



CWGC
Commonwealth War Graves Commission

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Maidenhead, UK

MEDIA RELEASE

ROYALS PAY TRIBUTE TO SACRIFICES MADE BY AFRICANS DURING TWO WORLD WARS

- **Their Royal Highnesses, the Prince of Wales and Duchess of Cornwall, will visit the CWGC's Fajara War Cemetery in Gambia; Christiansborg War Cemetery in Ghana; and The Prince of Wales will visit the CWGC Abuja Memorial in Nigeria, where they will pay tribute to the sacrifices made by Africans during the two world wars**
- **First and last shots of the First World War were fired in Africa**
- **CWGC has restored memorials to African soldiers using 3D scanning technology**

Their Royal Highnesses, The Prince of Wales and Duchess of Cornwall, will take part in commemorative events to remember the sacrifice made by Gambian, Ghanaian and Nigerian soldiers in the two World Wars at Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemeteries and memorials in all three countries.

The royal couple will lay wreaths at the CWGC's Fajara War Cemetery, Gambia; Christiansborg War Cemetery, Ghana; and The Prince of Wales will visit and lay a wreath at the CWGC Abuja Memorial in Nigeria. The CWGC commemorates almost 7,000 Commonwealth servicemen and women in these three African countries.

The royal tour comes a week ahead of Remembrance Sunday commemorations on November 11, which have added significance as this year is the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War.

Richard Hills, CWGC Director Africa and Asia Pacific Area, said: "Sadly, few people are aware of the importance of the First and Second World War campaigns in Africa, nor of the huge contribution and sacrifices made by Africans in both conflicts. This historic Royal Visit will do much to raise awareness of that sacrifice and our work in these magnificent countries.

"The Commission's commitment across Africa bears witness to the ferocity of fighting that took place here and our determination that those who served should never be forgotten."

Some of the first and last fighting of the First World War took place in Africa and Africans made a vital contribution to the war effort. Hundreds of thousands of Africans served during the two World Wars and tens of thousands died. Sadly, exact figures are impossible to determine due to the lack of available records from the time.

Over the last four years, the CWGC has commenced major restoration work at a number of sites in Africa – particularly on the magnificent Memorials to the Missing in Nairobi, Mombasa, Dar es Salaam and Abuja, that commemorate African troops and carriers who died during the East and West African campaign and have no known grave.



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3D scans were taken of the memorials' sculptures and plaques in East Africa to create a permanent digital record of them, and to help manufacture elements of the sculptures in need of repair.

For more information, images and spokespeople please contact: Peter Francis on peter.francis@cwgc.org or on 01628 507163 / 07766255884

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 and territories.

The CWGC Abuja Memorial

Originally erected in Lagos in 1932, the memorial was built to honour almost 1,000 Africans who died in the First World War. It bore no names but was topped by two magnificent bronze statues representing a Hausa soldier of the Nigeria Regiment and an Igbo carrier of the Nigeria Carrier Corps.

In 1962 a Second World War memorial, formed of 10 bronze name panels, was built alongside the existing structure. It was inscribed with the names of 1,158 servicemen of the Second World War who enlisted in Nigeria and died in West Africa, and whose graves were unknown or could not be maintained. The combined memorials formed a part of a 'Square of Remembrance' in the centre of Lagos – the centrepiece of which was the tomb of the 'unknown soldier'.

Following a decision by the Nigerian Government to build a national memorial in the new state capital of Abuja, the CWGC designed and built a new memorial that would, for the first time, incorporate the names of casualties of both world wars. The new memorial was dedicated in 2017 and bears more than 2,000 names.

Fajara War Cemetery

During the Second World War the four territories in West Africa - including Gambia - became bases for recruiting and training men for the armed forces and their ports and harbours were of great value to convoys bound for the Middle East, India, South Africa and South America. By the end of 1942, coastal defence artillery had been installed and manned in all the principal West African ports. Bathurst (now Banjul) became a naval base.

The cemetery contains 203 Commonwealth burials of the Second World War, 4 of which are unidentified. The cemetery also contains a memorial to 33 Gambians who served in the Royal West African Frontier Forces who died whilst serving in West Africa and whose graves are not known.

Christiansborg War Cemetery



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During the Second World War, Accra airport and other airfields in the Gold Coast and Nigeria, were of major importance to the Atlantic Ferry - a process whereby much needed aircraft were flown by American crews from factories in America, across the South Atlantic, to West Africa. At Accra, the aircraft were handed over to the Royal Air Force, fitted and tested after their long flight, then flown onwards to the Desert Forces in North Africa. A separate service run by the South African Air Force flew bombers south to the Cape.

No. 37 (Accra) Military Hospital was established at Accra during the war-time expansion of the Royal West African Frontier Force. Accra also contributed six Companies to the Gold Coast Home Guard, created in 1940 and disbanded in 1944.

The cemetery was constructed in 1941 and was maintained by the Royal Engineers until taken over by the Commission towards the end of 1949. There are now 416 Commonwealth burials of the Second World War here and a memorial which forms the entrance to the cemetery. This commemorates more than 450 men of Gold Coast enlistment who died in West African territory during the Second World War, whose graves are unknown or are so situated that permanent maintenance is not possible.

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