

REPORT OF
THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE
TO REVIEW HISTORICAL
INEQUALITIES
IN COMMEMORATION



MAIDENHEAD

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In December 2019, the Commissioners of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) elected to appoint a committee of independent experts and community representatives with the following remit:

- To analyse the historical actions of the CWGC within a global context to identify and, wherever possible, correct any gaps in commemoration.
- To produce recommendations that would help shape the future work of the CWGC.

At the time of establishment, it was envisioned that the Committee would meet in-person at the CWGC's Head Office in Maidenhead, meaning representation was UK based. The Committee was asked to be impartial, objective and to report the facts, however uncomfortable they might be. Sir Tim Hitchens, a CWGC Commissioner, was appointed as the Special Committee's Chair.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Special Committee was appointed to probe the early history of the Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC) to identify inequalities in the way the organisation commemorated the dead of the British Empire from the two world wars. Where such inequalities were identified, it was asked to produce a set of recommendations that might assist and guide the present-day Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) in responding to them. Due to the difficulties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the apparent size of the task once begun, the Committee restricted its focus to IWGC operations during and following the First World War.

Founded over a century ago to commemorate the First World War dead of the British Empire, from the outset the IWGC's work was defined by the principle of equality of treatment in death. Whatever an individual's rank in social or military life, whatever their religion, they would be commemorated identically – with their name engraved either on a headstone over an identified grave or on a memorial to the missing. While that principle was admirable, and in Europe effectively achieved, this report finds that the promise of equality had limits elsewhere.

In conflict with the organisation's founding principles, it is estimated that between 45,000 and 54,000 casualties (predominantly Indian, East African, West African, Egyptian and Somali personnel) were commemorated unequally. For some, rather than marking their graves individually, as the IWGC would have done in Europe, these men were commemorated collectively on memorials. For others who were missing, their names were recorded in registers rather than in stone.

A further 116,000 casualties (predominantly, but not exclusively, East African and Egyptian personnel) – but potentially as many as 350,000 – were not commemorated by name or possibly not commemorated at all. Most of these men were commemorated by memorials that did not carry their names – in part because the IWGC was never furnished with their names or places of burial by the military or colonial authorities, in part because it chose to diverge from its principles in the belief that the communities these men came from would not recognise or value such individual forms of commemoration.

This report finds that in the 1920s, across Africa, the Middle East and India, imperial ideology influenced the operations of the IWGC in a way that it did not in Europe, and the rules and principles that were sacred there were not always upheld elsewhere. As a result, contemporary attitudes towards non-European faiths and differing funerary rites, and an individual's or group's perceived 'state of civilisation', influenced their commemorative treatment in death.

Although in the vast majority of cases the IWGC did not make the decision to diverge from its principles unilaterally, it should at least be considered complicit in all of them. While we should not lose sight of the inclusive and successful work of the Commission in Europe and elsewhere around the

world, we also should not overlook the mistakes in the organisation's early history – many of which have been forgotten or reimagined over the century of its existence.

For the CWGC to engage positively with this history and to take steps in righting and explaining the wrongs of the past, this Committee makes ten recommendations based around three central themes:

- Extend geographically and chronologically the search in the historical record for inequalities in commemoration and act on what is found.
- Renew the commitment to equality in commemoration through the building of physical or digital commemorative structures.
- Acknowledge and accept this difficult history and share it with all the communities of the former British Empire touched by the two world wars.

INTRODUCTION

i. The dangers of complacency

The Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC) was founded in 1917 to commemorate in perpetuity the men and women of the British Empire who lost their lives in the First World War. It would extend its charter to incorporate just one other conflict, the Second World War, and now – more than a century since it was established – it preserves the memory of more than 1.7 million Commonwealth citizens who died in those struggles.¹ It does this by maintaining cemeteries and memorials at more than 23,000 sites across the globe, while also providing a managed online database with the names and details of those in its care.

A Royal Charter and several formative reports shaped the way in which the IWGC worked in the aftermath of the First World War and, more recently, how the now Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) has reflected on that work.² This reflection, further encouraged by the organisation's own centenary in 2017, has informed public communications about its founding values and principles, which were ultimately distilled into four key statements:

- Each of the Commonwealth dead should be commemorated by name on a headstone or memorial.
- Headstones and memorials should be permanent.
- Headstones should be uniform.
- There should be equality of treatment for the war dead irrespective of rank or religion.³

It was one of the mentioned formative reports that provided the origins of these principles. This was completed for the Commission in the autumn of 1918 by Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Frederic Kenyon – Director of the British Museum and Artistic Director to the IWGC – after consultation with relatives of the dead, the armed forces, religious leaders and representatives of the arts. Here it was stated that 'all, whatever their military rank or position in civil life, should have equal treatment in their graves'

¹To qualify for commemoration as a casualty of the First World War, service personnel must have died between 4 August 1914 (Great Britain's declaration of war) and 31 August 1921 (the official end of war following the Order in Council required by the Termination of the Present War (Definition) Act). For the Second World War the dates are 3 September 1939 (Great Britain's declaration of war) and 31 December 1947 (a date agreed by the participating governments to produce a post-war period roughly equal to that of the First World War). Death after discharge still qualifies a casualty for commemoration if directly attributable to war service.

²In recognition of the changed relationships between Britain and its former Dominions and colonies, but also sure of the ongoing importance of its work, the organisation replaced 'Imperial' with 'Commonwealth' in its title in March 1960.

³These principles have featured on different iterations of the CWGC's website since at least 1998. They were first explicitly set out within the CWGC's Fifty-Second Annual Report in 1970–71, p. 3.

and, perhaps more importantly still, 'that no less honour should be paid to the last resting places of Indian and other non-Christian members of the Empire than to those of our British soldiers'.⁴

With the solemn beauty of memorials like Neuve Chapelle in France, dedicated to pre-partition Indian forces, or the peaceful cemeteries that populate the former front lines across the world seemingly showing no distinction between those buried, there is little on the surface to suggest the Commission has done anything but uphold these ideals. Nonetheless, since its major works were completed, a number of historical discrepancies in commemoration have been identified by the organisation, and corrections and additions have been made, are in progress or are planned for a number of sites globally.⁵ The question of how these discrepancies came about, along with the wider issue of non-commemoration or the failure to treat casualties equally, however, have, until now, never been explored proactively by the CWGC. Similarly, although it identified and corrected numerous issues, the organisation did not change the narrative of its origins to incorporate and explain these historical irregularities and the ways in which they infringed upon its often-stated universal principles.

Though a review of this situation was overdue, a catalyst for the formation of this Committee and its investigation was a one-hour Channel 4 documentary entitled *The Unremembered*. Aired in November 2019, it explored the Imperial War Graves Commission's treatment of African war dead in the aftermath of the First World War. Fronted by David Lammy MP and informed by the research of Professor Michèle Barrett, the programme presented evidence suggesting that, in a number of examples in East Africa, the Commission had failed to live up to its ideals of equality of treatment. This Committee was in part formed to investigate these examples but also to extend, still further, the search for any similar problems that might exist elsewhere.

The evidence recorded here provides a preliminary exploration of cases of unequal commemoration and non-commemoration, and the IWGC's role in bringing them about. It demonstrates that divergences from the organisation's principles exist outside of Europe and across its estate, principally falling into two categories:

- In the first instance, it is estimated that between 45,000 and 54,000 casualties are or were commemorated differently across East Africa, West Africa, Egypt and the Middle East – usually collectively via memorials when some might have had marked burials, or by recording the names of the dead in registers rather than engraving them in stone.
- In the second instance, it is estimated that at least 116,000, but potentially as many as 350,000, casualties may not be commemorated by name or may not be commemorated at all, primarily across East Africa and Egypt.

⁴Kenyon, Lt-Col. Sir Frederic, *War Graves – how the cemeteries abroad will be designed* (London: HMSO, 1918), pp. 7 & 11.

⁵See Tables A2, A3 and A5 in Appendix 1 for a full list of these sites.

Both issues are the result of decisions owned by the IWGC, albeit decisions influenced by a scarcity of information, errors inherited from other organisations and the opinions of colonial administrators. Underpinning all these decisions, however, were the entrenched prejudices, preconceptions and pervasive racism of contemporary imperial attitudes.

The Committee accepts that the subjects explored in this report are potentially contentious, contested and divisive, particularly those connected to ethnicity, culture, language, caste and religion, and the way in which they were used by some to build hierarchies of race. Nonetheless, it is without question that these subjects were central to the unequal treatment of the dead outside of Europe. This point has not been laboured within this report as, where possible, the contemporary record has been allowed to speak for itself. Modern readers will have no trouble distinguishing the underlying attitudes.

This report adds to a body of writing exploring these issues, identifying, contextualising, probing and seeking to understand the IWGC policies and practices of the time that led to different and discriminatory treatment, while also categorising the outcomes of that activity.⁶ The recommendations that follow have been suggested by this Committee as ways in which the CWGC might take steps to acknowledge, understand and, where possible, rectify the injustices, errors and oversights of the past.

ii. A note on methodology, scope and limitations

Research began in the spring of 2020, just as the COVID-19 pandemic began to impact people's working lives as well as limit access to important archival material. Although the project had been scoped, there was no way of knowing the extent of the issues it might uncover nor the reach of the work. As a result, it was planned that the CWGC's archives would provide the starting point from which the research team would identify links into other collections that would make up future phases of work. In practice, stringent lockdown rules coincided with the beginning of the research, which largely restricted this activity not only to the CWGC's own collections but also to digitised material.

