MEDIA RELEASE

CWGC reports visitor number success

- Sir Bill Rollo, the new Vice Chairman of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) visits First and Second World War Cemeteries on Malta to see the results of its Tourism Heritage Initiative
- CWGC reports a staggering 100% rise in visitor numbers
- Sir Bill Rollo was appointed new Vice Chairman of the CWGC in July 2019

Sir Bill Rollo, Vice Chairman of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) today embarked on a two-day tour of the island to review the CWGC’s Heritage Tourism Initiative – that has seen record numbers paying their respects at the graves of those who died on Malta during the two World Wars.

Launched in January 2019, the initiative encourages locals and tourists to visit Malta’s war grave cemeteries and honour the people who fell in the two World Wars. The project has seen new tours introduced at Imtarfa and Pieta Military Cemeteries and Capuccini Naval Cemetery. The tours are run by local volunteers, who have worked with the CWGC to create an insightful journey of remembrance for visitors.

The success of the initiative has been evidenced with an increase in tours of the cemeteries and a 100% rise in visitor numbers. The initiative is supported by the Malta Tourism Authority, Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna and the Malta Aviation Museum Foundation, who have been actively promoting the project to their own visitors.

As part of the two-day visit, Sir Bill previewed the second phase of the initiative; a new exhibition and self-guided tour of Capuccini Naval Cemetery. The exhibition highlights CWGC’s commitment of remembrance on Malta and globally and will be available to the public from the 31 October 2019. The new self-guided tour will enable visitors to discover personal stories of those buried in the cemetery and learn more about Japan’s little-known, but significant, role in the First World War.

During the First World War, Japan was in fact an ally of Britain. From 1917 Japanese ships were based at Malta and Japanese sailors gained an excellent reputation for hard work and dedication. They suffered few losses until 11 June, where 65 sailors were killed off the coast of Crete. They are remembered on the Japanese Memorial, maintained by the CWGC in Capuccini Naval Cemetery. In 1921 Crown Price of Hirohito visited the cemetery during a tour of Europe- it was the first time a future emperor had left Japan.

Sir Bill Rollo said:

*I am delighted to be in Malta to see the CWGC’s Heritage Tourism Initiative first hand and to be able to meet and thank our partners and our staff. Our cemeteries are a key part of Malta’s culture and heritage and I hope the project will encourage more visitors to visit our sites, learn the stories of the people we commemorate, from the Commonwealth, Malta and elsewhere, and remember the sacrifice they made.*
During the First World War, Malta gained the title of the “Nurse of the Mediterranean”, and almost 140,000 service personnel were treated in 27 hospitals. During the Second World War, Malta’s role is well documented. From 1940-1942 Malta was besieged and became the most heavily bombed place on earth.

CWGC commemorates many Commonwealth service personnel across fourteen unique sites on the Island. The cemeteries provide an opportunity for the public to understand a key period of Maltese history and reflect on the sheer human cost the World Wars.

For more information, images and spokespeople please contact:
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Notes for editors:

1) About Sir Bill Rollo:

Sir Bill became a Commissioner in 2013 and has led CWGC’s Centenary Committee and Audit and Finance Committees. He is a former Army officer, initially commissioned into the Blues and Royals in 1977. He has held many senior appointments within the military, including Deputy Chief of Defence Staff (Personnel & Training) and Adjutant General, following a series of operational commands in the Balkans and Iraq. He has also served as a Non-Executive Director and as a Trustee for several charities.

2) CWGC in Malta:

CWGC has a strong commitment in Malta and is responsible for maintaining commemorations for more than 5,600 Commonwealth war dead at 14 locations on the island. Across the world the Commission commemorates thousands of Maltese people who died serving with Commonwealth forces and their graves can be found in Belgium, Canada, Egypt, France, Greece, Iraq, Japan, Macedonia and Serbia. The Commission is also responsible for commemorating Maltese civilians who died during the Second World War, the majority of whom were killed during the Siege of Malta, which lasted from June 1940 to November 1942.

3) 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 and territories.

4) Get to know the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Read: http://www.cwgc.org/
Follow: https://twitter.com/CWGC
Like: https://www.facebook.com/commonwealthwargravescommission
Watch: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCuyv7WCJv_NYL04eKg3oyVA

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