |
| Financial – | There may be expenses costs associated with Members attending this event. |
| Legal - | None |
| HR - | None |
| Equalities - | None |
| Risk - | None |
| Customer | None. |
| Service - | |

Executive Director of Customer Services
21st May 2014

For further information contact: Shirley MacLeod, Area Governance Manager
Tel 01369 707134.

Edinburgh (Comely Bank) Cemetery



CWGC
Commonwealth War Graves Commission

The British Home Front during the First and Second World Wars

During the two world wars Britain became an island fortress and a base for equipping and training troops and launching land, sea and air operations. In both conflicts the skies above the island and the seas that surround her became the scene of fierce fighting involving aircraft, submarines and warships. Britain was also the main centre for the medical care of men and women serving in the armed forces, and thousands of hospitals located across the country were used to treat service personnel who were wounded, fell victim to disease, or were injured in accidents at home or overseas.

Many of the servicemen buried in the United Kingdom were killed in action in the air while defending the home front.

Others, mostly naval men, drowned in British coastal waters. However, the majority were wounded or contracted disease on active service and subsequently died while undergoing hospital treatment or recovering in private homes.

Today over 170,000 men and women who died in the United Kingdom while serving in the armed forces during the first and second world wars are buried in cemeteries and churchyards throughout the country. Some burials form small war graves plots within larger cemeteries, but the majority are scattered throughout cemetery grounds. In all, there are Commonwealth war graves in almost 12,500 different locations throughout the United Kingdom.



Edinburgh (Comely Bank) Cemetery

Comely Bank was opened as a public cemetery in 1843 and laid out by J. M. Dick Peddie for the Edinburgh Cemetery Company in 1898. During the First World War a plot was acquired for burials from three military hospitals. From 1914 Edinburgh was headquarters to the 4th, 5th, 6th and 9th Battalions of the Royal Scots, with the 7th Battalion in Leith. The 2nd Scottish General Hospital occupied Craighall Poorhouse and had beds for over

1,000 officers and men. The Edinburgh War Hospital was established in 1915 when the War Office took over Bingham Village Hospital and by 1918 had reached a record capacity of 3,000 patients crowded into wards, huts and specially-erected marquees. The Leith War Hospital had 585 beds in the infirmary at Leith and the port was used by hospital ships throughout the war. Military hospitals were staffed and operated by the Royal Army Medical Corps and Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military

Nursing Service, supplemented by volunteer workers from Voluntary Aid Detachments, the Red Cross, St. John's Ambulance and the YMCA.

There are 225 First World War burials in the war plots at Comely Bank, including chests of two female auxiliaries who died in 1918. At least 50 of the servicemen buried in the cemetery died of influenza. The so-called 'Spanish Flu' was a global pandemic that killed up to 6 per cent of the world's population between 1918 and 1920. An estimated 25 million people died in the first 6 months alone and the disease ultimately claimed the lives of as many as 50 million worldwide. The young and healthy were particularly vulnerable to the flu, which struck with such severity that a victim could be fit at breakfast and dead by tea-time.

An unusual feature of Comely Bank cemetery is that the granite headstones in the war graves plot lie flat. A decision made by the architect, Sir Robert Lorimer. In addition to the burials dating from the First World War, the cemetery is also the final resting place of 76 soldiers, sailors and airmen who died as a result of service during the Second World War, including a member of the Mercantile Marine who died at the age of 14 in 1941.

Group of Burials and Graves at Edinburgh War Hospital, Bingham Village, Edinburgh

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

The Commission is responsible for the commemoration of almost 1,700,000 members of the Commonwealth forces who gave their lives in the two world wars. The graves and memorials of these men and women, who came from all parts of the Commonwealth and who were of many faiths and of many, are found around the globe in 153 countries. For more information about the Commission, our work and how to search our records online visit www.cwgc.org. Enquiries are also welcome at our offices: **CWGC Head Office** Tel +44 (0) 1628 507200 Email: casualtyenq@cwgc.org **CWGC United Kingdom Office** Tel +44 (0) 1926 320137 Email: ukoffice@cwgc.org

For more information about this location and some of those commemorated here, scan the QR code (right).