Although this research was originally designed to probe the Commission's work connected to the casualties of both world wars, the mentioned restrictions forced the research team to rethink its scope, leading to a deliberate focus on the First World War and inter-war period. The majority of

⁶See, for example: Barrett, Michèle, 'Subalterns at War: First World War Colonial Forces and the Politics of the Imperial War Graves Commission', *Interventions*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (2007), pp. 451–74; Barrett, Michèle, 'Afterword Death and the afterlife: Britain's colonies and dominions', in Santanu Das (ed.), *Race, Empire and First World War Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 301–20; Barrett, Michèle, "'White Graves' and Natives: The Imperial War Graves Commission in East and West Africa, 1918–1919', in Paul Cornish and Nicholas Saunders (eds), *Bodies in Conflict: Corporeality, materiality, and transformation* (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 195–218; Barrett, Michèle, 'Dehumanisation and the War in East Africa', *War & Culture Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (2017), pp. 238–52; Siblon, John, 'Negotiating Hierarchy and Memory: African and Caribbean Troops from Former British Colonies in London's Imperial Spaces', *The London Journal*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (2016), pp. 299–312; Siblon, John, "'Race", rank, and the politics of inter-war commemoration of African and Caribbean servicemen in Britain', in Hakim Adi (ed.), *Black British History: New Perspectives* (London: Zed Books, 2019), pp. 52–70.

relevant country files concerning East Africa, West Africa and many operational files for Europe had already been digitised by the CWGC's Archive team. As a result of ongoing commitments to open up this collection and better understand its history, the Commission minutes and a swathe of other relevant documents were also available. What is presented here is largely informed by IWGC operations in Europe, East Africa, West Africa and the Middle East in the aftermath of the First World War.⁷ In light of the existing research already mentioned, it was across Africa that the largest number of commemorative anomalies were predicted, and this report's findings do bear this out. While this is partly the result of the material consulted, it also reflects some unique issues, experiences and decisions made on that continent. Nonetheless, it also means the findings of this report can only be seen as the first phase of a wider exploration that should include all areas of the Commission's work connected to both world wars.

This report was researched, compiled and written by Dr George Hay and Dr John Burke under the advice and guidance of the Special Committee. The recommendations at the end of this report were devised by the Committee through reflection and discussion and are passed to the CWGC for consideration and adoption. They are designed to be non-specific, flexible and applicable to all identified and predicted issues that the CWGC might need to address in the future, without risking repeating the mistakes of the past.

The restrictions placed upon the research team have not prevented it from identifying other potential areas of exploration in the Commission's archives, or the material available globally that might support this work in the future. While this part of the project could never have been exhaustive in the time frame available, even without restrictions on movement, it has provided sufficient examples to allow this Committee to make informed recommendations. The first of those recommendations is worth stating here: that the CWGC should continue this research if it is to fully understand the extent of these problems and to implement necessary remedial action.

iii. Terminology and language

When writing about any British institution founded during the height of empire, it is important to draw attention to contemporary terminology and language, and the ways in which they will be used and repeated in the text. Much of the material that has informed this report has been drawn from institutional archives from the 1920s, and from an institution that was a product of empire. Though its work was driven by the spirit of unity in common sacrifice, that unity was seen through the lens of British imperialism. It should, therefore, be understood that the terminology and language applied by the organisation is very different to what we believe to be acceptable in 2021. This is not to excuse its use but simply to state that it was a product of its time.

One of the key findings of this report is that the IWGC's commitment to uniformity in the handling of commemoration – and therefore equality in death – had geographical limits.

⁷Limited time and the difficulty in accessing physical archival material in Maidenhead due to travel restrictions has meant this report stops short of exploring in detail any potential issues within South Africa. This, as well as many other geographical areas and chronological periods, will need to be part of future projects.

For imperial forces who died outside Europe, but particularly across Africa, the Middle East and India, treatment often differed. When working in these theatres, the IWGC categorised the dead into the following groups: 1) those who were 'white' (often used interchangeably with 'European'), West Indians, South African 'Coloureds' and Chinese; 2) Indians and 3) all other ethnicities, generally referred to as 'natives'.⁸

The authors have reproduced the terms in these contemporary IWGC categories when referring to policies or actions that relied upon them. When referring to Africa, the term 'native' (always in quotations) denotes 'non-white' Africans. Reflecting IWGC usage, the same meaning is applied to collective terms, such as African soldiers and African dead. This could potentially include the full gamut of ethnolinguistic groups, except those of white European ancestry. This latter group is typically labelled as 'European' in this document, as they would have been by the IWGC. When setting out the consequences of policies and actions, the authors have endeavoured to use terminology that is more accurate and appropriate for those affected.

Countries, territories and place names will initially be given as they were during the events being referred to. They are followed by the appropriate current title given in brackets.

⁸The Chinese referred to here are principally those of the Chinese Labour Corps serving on the Western Front. Here the IWGC marked the graves and went to some lengths to recognise and adhere to appropriate burial rites. This, however, did not apply to all Chinese casualties, as those missing with the Indian Army, in other theatres or lost at sea were commemorated on the Hong Kong Memorial, which prior to 2006 did not carry their names.

PART 1 - AN IMPERIAL WAR AND THE PEOPLES OF EMPIRE

i. Recruitment, service and recognition

Victory in the First World War cost the United Kingdom more than 800,000 lives.⁹ The colonies and Dominions of the vast British Empire also paid a substantial price to bring about that victory. Enormous quantities of money, materiel and blood were spent in securing it, and, whilst it is difficult to give exact figures, it is fair to estimate that well over three million British colonial and Dominion subjects served, and that potentially upwards of 500,000 perished.¹⁰ While the white-settled Dominions of Canada, Australia and New Zealand tend to dominate common narratives of the Empire at war, in truth their substantial contributions (amounting to more than 1.1 million men and women) are just one part of a much bigger, global story.¹¹

For example, the Indian Army alone provided more than 1.2 million men, with its soldiers deployed to all the main theatres of the war and making up two-thirds of all the manpower serving in Mesopotamia.¹² Over the course of the war, around 1,200 men served with the West India Regiment (WIR), and over 16,000 with the British West Indies Regiment (BWIR) in Europe, Egypt, Palestine, East and West Africa, and Mesopotamia.¹³ Though strictly speaking not subjects of the British Empire, 100,000 men were raised for British service in the Chinese Labour Corps, serving primarily in France from 1917.¹⁴ Elsewhere, where the war relied even more heavily upon labour, manpower demands could be insatiable. In Nyasaland (now Malawi), for example, it has been estimated that perhaps 83 per cent of the available manpower – totalling some 210,000 men – served either as soldiers or more commonly as carriers in the East African campaign.¹⁵ More broadly, British forces may have employed upwards of 50,000 African soldiers and probably in excess of one million

⁹This is calculated from the current number of named UK commemorations in the CWGC's casualty database minus the Crown Colony figures. See footnote 10.

¹⁰The CWGC's casualty database contains the names of 1,063,137 named dead for the First World War, 230,866 of whom served with Indian, Canadian, Australian, New Zealand and South African forces. Casualties of Crown Colony units – such as those raised in Africa or the West Indies – cannot be disaggregated by country or territory of origin within the database but are counted under the United Kingdom total. To find these casualties you would need to search unit by unit. The upwards of 500,000 figure given here is made up of all of these casualties plus the estimates for those for whom the CWGC holds no names – see Part 1(ii).

¹¹Approximate enlistment by country: Canada: 620,000; Australia: 380,000; New Zealand: 100,000.

¹²For the campaign in Mesopotamia, the Indian army provided 588,717 men – 295,565 soldiers and 293,152 non-combatants. See *India's Contribution to the Great War* (Calcutta: Government of India, 1923), pp. 79–80, 96–7; Roy, Kaushik, *Indian Army and the First World War: 1914–1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 56, 342–3.

¹³Smith, Richard, 'The multicultural First World War: Memories of the West Indian contribution in contemporary Britain', *Journal of European Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 4 (2015), pp. 349–50.

¹⁴Fawcett, Brian C., 'The Chinese Labour Corps in France 1917–1921', *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. 40 (2000), p. 50.

¹⁵Carriers or porters were men employed to transport war materials where vehicles or animals were unsuitable or unavailable. Hodges, G.W.T., 'African Manpower Statistics for the British Forces in East Africa, 1914–1918', *Journal of African History*, Vol. xix, No. 1 (1978), pp. 103, 113; see also *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire during the Great War, 1914–1920* (London: HMSO, 1922), p. 382.

African carriers in the same fighting – many of the latter ultimately serving both sides.¹⁶ Though far from exhaustive, this select list begins to demonstrate the extraordinary reach of this war and the communities it touched.

