



CWGC
Commonwealth War Graves Commission

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Maidenhead, United Kingdom

MEDIA RELEASE

HRH The Duke of Kent to follow in grandfather's footsteps on visit to Western Front

- **His Royal Highness, President of The Commonwealth War Graves Commission, will undertake a tour of tour of the Commission's sites on 10 May 2018**
- **The tour will include a visit to Etaples Military Cemetery to mark 100 years since German aircraft bombed the Etaples military base, killing and injuring many.**
- **His Royal Highness will be accompanied by The Commonwealth War Graves Commission's Director General Victoria Wallace and Brigadier RJ Thomson CBE DSO, Defence Attaché, at the British Embassy, Paris**

On 10 May, His Royal Highness The Duke of Kent, President of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC), will follow in the footsteps of his grandfather, King George V, when he visits a number of CWGC cemeteries on the former Western Front. This will include a visit to the Etaples Military Cemetery where 100 years ago, on the 19 May 1918, bombing raids by German aircraft killed over 180 soldiers and injured many others. Those who lost their lives are buried in the cemetery.

Accompanied by CWGC Director General, Mrs Victoria Wallace, His Royal Highness will pay tribute to the bravery of the men and women commemorated at cemeteries first visited by his grandfather during a special post-war pilgrimage in 1922.

The Duke will also recognise the outstanding service and lifelong commitment of two of the CWGC's longest serving members of staff – both of whom will receive award in recognition of 50 years of service with the Commission. Senior Head Gardener Dennis Pluck followed in his father's footsteps, becoming a gardener for the Commission in 1966. He has worked across sites in Northern France. William Moody is currently the Sector Supervisor in Western France, however he has worked at sites in Tunisia, Germany and Greece. Both his son and nephew have taken roles with the Commission.

Speaking about his visit His Royal Highness said: "As President of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, it has been my honour to visit war cemeteries and memorials across the globe.

These remarkable, but deeply moving reminders of the human tragedy that unfolded here a century ago are as important today as when my grandfather visited them in 1922.

It is fitting and noble that our committed staff maintain these places to a standard of excellence and I am especially pleased to be able to recognise the work of Dennis and William, who typify the dedication of all the CWGC's staff in ensuring that the resting place of those who gave their lives for us, is a fitting tribute to their sacrifice."

His Royal Highness, who has presided over the CWGC since 1970, will first visit Etaples Military Cemetery, the largest CWGC war cemetery in France, before making his way to St Etienne au Mont Communal Cemetery, where he will pay tribute to the contribution of the 'Chinese Labour Corps and South African Native Labour Corps', 168 of whom are buried here.



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At the CWGC's Terlincthun British Cemetery, The Duke will present 50 Year Service Medals to Dennis Pluck and William Moody.

It was at Terlincthun in 1922, towards the end of his pilgrimage to the Western Front, that King George V made a famous remark about the impact of the war cemeteries, then under construction: "I have many times asked myself whether there can be more potent advocates of peace upon earth through the years to come than this massed multitude of silent witnesses to the desolation of war."

His Royal Highness will conclude his visit at Wimereux Communal Cemetery – the final resting place of Canadian poet John McCrae, the author of 'In Flanders Fields', one of the most famous poems of the First World War.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission's Director General Mrs Victoria Wallace said: "The Duke of Kent has presided over our work for nearly fifty years. In all that time, his commitment to us and to the importance of ongoing remembrance of the war dead has never waned.

It is always a privilege to take His Royal Highness to our sites and to tell him of our plans to encourage ever greater numbers of people to follow in his footsteps. It is fitting, therefore, that we conclude this short pilgrimage at the graveside of John McCrae – the man whose poem issued a challenge to us all, to pass on the torch of remembrance to the next generation and who died 100 years ago."

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

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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.

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