



CWGC
Commonwealth War Graves Commission

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The Commonwealth War Graves Commission announces ‘behind the scenes’ Visitor Centre

- **The Commonwealth War Graves Commission will open the CWGC Experience in Beaurains, France in Spring 2019 supported by the UK government’s LIBOR fund.**
- **Just an hour from Calais, for the first time, visitors will have access ‘behind the scenes’ of the Commission, seeing their artisan craftsmen at work.**
- **Highlights will include access to the headstone engraving process, an overview of the metal and carpentry workshops and insights into our process of recovery and identification of soldiers found on the battlefields after ten decades.**

From Spring 2019, Visitors to the battlefields of Northern France will be able to gain a fascinating insight into the work of an extraordinary international organisation. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission, known for its superb maintenance of war cemeteries around the world, is delighted to announce plans to open its first visitor centre in Beaurains, France, just south of Arras and an hour from the channel ports.

For the first time visitors will be able to see the Commission’s team of skilled craftsman at work. Taking a tour of their workshops and observing them as they continue their century long task of caring for some of the world’s most impressive and recognisable monuments and memorials.

The centre aims to provide a greater understanding of the organisation’s work commemorating the 1.7 million men and women who died in the service of King and Country during the two world wars. It will provide a snapshot of the work of the Commission at over 23,000 sites across the globe where it continues to commemorate the final resting places of the war dead. The project, which has been made possible with the support of a £700,000 LIBOR grant, is backed by the UK government.

During their tour, visitors will be able to watch the Headstone Production Team using 21st century technology to carve the iconic headstones, carefully crafting regimental badges and personal inscriptions, ensuring the names of the men who died remain legible. The highly skilled team of blacksmiths, stonemasons, carpenters and horticulturists will offer demonstrations on the restoration and conservation of the iconic features of the CWGC’s sites, designed by some of the 20th Century’s most influential architects.

The work of the Commission in burying the war dead is far from over. The team in France still help local authorities recovering newly revealed dead from the battlefields on an almost weekly basis, a century on. A fascinating exhibition will show this work, from the recovery of the body to the final reburial with full military honours, using all the historical, archaeological and forensic evidence to identify the casualty, combining military historical research and cutting edge DNA and genealogical tracing.



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The CWGC Experience will not only focus on the organisation's commitments in Western Europe, but also shine a light on the ongoing responsibilities across Africa, Asia, Australasia, Eastern Europe and the Americas. It will show how its team maintain sites in diverse environments, and the ground-breaking work managing the impact of climate change.

Victoria Wallace, CWGC's Director General, said: "We have long been able to offer tours of our workshops to VIP visitors to the battlefields of Northern France. But the Commission wanted this to be someone everyone could see. As any visitor to one of our beautifully kept cemeteries will see, the artisan skills of our team are extraordinary, and the attention to detail, the scale of what we do, and the fascinating story of the recovery of men from the area for reburial today will make a real addition to any visit to the Western Front. We are hugely grateful to the British government for the funding, and to our team for embracing the idea of showing people what we do with such enthusiasm".

The CWGC Experience will open in spring 2019 at The Commonwealth War Graves, 5-7 Rue Angele Richard CS10109,62217 Beaurains, France. Further details will be announced closer to the launch.

For more information, images, spokespeople or more personal stories please contact:

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Ends.

Notes for editors:

1. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (www.cwgc.org)

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.

Get to know the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

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