While it is clear that large numbers of these colonial subjects volunteered across the British Empire, within some territories – but particularly Egypt and the colonies of East Africa and West Africa (including British occupied German colonies) – an equally high proportion may have been coerced or forcibly conscripted by the military and colonial authorities. This could involve political and economic threats, intimidation, extortion and, in some cases, mass kidnappings.¹⁷ Within Egypt alone, it has been suggested that around 75 per cent of the 327,000 men who served were recruited forcibly.¹⁸ In these cases, how they were raised appears to have been of less concern than the fact that they were raised.

Despite these substantial contributions to the British Empire's war effort, many are rarely spoken about and the cost in lives is rarely disaggregated from the combined total. In fact, due to the structure of the CWGC's casualty database, in most cases the search function will not allow these national casualty figures to be disaggregated from the 'United Kingdom' total.¹⁹ At least part of this problem with recognition is born out of the enduring Eurocentrism that still dominates the study of the First World War and pays little heed to the most diverse contributions, which predictably took place beyond the Western Front. However, the way in which these men are counted as casualties and commemorated – or, indeed, not commemorated – by the CWGC has most likely also contributed to the collective lack of knowledge about the parts they played.

ii. Quantifying the problem

As an initial exploration of potential issues, this report could never provide a conclusive figure for the total number of casualties unequally commemorated or not commemorated at all by the CWGC. What follows is an estimate informed by this preliminary research.

Firstly, evidence presented to this Committee suggests that, globally, between 45,000 and 54,000 named casualties are or were in some way deliberately treated differently to those killed in Europe. If we were to take the higher figure, this would account for 22 per cent of all known colonial and Dominion forces who received a form of named commemoration by the IWGC. Perhaps more strikingly still, this figure is known to include more than half of all globally commemorated Indian

¹⁶Hodges, 'African Manpower Statistics', p. 115.

¹⁷See Killingray, David and Matthews, James, 'Beasts of Burden: British West African Carriers in the First World War', *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 1/1 (1979), pp. 13-4; Page, Melvin, 'The War of *Thangata*: Nyasaland and the East African Campaign, 1914–1918', *Journal of African History*, Vol. xix, No. 1 (1978), pp. 87–100.

¹⁸Killingray, David, 'Labour Exploitation for Military Campaigns in British Colonial Africa 1870–1945', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (1989), p. 485.

¹⁹See footnote 10. The way this data is presented reflects the way in which the Commission's work is paid for, which is a contribution from member governments based on the number of graves maintained. As the UK government covers the costs of maintaining the graves of those not from the former Dominions or India, the database returns these casualties as UK deaths. As previously stated, they can be separated by a search for individual units.

dead.²⁰ Examples of what this means, as well as the contemporary reasons provided for this difference in treatment, are detailed in Part 3 (iii) of this document. However, in practice, this figure relates to the form of commemoration on seven memorials to the missing (five of which have since been corrected by the CWGC in the last two decades) and the deliberate decision to abandon some graves in favour of collective commemoration.²¹

Known issues with memorials to the missing include:

- 38,696 Indian casualties who were or are still commemorated numerically on memorials with their names inserted into memorial registers only. This includes the Basra Memorial in Iraq, the original Port Tewfik memorial in Egypt and the combined British and Indian memorials at Nairobi and Dar es Salaam.²²
- A total of 2,692 West African and Chinese casualties who had their names placed into memorial registers only, with nothing further inscribed on the monuments themselves, in Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Hong Kong.²³

Known issues with cemetery memorials include:

- 3,328 non-European casualties in East Africa, Egypt, and the Middle East who were or are commemorated on cemetery memorials, either numerically or by name, even though individual graves existed within the cemeteries.

The final part of this calculation forms the upper estimate and is more difficult to accurately construct as it is impossible to know how many of these men ever had an identifiable grave. Nonetheless, in certain circumstances, it became IWGC policy to abandon some burials in favour of central commemoration.

Potential issues include:

- Up to 9,061 West African, East African and Indian casualties whose places of burial might have been known but as a matter of policy were abandoned so that they might be commemorated on central memorials by name, primarily in West Africa, Zambia, Iran and India.

Again, as Part 3 (iii) will set out in greater detail, the upper estimate is used in the knowledge that many of these burials were likely never known to the IWGC. Nonetheless, they occurred in areas

²⁰The total number of colonial dead currently commemorated by the CWGC that do not fall within the 230,866 figure attributed to Indian, Canadian, Australian, New Zealand and South African forces is 12,459, making a total of 243,325. The total number of Indian dead listed on the Commission database is 73,927. See Appendix 1 for number of Indian casualties commemorated unequally.

²¹See Tables A2 to A6 in Appendix 1 for a full breakdown of the figures that follow and dates of correction, where applicable.

²²Of the memorials mentioned, the latter three now carry the names of the dead following earlier CWGC projects. A decision is yet to be made regarding the Basra Memorial, primarily due to ongoing instability in Iraq.

²³These are the figures for the memorials when originally constructed.

in which the organisation enacted a policy of erecting collective memorials for specific groups, thereby not actively seeking out their burials and abandoning those of which it was already aware.

Secondly, and even more problematic than the above calculations, is one involving casualties not commemorated by name or potentially not commemorated at all. While all differences in commemorative practice have been considered by this Committee, and all have influenced the recommendations it has made, it is these last groups that present the biggest challenge. Nameless commemoration on general memorials was undertaken for a variety of reasons explored in Part 3 (iii) in this report, but its impact is potentially substantial. As well as denying these casualties an individual place of commemoration, this outcome has also hidden the true cost of the First World War to specific communities. As a result, the total number of war dead presented by the CWGC's public casualty search – which can only count the names available in its database – is wrong. What follows is an estimate of the number of casualties suffered during the First World War who are not commemorated by name, informed by the evidence presented to this Committee combined with calculations made elsewhere.

At the present time, the CWGC commemorates by name 1,063,137 British Empire casualties of the First World War. Those missing from this figure include 227 unnamed Singaporean Chinese casualties of the Chinese Labour Corps currently commemorated in Basra War cemetery in Iraq, but who had been buried in Tanooma Chinese Cemetery before their graves became unmaintainable. Within East Africa, this includes the three nameless memorials sited at Dar es Salaam, Mombasa and Nairobi, as well as the Abercorn Memorial in Zambia, which are dedicated to African soldiers and carriers who fell in the fighting in that theatre.²⁴ At the time of construction, the IWGC believed these East African memorials represented 5,000 missing soldiers and between 40,000 and 50,000 carriers.²⁵ While the research connected to this report has recovered the names of more than 1,400 soldiers and non-combatants from burial and other records found within the archives of the CWGC and other sources, more than 4,200 King's African Riflemen (KAR) alone are known to have died in the war.²⁶ At present, the Commission has no details for the bulk of them. As will be demonstrated in Part 3 (iii) of this report, it is clear that Commission staff might have recovered at least some of these 5,000 soldiers' names in the 1920s.

²⁴In the early 1920s, the colonial government in Uganda constructed a separate general memorial in Kampala dedicated to the estimated 6,000 European and Ugandan soldiers and carriers who died in the conflict and had no known graves. It was privately erected and paid for by public donations, as the IWGC was informed in 1923 that the money they had planned to provide – totalling around £275 – was not required. Despite not officially paying into or adopting the memorial, the IWGC deemed it 'a proper commemoration of the Missing of the Uganda tribes.' See CWGC/1/1/9/D/33, pp. 22–55; CWGC/1/1/10/E/14.

²⁵Figures compiled by the War Office and published in 1922 placed the number of dead African soldiers from the East African campaign at 4,300 – of these, 1,029 were killed, 348 died of wounds and 2,923 died of disease. However, the total number of African followers and non-combatants listed as dead varies across the report. For example, one figure states 44,635 dead with a further 764 missing, another lists 48,000 dead. See *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire during the Great War, 1914–1920* (London: HMSO, 1922), pp. 240, 302, 382.

²⁶KAR casualty figures held by the War Records Office in Nairobi were queried by the regiments as being too low. At the time, they exceeded 4,200 for other ranks alone. CWGC/1/1/10/E/14, 'Letter: J.N. Cormack to Director of Records', 20 December 1923. Alongside these 1,400 men are around 300 Indian, Cypriot, Fijian and British names discovered by the research team which are not currently listed on the Commission's casualty database.

Attempts to calculate a total number for the carriers lost in this theatre are even more complex, but at the same time even more substantial. For example, a December 1919 report by Lieutenant-Colonel Oscar Watkins, in command of the Military Labour Bureau in East Africa, calculated that 38,642 had died out of a total of 485,168 recruits drawn from the territories of British East Africa (now Kenya), German East Africa (now Tanzania, Burundi, Rwanda), Portuguese East Africa (now Mozambique), Uganda and Zanzibar.²⁷ However, these figures were not final and they did not include all the carriers raised in every territory, nor did they include those classed as missing.²⁸ As such, later estimates saw this number more than double, with G.W.T. Hodges, for example, suggesting at least 94,725 were killed or died.²⁹ Today, given the gaps and omissions that are known to exist within the contemporary record, historians accept that a figure of around 100,000 represents the likely minimum number of deaths, although some have drawn on estimated wastage figures (which could include any form of incapacitation or desertion) to suggest the total figure could potentially reach, or even exceed, 300,000 deaths.³⁰ For the purposes of this calculation, the combined figure for African soldiers and carriers killed or died as a result of operations in East Africa has been estimated at between 100,000 and 300,000.

