



CWGC
Commonwealth War Graves Commission

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Maidenhead, UK

MEDIA RELEASE

Visitors invited to attend Arnos Vale Cemetery ceremony after Commonwealth War Graves Commission restoration project

- **Visitors are welcome to attend the ceremony on 8 December at Arnos Vale Cemetery, Bristol and invited guests include the families of some of those buried at Arnos Vale**
- **Commonwealth War Graves Commission replaced and restored grave markers and memorials to First World War heroes in its biggest UK restoration project of 2018**
- **New exhibition also launches telling the story of CWGC, its global reach and the personal stories of some of those from around the world remembered at Arnos Vale**

Visitors are invited to attend a special ceremony at Arnos Vale Cemetery, Bristol, to mark the completion of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's (CWGC) restoration work to preserve grave markers and memorials to the war dead.

Invited guests include the descendants of some of the war heroes buried in the cemetery and the Commission is encouraging those with a family connection or interest in the site and the stories of those commemorated there to attend on Saturday 8 December 2018. A new exhibition about CWGC's work and the people commemorated there will launch on the same day.

The Soldiers' Corner plot at the cemetery had fallen into disrepair due to the neglect of the cemetery in the 80s and 90s under a previous owner. Some of the original grave markers had been removed or were in poor condition. When the Arnos Vale Cemetery Trust took over the site after a local campaign, the stones were put back on the memorial with the help of the local army reserves. However, many of the marker stones had been significantly damaged and others were beyond repair.

More recently, the CWGC and Arnos Vale Cemetery Trust have worked in partnership to ensure the historic memorial and marker stones could be improved. The CWGC is now responsible for their maintenance and earlier this year the Commission's expert stonemasons restored grave markers where possible and created 40 new ones from Portland stone to replace those that were missing or beyond repair.



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Among those replaced was the grave marker of Private William Walker of the 6th Australian Infantry, who died in Bristol on 11 December 1918. Private Walker's family have been invited to attend the special ceremony at Arnos Vale after their correspondence with CWGC helped to kick-start the restoration project.

During both World Wars there were several military hospitals in Bristol. Many of the First World War casualties buried in Arnos Vale were treated at these after returning to the UK from the Mediterranean on hospital ships, only to succumb to illness or injury on British soil. There are 514 burials in the whole cemetery from across the UK and the Commonwealth including men from the Australian, Canadian and South African Forces.

Julian Evans, Director of International and Community Engagement for the Commission, said: "CWGC commemorates the war dead regardless of how they died. Whether it was on the battlefield, from Spanish flu, or, as with many of those buried at Arnos Vale, of injuries and illness on the way home, each life given in service was of equal sacrifice.

"Strikingly around one fifth of the First World War servicemen commemorated at Arnos Vale died after the Armistice was signed on 11 November 1918, reminding us that 100 years ago today, the war was still not over for everyone.

"Places like Arnos Vale tell a different side to the story of those who died in the World Wars. Some were tantalisingly close to home. Others were part-way through their journey back to other parts of the Commonwealth and though their remains will forever lie in foreign soil here at Arnos Vale, the Commission is here in perpetuity to remember them at this fitting and newly restored site."

Mike Coe, Chief Executive of Arnos Vale Cemetery Trust, said: "It is amazing to see the marker stones back in their rightful place and looking like they did a hundred years ago. The mix of original and new really shows the history of the memorial and the story of those remembered there."

The three-month restoration project involved the use of archive photographs and old cemetery plans to locate unmarked graves and ensure every war grave in Arnos Vale was properly marked. The Portland stone used on new markers was sourced from the same quarry as when the Red Cross first built the site a century ago.

For more information, images and spokespeople please contact:

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Ends.

Notes for editors:

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) commemorates the 1.7 million Commonwealth servicemen and women who died during the two World Wars. It also holds and updates an extensive and accessible records archive.

The Commission operates in more than 23,000 locations in more than 150 countries.

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