The Giza Memorial in Egypt presents a similarly challenging issue. Commemorating all the missing of the Egyptian Labour Corps and Camel Transport Corps, it does so without their names or even a suggestion of the number lost. A number of recent estimates have placed this figure at upwards of 10,000, although other sources would suggest this to be conservative.³¹ Indeed, by drawing on the average death rate per thousand men employed from January to March 1918, when an epidemic of 'relapsing fever' broke out in Palestine, it can be estimated that potentially upwards of 10,000 may have died during these three months alone.³² When discussions were first held by IWGC Commissioners in December 1920, it was noted that losses in these corps had been heavy and, whilst an exact figure for the number of dead was unknown to them, it was believed to be upwards

²⁷A further 1,844 deaths were listed for the 9,768 recruits raised in Sierra Leone, Nigeria and the Seychelles. They are excluded from the above total as these men were commemorated by the IWGC within their country of origin. See TNA, CO 533/216, 'Report by Lieutenant-Colonel O.F. Watkins, Director of Military Labour to the B.E.A. Expeditionary Force on the period from August 4th 1914 to September 12th 1919', Appendix 1, Table 6.

²⁸The carriers employed by General Northey's 'Norforce' were separate from those raised by Watkins. In a war diary entry from 1 October 1917, he placed their number at 30,000. It has also been suggested (although not demonstrated) that Watkins may have been in charge of only two in every five of all military followers in the campaign. See TNA, WO 95/5330/1, 'East Africa, HQ Norforce, Nyasaland and North-Eastern Rhodesia Frontier Force', pp. 58-9; Hodges, 'African Manpower Statistics', p. 103.

²⁹Within this breakdown there were still known to be gaps owing to the lack of surviving records. See Hodges, 'African manpower statistics', p. 116.

³⁰The lack of documentation makes this upper figure heavily reliant on circumstantial evidence. For a breakdown of these figures, as well as links to the relevant historiography, see Table A1 in Appendix 1.

³¹See Fuchs, Ron, 'Sites of Memory in the Holy Land: The design of the British war cemeteries in Mandate Palestine', *Journal of Historical Geography*, Vol. 30 (2004), p. 650; Starling, John and Lee, Ivor, *No Labour, No Battle: Military Labour during the First World War* (Stroud: The History Press, 2009), pp. 270-9.

³²The estimated death rate per 1,000 within the Egyptian Labour Corps, with the overall strength in brackets, was: January 1918, 53.4 (59,135); February 1918, 96.1 (62,921); March 1918, 111.9 (64,672). See Caddy, Peter, *British Policy and Egyptian Unrest 1914-1920* (PhD Thesis, School of Oriental and African Studies, 1982), pp. 254-5.

of 16,000.³³ Just over a year later in January 1922, when a final decision was taken on the nature of the memorial, it was noted that the total number of casualties to be commemorated was 'approximately 50,000'.³⁴ Even this figure was subject to change, however, and the IWGC was clearly not confident about its accuracy. Whilst its annual reports in the 1920s regularly spoke of 40,000–50,000 East African casualties, they did not mention again any estimates for Giza until the following decade. When that came in the Twelfth Annual Report (1930–1), the number had once again dropped to a minimum value of 10,000.³⁵ As such, it needs to be recognised that the number of Egyptians commemorated by the Giza Memorial remains as inexact as the number of carriers commemorated in East Africa. For the purposes of this calculation, however, this report adopts the original figures set out by the IWGC in the 1920s to form a range of between 16,000 and 50,000 casualties.³⁶

Ultimately, whilst quantifying an accurate total is in both cases fraught with difficulties, what is certain is that the number lost was extraordinarily high and the number commemorated individually is extraordinarily low. Again, as with the missing soldiers, it is significant to note that Watkins' report on the East African Military Labour Bureau suggests that detailed lists of those who died under his command were compiled and forwarded to District Commissioners to inform next of kin and return effects and pay.³⁷ These lists do not appear to have been sought or acquired by the IWGC.

Finally, although time has not allowed for a full exploration of the records or their accuracy, there is also the strong suggestion that the casualty figures provided by the Indian Army following the First World War were incomplete. At this stage it is too early to accurately predict how many men may not be commemorated, but it could potentially extend to tens of thousands.

What we can say is that at the time of their construction, the IWGC believed that the nameless memorials it erected across East Africa and Egypt commemorated anywhere between 66,000 to 100,000 casualties. Today, using the projections outlined here and in Table A1 in Appendix 1, it is estimated that this figure is at least 116,000 British Empire combatants and non-combatants. Whilst it is probably impossible to prove definitively either way owing to a lack of paperwork, in taking the upper estimates, it cannot at present be completely discounted that this figure could be as large as

³³CWGC/2/2/1/28, *Commission Meeting No.28*, 20 December 1920, pp. 3–5; within the IWGC's Second Annual Report, it was stated that a general memorial was planned 'as accurate records were not kept of the casualties' of the Egyptian Labour and Camel Transport Corps. See *Second Annual Report of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 1920–1921* (London: HMSO, 1921), p. 8.

³⁴See CWGC/2/2/1/41, *Commission Meeting No.41*, 17 January 1922, pp. 8–9.

³⁵Within the IWGC Annual Reports 2–3, the total number of 'African Followers' who died in East Africa was placed at 50,000. Within Annual Reports 8–11, an initial figure of 45,000, reduced to 42,318, was placed as a separate entry within the tabulated breakdown of the total number commemorated. From Annual Report 12 (1930–31), the majority of this figure was added to the total commemorated in Kenya. For Egypt, the only significant one-off increase occurred in Annual Report 12, when an additional 10,000 was added to the total. Given the total commemorated on other memorials across Egypt, we can assume this increase can be linked to Giza – this, however, was not explicitly set out or explained. See *Twelfth Annual Report of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 1930–1931* (London: HMSO, 1932), p. 46.

³⁶Further research is planned in relation to IWGC operations within Egypt during the next phases of this project.

³⁷TNA, CO 533/216, 'Report by Lieutenant-Colonel O.F. Watkins, Director of Military Labour to the B.E.A. Expeditionary Force on the period from August 4th 1914 to September 12th 1919', pp. 18–19.

350,000. These figures, as a means of comparison, would equate to between 11 and 33 per cent of those currently named in the casualty database for the First World War.

PART 2 - ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE IWGC

i. Establishment, principles and the primacy of the Western Front

The primary driver for the establishment of the IWGC was the enormous human cost of the First World War. Never had the world witnessed a conflict of such reach and bloodiness, and never had so many people of the British Empire been called upon to shoulder the burden of victory. An exceptional war gave birth to an exceptional demand for recognition of the sacrifices made, and it was because of these unique conditions that nothing proposed by the IWGC in 1917 was routine or commonplace. Though it was not unknown for British forces to commemorate victories or venerate leaders, the deceased soldier had historically not received lasting, individual recognition from the state in the form of a burial or memorial. As a result, the very idea of the Commission's work was novel.

Although the stated commitment to commemorate each war casualty by name was generally well received, several other decisions were not without controversy. First among those controversies was the way in which the state appeared to take ownership of the dead. The decision not to repatriate those killed but to commemorate them where they fell had several lasting and profound impacts, the most significant of which was the transformation of former battlefields into cemeteries and memorials fit for the Empire's dead. The objective driving this decision, however, was the pursuit of equality and uniformity in the way in which casualties were commemorated – whatever their rank in social or military life, whatever their religion. On this latter point, it is clear from statements made in the Kenyon Report that the IWGC entertained a commitment to commemorating all the peoples of empire equally and in accordance with their faiths, and the Commission even shared these ideals and objectives in a publication explaining its work.³⁸ Nevertheless, as will be demonstrated, there are examples where the IWGC's interpretation of faith and other factors led it to deliberately treat certain groups differently and unequally.

Despite the global nature of the war and the IWGC's worldwide commitment, it is clear the Commission still prioritised the Western Front battlefields. The principal front and the epicentre of the British Empire's war, it would account for the majority of casualties, and its proximity to the United Kingdom and the cooperation of the French and Belgian authorities encouraged the IWGC's work. As the front closest to the imperial metropolis, and the one most easily connected to the rest of the world via established transport networks, it was also fully expected that people would visit the cemeteries and memorials of the Western Front in far greater numbers than any other former theatre of war.

³⁸Though Kipling's publication contains direct references to the 'Graves of Indian Troops', its focus – as with the rest of the volume – is very much on those killed on the Western Front. The bulk of the Kenyon Report has a similar bias but includes an addendum dated ten months later outlining the extension of the scheme to the other theatres of war. Although this includes references to Egypt, Palestine, Macedonia, Gallipoli and Mesopotamia, African theatres are still not present. Kipling, Rudyard, *The Graves of the Fallen* (London: HMSO, 1919); Kenyon, Lt-Col. Sir Frederic, *War Graves*, pp. 22–4.

Whilst this assumed white visitors above all else, there was also recognition of the fact that the peoples of the Empire had travelled to Europe to fight Britain's war and may well do so again in the name of commemoration.

In the eyes of the organisation, it was, therefore, always the Western Front by which its work would be judged. This principal theatre sucked in global resources during the war and made it the primary focus of the IWGC in its aftermath. With the eyes of the world still upon it, it would be here that the Commission would build its largest and greatest architectural works, reflecting the significance of the war in Europe and its unparalleled cost. This was something the Principal Assistant Secretary, Lord Arthur Browne, would spell out more than once, and would mean that the IWGC's work on the ground outside of Europe in some cases did not begin until the early 1920s.³⁹

Delays in the construction of cemeteries and memorials further afield presented new problems largely born out of distance, communication, local conditions and on-going instability. After the war, Mesopotamia (now Iraq), for example, had briefly been a British mandatory territory by rule of the League of Nations but had reverted to a kingdom under British administration following an uprising and continued unrest. In Africa, on the other hand, the distribution of fighting, remote burials and the challenges of climate presented unique problems compared to the Western Front. Though far from obvious on the surface, in some cases these problems contributed to decisions that led to divergences from the core principles that had directed IWGC operations closer to home.

Until recently, the most detailed studies of the IWGC and its work have focused on its efforts and achievements in Europe. Here, under greater pressure and scrutiny, it is clear the organisation went to great lengths to realise its publicly stated objectives. Where conditions were more challenging and records were limited, or where resources and staff were stretched, it appears that rules and principles that were sacred in Europe could be flexible or even dispensable.

ii. Legacies of wartime burial, graves registration and prejudices in paperwork

Despite the IWGC's role as the organisation responsible for post-war commemoration within the British Empire, prior to September 1921 it was not responsible for locating, marking and concentrating burials on the battlefield. British forces had gone to war without formal processes for ordering and recording graves, something that quickly became problematic when the number of casualties far exceeded expectations. Furthermore, there had been no official organisation to oversee burials or the search for missing men and women. This meant most would be buried by their comrades near to where they fell without the location being officially recorded, whilst others might be buried by the enemy with similar consequences. In Europe, this resulted in isolated graves and makeshift cemeteries with temporary markers, many of which were obliterated by repeated fighting over the same ground. Elsewhere, things were more problematic still. In East Africa, for example, many graves – but particularly those of Indians and Africans – were never marked at all

³⁹CWGC/1/1/7/E/63. 'Letter: Lord Arthur Browne to Secretary, Enquiries Branch', 3 April 1923.

by the military authorities of any fighting force, leaving no physical trace of potentially hundreds of thousands of men.

For those killed and not recovered, the continued disturbance of the battlefield rendered finding them less likely as the churned ground swallowed their bodies. Although the efficiency of graves registration would improve as the war went on, the nature of the fighting meant many casualties could not be recovered before the end of the war. When that came, the passage of time and the cause and mechanism of death left many unidentifiable.

From origins in a British Red Cross ambulance unit, a military organisation dedicated to dealing with the dead received official sanction in 1915. Pioneered by Fabian Ware – the man later responsible for the establishment of the IWGC – what would ultimately become known as the Directorate of Graves Registration and Enquiries (DGRE) was responsible for recovering, registering and concentrating burials into ordered cemeteries and providing durable markers. It would be the Grave Registration Units (GRUs) of this organisation that continued to search the battlefields for the dead and missing in the aftermath of the war. The significance of this arrangement and chronology is important. By June 1919, Fabian Ware reported that 15,000 labourers had been recruited by the DGRE for locating and concentrating graves in France and Belgium, and at the beginning of 1920, 9,000 men were still working in these exhumation companies. By the end of their work the following year, they had concentrated the remains of more than 200,000 casualties.⁴⁰ These teams were responsible for the vast majority of registrations, recoveries and reburials that took place in the theatre. The DGRE's reach obviously stretched far beyond the former Western Front, but nowhere was this manpower equalled.

While comparatively compact and contained battlefields like Gallipoli presented issues resulting from body density, in Mesopotamia and East Africa – where fighting was more mobile and covered vast distances and remote locations – burials that were known to exist were not registered or concentrated for years. The GRU responsible for the latter theatre had just 6 officers and 130 staff members covering more than 650,000 square miles of seven different countries.⁴¹ In terms of resources deployed, the contrast to the Western Front could not be starker, and with hindsight it is no surprise that the outcomes of its work were quite different. While problems faced on the former battlefields of Europe stemmed from the sheer number of casualties and the nature of death, the more remote theatres presented unique challenges when it came to finding and identifying the dead. Climate and inhospitable terrain made some burials impossible to reach, while the destruction of wooden markers by termites or the theft of metal plaques could rob the dead of their identity. The sun could also bleach lettering from name boards, and wild animals and the weather could destroy the evidence of someone's final resting place. Above all else, however, it was the quality of wartime grave marking and time that presented the biggest challenges.

⁴⁰CWGC/2/2/1/13, *Commission Meeting No.13*, 17 June 1919; CWGC/1/1/7/B/47. 'Memo: Brig-Gen E. Gibb', 19 January 1920.

⁴¹*Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire during the Great War*, p. 344

Delays in DGRE graves registration work and IWGC operations on the ground after the war had profound consequences for many Indian and African casualties killed outside of Europe. Far more of these men, however, would be lost because their burials were never appropriately marked in the first place.

While disparities in burial practice and grave registration might mean the final resting places of some casualties would never be marked, failures in administration meant many other casualties were never even reported or properly recorded at all. When the IWGC took possession of the DGRE's paperwork and cemeteries to begin its work, by no means could it account for all the fallen. For reasons already outlined, there were substantial numbers of personnel still missing – which is to say those without an identified grave – but even providing a number for these individuals was difficult. For this information the IWGC was reliant on the service branches and the offices of the colonial, Dominion and British governments, which in turn were reliant on wartime record-keeping. While this process seems to have been relatively successful for British and Dominion casualties, many figures and casualty lists provided by the Indian Army and other authorities appear to have been flawed. Other contemporary lists and sources of information regarding colonial casualties, that are believed to have been available, seem not to have been handed over to the IWGC or actively sought out by the organisation.

Authors and historians have often stated that the IWGC's working figure for those considered missing at the end of the war was approximately 300,000, but – in a further example of Eurocentrism – this figure appears to be very much attached to the Western Front.⁴² In the published annual reports, the numbers of missing actually continued to grow through the 1920s as new information came to light, and by 1934 the IWGC seemed to accept that these figures could never be considered final – for the most part because the dead continued to be found, and sometimes identified. Nonetheless, that year the total 'Number of dead commemorated whose Graves are not known' amounted to nearly 518,000, of which nearly 27,000 were at Gallipoli, more than 56,000 were in India and Iraq, and nearly 67,000 were spread across the continent of Africa (although 58,493 of these were said to be in Egypt and Kenya alone).⁴³

Not only has the focus on this 300,000 figure helped to further the primacy shown to the fighting fronts in France and Belgium, the subtlety of the language elsewhere hides a change from earlier reports, which alongside columns for 'Identified and registered graves' and 'Missing', included a column for the 'total number of names registered'.⁴⁴ Simplifying the structure of the tables to include the number of dead in identified graves and the number of dead whose graves were unknown, avoided the issue

⁴²See, for example, Longworth, Philip, *The Unending Vigil – The History of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2010), p. 84. It is interesting to note here that Longworth's volume, originally published in 1967, provides practically no coverage of the issues outlined in this report, covering the post-war work in Africa in little more than a page. It has played a central role in perpetuating a sanitised version of the organisation's early history.

⁴³*Fifteenth Annual Report of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 1933–1934* (London: HMSO, 1935), pp. 42–5.

⁴⁴*Seventh Annual Report of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 1925–1926* (London: HMSO, 1927), pp. 48–51.

of those whose names remained unknown. With nameless memorials long since completed in East Africa, Egypt and Iraq, it is assumed the IWGC had accepted that in many cases these names would never be known. Where incomplete information had been provided to the Commission, it is also clear that policies enacted by the organisation allowed names to be omitted or to be relegated to registers rather than carved in stone. As has already been discussed, these decisions have prevented the production of a full and final number for the known dead of the British Empire for this war.

Though there were always clear delineations in the remits of the organisations responsible for the handling and commemoration of the dead, even slight scrutiny reveals that in many cases leadership and labour belonged to more than one, or migrated from one to the other. Fabian Ware – the driving force behind the formation of both the DGRE and the IWGC – is perhaps the most obvious case, but further afield lines were equally blurred. Again, East Africa presents an interesting example, where the head of the GRU simply transferred to the IWGC to establish its East Africa Branch. Though this may have appeared to make sense given George Evans' understanding of the theatre and his role in the marking of graves prior to his appointment, it also ensured that his personal prejudices were transferred with him.

PART 3 - ERRORS, OVERSIGHTS AND INJUSTICES

i. Reaction rather than action

Although a truly global organisation maintaining more than 23,000 sites in more than 150 countries and territories, it is the CWGC's cemeteries and memorials in Europe that are the most accessible and most visited. They demonstrate the standards, principles and values the public has come to associate with the CWGC – partly as a result of the way in which the Commission has spoken about its work, but also as a reflection of the importance paid to that theatre during and after both world wars. These sites received the majority of the Commission's resources and time in the aftermath of those conflicts and it is by this work that the Commission has historically been judged. Nonetheless, the nature of the two wars the Commission was established to commemorate means that its task has always been a global one.

In the past few decades there has been no shortage of events and initiatives drawing attention to the CWGC's global presence and, importantly, to the diversity of those in its care. Cemeteries and memorials around the world continue to be maintained to the highest possible standards, and the centenary of the First World War and the seventy-fifth anniversaries of VE-Day and VJ-Day have demonstrated the organisation's ability to engage the public with its history and purpose. Nonetheless, as the findings of this report demonstrate, what these events and initiatives have also shown is how much of the Commission's early history has been sanitised or reimagined over the century of its existence. Rather than any single deliberate act, this can be explained by shifts in focus over time. In the years following the two world wars, the IWGC went through periods defined by intense administrative and technical work as it gathered the names of the dead and built cemeteries and memorials. From this intensity of action, the IWGC effectively morphed into a works organisation whose primary purpose was, in the words of its charter, to maintain these sites in perpetuity. Without the means or apparent necessity to explore its own history, and with its archive originally arranged for administration rather than study, it is no surprise that some of the more challenging problems connected to its early existence were lost from institutional memory.

Time has seen this focus shift again, and the comparatively recent appointment of full-time archivists and historians has begun to change the outlook of the organisation as well as the accessibility of the documents that tell its story. The institution has also not sat idle where issues have come to light. The Port Tewfik memorial in Egypt (now at Heliopolis) was rebuilt and unveiled in 1980 after the original was damaged during the Israeli–Egyptian War of 1967–1973. Unlike the original, however, this now records the names of the 4,000 men it commemorates – all from the Indian Army, lost without known graves in Egypt and Palestine in the First World War. As tables A2, A3 and A5 within Appendix 1 set out, across the late 1990s and early 2000s Indian names were also added to the Nairobi British and Indian Memorial and the Dar es Salaam British and Indian Memorial (both 2004), as well as a number of screen walls at sites in the Middle East, including Beirut Maronite Cemetery

(1997), Tul Karm War Cemetery (1999) and Manara Indian Muslim Cemetery (2002). Prior to this, all these sites had only recorded the number of Indian dead. Similarly, in Nigeria, when the government moved its capital from Lagos to Abuja and constructed a new National Military Cemetery, the CWGC rebuilt two memorials to form the Abuja Memorial. Dedicated to Nigerian dead of both world wars, it now includes the names of the Nigeria Carrier Corps, omitted from the earlier memorial by the colonial government with the consent of the IWGC. Although ongoing issues of security in Iraq have delayed any decisions about next steps, in recent years the CWGC has corrected and confirmed the Indian names held in the memorial registers of the Basra Memorial, which were omitted from the monument at the time of its construction. On a smaller scale, the CWGC also continues to engage with projects that search for those who are not at present commemorated but should be, such as the *In From the Cold Project*.⁴⁵

Nevertheless, despite identifying problems and quietly putting them right, it is fair to say that the CWGC has, historically, not gone looking for them. Similarly, nor has it publicly shared or recorded the majority of flaws it has corrected or acknowledged the fact that these flaws challenged its principles and narrative of equality in death. As well as being more reactive than active, the Commission has arguably also been slow to absorb and engage with the findings of external research that has shown wider-spread problems.⁴⁶

ii. The limits of equality

Equality in death was a cornerstone of IWGC policy and had been the primary reason for the organisation's resistance to repatriation. Only with the dead in the care of a dedicated organisation could their sacrifice be made common and their treatment in death alike. This principle has been widely explored in theory and practice from a social perspective, particularly as regards the relatively small number of next of kin who demanded that they should have the freedom to bring their dead home. Less work has looked at the limitations of equality in death in respect of theatre of war or resulting from race or religion, but this is most likely a result of the success of the policy in Europe. This is not to say that it was only there that the IWGC realised this goal or where it worked to make it a reality, but that the nature of the fighting and the resources devoted there ensured it was achieved. Where conditions and information were less favourable, or where the IWGC needed to work alongside other organisations or authorities, deliberate decisions were sometimes made that allowed the principles of uniformity and equality to be abandoned to the detriment of those being commemorated.

While the war was still being fought, the IWGC had circulated information about its role and purpose to those theatres where it had no presence on the ground. In June 1918 this saw a copy of Kenyon's previously mentioned report sent to the Commander-in-Chief in East Africa, the South African Lieutenant-General Sir Jacob Louis van Deventer. Responding to the report

⁴⁵<http://infromthecold.org/>.

⁴⁶For an outline of this work, see footnote 6.

on 26 October 1918, under the title 'Equality of Treatment', he referred to the large number of Indians and Africans who were buried at battlefield sites but whose graves were unidentifiable. This was perhaps the first mention of this particular issue on the continent, which in reality extended to the majority of African and Indian burials from the war. What followed, however, would ultimately have greater bearing on the way in which many of these men would be commemorated. Van Deventer said that many of the Africans in question had been recruited from ethnic groups who had 'primitive principles and do not bury their dead, their customs being to place the corpse in the bush to be devoured by hyenas'.⁴⁷

A little later, in January 1920, George Evans – the officer commanding the Graves Registration Unit in East Africa and soon to be the IWGC's Deputy Director of Works there – outlined that around 95 per cent of European burials had been located and supplied with temporary metal crosses. The same treatment, he stated, had been impossible for Indians and Africans, largely because they had not been adequately marked during the war. The scale of loss was also alluded to, with an estimate of 50,000 Africans of labour units having died from disease and other causes. Much like van Deventer, he repeated a belief that most Africans 'do not attach any sentiment to marking the graves of their dead', and, as a result, insisted that the construction of central memorials would be a much more effective and economic form of commemoration.⁴⁸ Sweeping judgements such as these, which chose to ignore the intricacies of faith, culture and customs in Africa outside Christian and Islamic traditions, played a significant role in shaping the IWGC policies that led to unequal treatment.⁴⁹

Writing to the IWGC's Director of Records in 1925, Lord Arthur Browne – the organisation's Principal Assistant Secretary – stated that, 'it has always been the view of the Vice-Chairman that identical treatment should be accorded to British and native troops so far as circumstances permit'.⁵⁰ There do not appear to have been hard and fast rules about when circumstances allowed for different treatment, but it is clear that before the war had even ended, the IWGC was aware that absolute equality of treatment in Africa and parts of the Middle East would not be possible for the majority of African and Indian war dead.

Identifying the names of the missing with adequate records from the armed forces and colonial administrations was often just as trying. A Colonial Office memorandum from 1925, for example, noted that the East African force had been largely improvised from local resources, meaning a

⁴⁷The letter was signed on behalf of Van Deventer by one of his staff. CWGC/1/1/7/E/52, 'Letter: GOC-in-C, East African Expeditionary Forces to IWGC Secretary', 26 October 1918, pp. 14–16; <https://www.cwgc.org/media/qyylruql/the-kenyon-report.pdf>, p. 7.

⁴⁸CWGC/1/1/7/E/52, 'Major George Evans, OC GRU East Africa, to IWGC Director of Works', 31 January 1920, pp. 73–4.

⁴⁹Such views, and the plan to construct general memorials across East Africa, were checked and verified by the Colonial Office. See CWGC/1/1/7/E/52, pp. 97–8, 103–4, 118–19.

⁵⁰CWGC/1/1/7/E/67, 'Cemetery Memorial Registers for Natives', 24 November 1925, p. 130.

satisfactory system of record-keeping had not been in place.⁵¹ This does not mean that no records were created or, indeed, that they do not still exist, but that the Colonial Office could not or would not go looking for them.⁵² In cases such as these it would seem that the Commission did not either. Ultimately, whilst the work was undoubtedly difficult, it is also clear that fewer resources were available to these distant theatres and, the bulk of what was available, was spent in the search for European burials. As the examples will show, there were occasions in the 1920s when the IWGC potentially could have located either names or the burial locations of African soldiers, but instead abandoned one or both to pursue a policy of collective commemoration. In contrast, for decades the IWGC pursued the French authorities in Cameroon to locate, mark and concentrate the much smaller number of British burials in that territory.⁵³

In an attempt to mitigate the distance between its head office in London and the work on the ground, in some areas the IWGC established bases of operations closer to the more distant former battlefields. Representatives in these outposts acted as intermediaries between the IWGC and colonial or foreign authorities, working at far greater distances than those on the Western Front. They also worked in more challenging environments and, as a result of this and the slow pace of communication, their decision-making appears at times to have been more pragmatic and less constrained by the rigid principles adhered to in Europe. As Fabian Ware put it in 1922 when working within a colonial setting, if a Governor wanted a form of commemoration which may not altogether be in accord with the Commission's usual policy, 'we should, for many reasons, comply with their wishes and advice as far as possible'.⁵⁴ This statement allowed IWGC officers to stray from the core principles of the organisation's practice, which in turn led to inconsistencies in the application of policy and the treatment of the dead. One clear example of this is the commemoration of the Seychelles Carrier Corps. This force of 791 men, drawn from a total island population of around 24,000, was deployed to German East Africa (now Tanzania) in 1916 and suffered 341 deaths. Of these, 290 died in East Africa (only one with a known grave), 3 died in India and 48 died from disease after returning home in August 1917.⁵⁵ In April 1926 the IWGC agreed to provide headstones for

⁵¹TNA, CAB 24/199/48, 'Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, L.S. Amery, on unclaimed balances of pay for members of the Military Labour Corps', June 1925. It would seem the provision of incomplete records by the War Office also meant that around three-quarters of Cypriots who fell as part of the Macedonian Mule Corps – some 149 men – have not received named commemoration. Our thanks to Dr Andrekos Varnava for sharing this information. See also Varnava, Andrekos, *Serving the Empire in the Great War: The Cypriot Mule Corps, imperial loyalty and silenced memory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).

⁵²There is hope that lists produced by Lt-Col. Oscar Watkins, who founded the Military Labour Bureau and may have recorded the deaths of more than 42,000 men, and other archival materials may still be held within African archives.

⁵³For details, see CWGC/1/1/7/E/65.

⁵⁴CWGC/1/1/7/E/53, 'Letter: Fabian Ware to J.N. Cormack', 23 June 1922, pp. 35–6.

⁵⁵The known grave was in the Dar es Salaam, Pugu Road, 'Native' Christian Cemetery. No headstones were erected within this cemetery as all casualties were commemorated numerically on a screen wall. However, in 1959, this site was deemed to be unmaintainable and this casualty is now commemorated on the Pugu Road Memorial – see CWGC/2/2/1/425, *Commission Meeting No.425*, 21 May 1959, pp. 9–10; <https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/1419807/%20NUR%20MUHAMMAD/#&gid=2&pid=1>; <https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/1419827/%20ADAN%20MUHAMMAD/#&gid=2&pid=1>. The three who died in India were buried in the Bombay (Sewri) cemetery and are now commemorated on the Kirkee Memorial.

the 48 buried at Mont Fleuri in the Seychelles. At the same time, it agreed to erect a memorial within the same cemetery to commemorate, by name, the 289 who had no known graves within East Africa. In a break with the established IWGC policy of commemorating the dead where they fell, this example actively demonstrates this pragmatism – on this occasion to please the governor of the Seychelles who observed that ‘such a memorial in East Africa would have little local interest and would probably never be seen by the relatives’.⁵⁶ Similar concessions would not be granted to the Indians commemorated at Basra, despite a belief that families would not visit and, in 1924, that Iraq was ‘practically inaccessible’, dangerous and ‘not to be recommended to the ordinary relative’ of any soldier.⁵⁷

But perhaps one of the most challenging and complicated aspects of IWGC policy outside of Europe was the way in which religion and understood or assumed funerary rites impacted the treatment of the dead. In Rudyard Kipling’s public statement on the IWGC project in 1919 he noted, ‘in all such matters the treatment of the bodies of ... [Indian] soldiers will be in strict conformity with the practice of their religions’.⁵⁸ Comparatively early in the organisation’s considerations about how it would tackle the issue of the Empire’s dead and therefore at this stage limited to the Indian Army and deaths on the Western Front, it nonetheless highlights an intention to recognise and honour the different ways in which religions dealt with their dead. As already stated, it is clear that those at the top of the IWGC also continued to believe in this broad application of equality in death, with Ware stating as late as 1926 that the aim of the Commission was that ‘all the soldiers of the Empire should be treated alike’.⁵⁹ These words were still probably written with the principal religions of British India in mind – Hinduism, Sikhism and Islam – which brought its own issues when using the word ‘alike’, as two of the three believed in cremation following death. In most cases, however, this particular issue was solved by the establishment of cremation memorials carrying the names of the dead, but not all examples of this sort bear up to scrutiny.

Despite the spread of the Islamic faith and isolated but extensive missionary work pushing the uptake of Christianity, religious practice across the continent of Africa was far from uniform or straightforward. IWGC attempts to meet the requirements of faith on that continent, or a perceived lack thereof, appear in many circumstances to have been used to justify different treatment, and it is here that the greatest issues are confronted. Fundamentally, these policies might be described as attempts to differentiate between those seen to practise an established, conventional religion or to come from that tradition, and those seen to hold ‘pagan’ beliefs or to be entirely without religion. Far from exclusively being IWGC thinking, this mind-set appears to have been entrenched imperial policy. For example, although a pension system was constructed for men disabled or killed while

⁵⁶CWGC/2/2/1/87, *Commission Meeting No.87*, 14 April 1926, p. 10.

⁵⁷CWGC/1/1/7/E/77, ‘Lecture delivered by Colonel Durham (Director of Works)’, 5 May 1924, pp. 14–16.

⁵⁸Kipling, *The Graves of the Fallen*, p. 13.

⁵⁹CWGC/2/2/1/88, *Commission Meeting No.88*, 12 May 1926, p. 8.

serving in the Military Labour Bureau, support for the dependants of these men was only made available if the individual had been 'a professing Christian or Mohammedan'.⁶⁰

Firmly rooted in the imperial project, these policies were influenced by contemporary ideals of progress and civilisation – ideals that were intrinsically bound up in the hierarchies of race and religion that underpinned empire. It was partly for this reason that units such as the West India Regiment, British West Indies Regiment and South African 'coloured' units were regarded as 'Europeans' rather than 'natives' in the eyes of IWGC policy-makers of the 1920s.⁶¹ From long-established colonies with Christian traditions, these men would receive individual forms of named commemoration wherever possible and, in that regard, many enjoyed greater equality in death than they did in life. IWGC policy in Africa in the 1920s, however, reflected wider imperial thinking by creating a hierarchy of commemorations, which treated distinct ethnic and religious groups differently. Although the organisation sought advice from the India Office, the Indian Army and the Indian colonial administration on how best to deal with Indian dead, Africa presented a more complex issue. Advice sought from British colonial administrators and military officials took little or no heed of what must have been extremely broad ethnic customs, the vast majority of which fell outside recognised or understood religious norms. They were, instead, 'pagan' or 'uncivilised', arguments that were used to support different treatment of the dead where the communities in question were said to be indifferent to – or even suspicious of – individual burial and the marking of graves.

The following evidence extracted primarily from the CWGC's archives, outlines examples where the commemoration of war dead has differed. The divergences from the ideals outlined previously largely fall into the following, broad categories:

- The names of the dead and their burial locations were known to the Commission, but both were abandoned in place of commemoration on general, nameless memorials.
- The names of the dead and their burial locations were known to the Commission, but burials were abandoned in place of named central memorials.
- The names of the dead were known to the Commission but not the place of burial; commemoration on memorials was by number alone, with names held in memorial registers.
- The names of the dead and places of burial were unknown to the Commission, which resorted to commemoration by general, nameless memorials.

As will be shown, a variety of reasons drove the decisions to treat individuals and groups differently in death, some of which were forced upon the IWGC and some of which were of its own making.

⁶⁰TNA, CO 534/40/10, 'Annexure to Force Order No.44, Military Labour Corps Pensions', 29 August 1919, p. 52.

⁶¹See, for example, CWGC/1/1/9/D/28, 'Letter: Director of Records to Browne on "Missing" African Native Soldiers', 19 May 1924, p. 168; CWGC/1/1/9/D/29, 'Browne to Director of Records on Commemoration of Natives in East Africa', 2 October 1925, pp. 28–9.

While in certain examples these differences show the IWGC making the most of a bad situation, in others they show that the organisation justified discriminatory decisions based on religious prejudice, the perceived likelihood of commemorative pilgrimage by relatives and the alleged value – or lack thereof – that standard forms of commemoration would have for an individual or group. While in the vast majority of cases it did not make these decisions unilaterally, it was at the very least complicit in all of them, and these decisions place the IWGC firmly within the machinery of the British Empire and the inbuilt prejudices that came with it. The following examples show how some casualties were denied named commemoration where it was possible, and how many others were deliberately treated differently to all the war dead in Europe and to European war dead elsewhere. In short, these men were deprived of the equality in death that the IWGC had promised.

iii. Categorisation and examples

The names of the dead and their burial locations were known to the Commission, but both were abandoned in place of commemoration on general, nameless memorials.

Central to the stated principles of the CWGC is the commemoration of each war casualty by name on either a headstone or memorial to the missing maintained in perpetuity. This preliminary research has identified cases where the IWGC did not adhere to this policy, with places of burial and the names of the dead having been in the possession of the organisation but deliberately not acted upon.

Portuguese East Africa, now Mozambique, was the largest non-British territory within East Africa to hold a substantial number of British Empire war graves from the First World War. While the exact reported total varied, the number of 'identified burials' listed within the IWGC Annual Reports for the territory dropped from 510 in 1924-5 to 277 in 1925-6. 'Identified' in this case did not necessarily mean locatable, and it is likely that this information was originally provided by the Graves Registration Unit, which in the vast majority of cases complained that African graves had never been properly marked during the war and took no steps to rectify this.⁶² It is assumed the considerable reduction is connected to the number of graves that could positively be identified when the decision was taken between 1925 and 1926 to abandon all the outlying cemeteries as a result of their remoteness and the fact that many were in 'dangerous and unhealthy' parts of the country. Where a place of burial but not an actual grave location was known, it was ultimately decided to abandon the sites.⁶³ Those left behind were invariably African or Indian and this decision included, but was not limited to, burials within the cemeteries set out in Table 3.1.⁶⁴

⁶²CWGC/1/1/7/E/52, 'Major George Evans, OC GRU East Africa, to IWGC Director of Works', 31 January 1920, pp. 73–4.

⁶³CWGC/1/1/7/E/55, 'Report by F. Green to J.N. Cormack', 16 November 1926, pp. 28–9; CWGC/1/1/7/E/55.1, 'J.N. Cormack to the British Consul General, Lourenco Marques', 17 August 1925, pp. 100–1; CWGC/1/1/7/E/55.1, 'Telegram from J.N. Cormack to Director of Works', 5 November 1926, p. 280; CWGC/1/1/9/D/32, 'J.N. Cormack to Fabian Ware', 23 November 1925, p. 157.

⁶⁴The figures in this table are compiled from two sources: CWGC/1/1/7/E/55.1, 'J.N. Cormack to British Consul General Lourenco Marques', 22 September 1922, pp. 56–61; see also the Grave Registration Reports at CWGC/1/1/7/E/55, pp. 40–57.

Table 3.1: List of abandoned cemeteries in Portuguese East Africa (now Mozambique)

Cemetery	Indians	Cape Corps	Africans
Ankuabe	1		12
Balama			7
Bandari			50
Chinga			6
Inkinjiri			3
Koronje			3
Medo	3		5
Meza			5
Monapo			2
Mtarica		5	
Mwalia			1
Mwembe		2	
Namala			1
Namarika Rock			5
Nambari			4
Nampula	1		2
Natovi	1		17
Wanakote			5

Though European burials in these locations were generally in separate cemeteries, they had, nonetheless, usually been adjoined. In the cases of the cemeteries mentioned in Table 3.1, all the British burials were concentrated to permanent cemeteries and were provided with individual headstones.⁶⁵ The non-European casualties who remained in the adjoining cemeteries were commemorated on a variety of different memorials, the nature of which depended on ethnicity. For example, five Cape Corps soldiers buried at Mtarica Cemetery were commemorated, by name, on a 'Kipling memorial' erected within Pemba Cemetery.⁶⁶ This largely tallies with IWGC thinking,

⁶⁵CWGC/1/1/7/E/55.1, 'Handwritten note to J.N. Cormack', 26 June 1922, p. 55.

⁶⁶A Kipling or Special Memorial was used to reference a grave or graves that were no longer identifiable but whose whereabouts were once known. The two Cape Corps soldiers in Mwembe are commemorated by a Kipling memorial in Mangochi Town Cemetery, Malawi. See <https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/904884/ARTHUR%20COOK/#&gid=1&pid=3>; <https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/904677/J%20VALENTINE/#&gid=1&pid=1>.

which was to treat these South Africans as Europeans where possible. The Indian burials, save for two who were omitted, were commemorated numerically only on the Dar es Salaam British and Indian Memorial.⁶⁷ The West African dead were, by quirk of decisions made by colonial administrations, commemorated by name on the memorials erected within their respective countries, while the East African dead were commemorated on general, nameless memorials at Nairobi, Mombasa and Dar es Salaam. These last memorials do not have registers containing the names of the East African soldiers and followers they commemorate, meaning their names do not, at present, feature anywhere.

A similar process occurred within other areas in East Africa, albeit in a less concerted manner, as the names of Africans who had known but unidentifiable burials in non-permanent cemeteries were often abandoned in this way during the concentration process. Undertaken as a means of consolidating the Commission's estate, and thereby reducing the costs associated with permanently maintaining 3,519 graves in 295 cemeteries spread out over 500,000 square miles, IWGC officials in the 1920s saw the concentration process as necessary. As a result of this and standing policies, race and then religion dictated the likelihood of exhumation.⁶⁸ For example, a 1922 report on the Rufiji River Cemetery in Tanganyika (now Tanzania) recorded a total of 36 burials.⁶⁹ In October 1924, the remains of 22 British, South African, Cape Corps and British West Indies Regiment soldiers were exhumed and concentrated from this site to Morogoro Cemetery, leaving the rest behind to 'revert to nature'. It is unknown if any of the remaining 14 burials were ever marked, but by this time the Commission had already decided that African soldiers in these circumstances would be 'allowed to disappear' because 'no records had been kept of the graves'.⁷⁰ For the most part, this meant no records at all – the majority being completely unaccounted for after the war – but it also extended to these sites where burials of named Africans were known to exist but the locations within the cemeteries were unmarked or deemed to be unlocatable.

The one exception to this policy when applied to African dead in outlying cemeteries was evidence that a casualty practised an accepted and recognised religion in the eyes of the IWGC – normally Christianity or Islam. The significance of this point appears to have varied, sometimes leading to more equal treatment, but generally without consistency. For example, in a 'summary of Native and Indian decisions' sent to the IWGC's Registrar on the 27 July 1925, reference was made to a June decision in relation to burials at Kipenio Cemetery in Tanganyika (now Tanzania). Here two black South Africans were provided with a 'Kipling Memorial' in Morogoro as they had been identified as practising Christians. Another African buried at Mpangas received a similar memorial at Morogoro.⁷¹

⁶⁷In 2003 the CWGC changed the panels on this memorial to include the names of the Indian dead, where it had previously only recorded the number lost by unit. The Indian names had been held in registers alone up to this point.

⁶⁸For information on concentration decisions, see files CWGC/1/1/7/E/56 and CWGC/1/1/7/E/57.

⁶⁹See the table at CWGC/1/1/7/E/56, p. 9.

⁷⁰CWGC/1/1/7/E/57, 'Registrar to Director of Records on Concentration, East Africa', 21 June 1923, p. 16; CWGC/1/1/9/D/29, 'Director of Records to Registrar', 26 June 1925.

⁷¹CWGC/1/1/9/D/29, 'Report on Native and Indian decisions', 27 July 1925, p. 18; CWGC/1/1/9/D/29, 'J.N. Cormack to Director of Records on Kipenio Cemetery', 19 June 1925, p. 20.

It is known that other African burials existed at these sites, but it can only be assumed that they were allowed to 'revert to nature', with their commemoration shifted to the general, nameless memorials.⁷² Rufiji River Cemetery, again, presents an interesting and contradictory example as, in June 1925, the IWGC's Registrar wrote to the Director of Records pointing out that two of the Africans left there – 'Hospital Boy Zenzuriguiza' and 'Cape Boy William' – were known to be Christians and enquired whether the IWGC's East Africa Branch might be asked to find and concentrate their bodies. In response, the Director of Records recommended that no action be taken as, whilst their religion was accepted, 'we cannot begin to distinguish on that ground'.⁷³ Their places of burial and names were, along with those of unknown religions, abandoned by the IWGC.

Within some permanent cemeteries, there are also examples of African graves being intentionally left unmarked. This is seen at Beira Christian Cemetery in Portuguese East Africa (now Mozambique), where 18 named 'Native African Soldiers' had clearly identified grave locations included in the cemetery register, details that were later crossed through. Rather than mark these graves individually, it was indicated that these men were to be commemorated by the nameless Dar es Salaam African Memorial.⁷⁴ Only white South African and European graves now remain at Beira. Similarly, at Zomba Town Cemetery in Nyasaland (now Malawi), there are two soldiers of the Rhodesia Native Regiment who were, in the 1920s, 'counted as graves for statistical purposes, and as "missing" for commemoration'.⁷⁵ Whilst the graves in Zomba were not marked, the names were known, but they were not included in the cemetery register or on a memorial. In both instances, the reason individual headstones were not provided can be linked to a general ruling that stipulated that African 'natives' buried within permanent cemeteries would be commemorated collectively rather than individually.⁷⁶ In the case of Zomba, but equally applicable elsewhere, it was also noted by the Director of Records in 1925 that:

P.A.S. [Principal Assistant Secretary, Arthur Browne] is of opinion that Cape Boys should be treated in all respects as British Soldiers, but that in the case of native African soldiers, who will be commemorated by certain Collective Memorials, headstones should not be erected unless we are obliged to do so, and we should not undertake research with a view to identification.⁷⁷

For those buried within Beira, a memorial including their names was erected at Pemba Cemetery in 2019. The two men buried at Zomba are among the new cases uncovered by this Committee and

⁷²See table at CWGC/1/1/7/E/56, pp. 6, 8.

⁷³CWGC/1/1/9/D/28, 'Registrar to Director of Records on Rufiji River Cemetery', 27 June 1925, p. 270; CWGC/1/1/9/D/29, 'Director of Records to Registrar on Rufiji River Cemetery', 30 June 1925, p. 23.

⁷⁴Very little information seems to have been known about these casualties and their service, which may have influenced the decision to commemorate them collectively. See the Cemetery register at <https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/904788/%20MIR%20ZAMAN/#&gid=1&pid=4>.

⁷⁵See the Grave Registration Report at <https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/6000539/JULIUS%20BARTHELIS/#&gid=1&pid=1>.

⁷⁶CWGC/1/1/7/E/56, 'Recommended policy for African Natives', c.1921–22, pp. 49–50.

⁷⁷CWGC/1/1/9/D/29, 'Director of Works to Registrar on Zomba Cemetery', 22 June 1925, p. 21.

are thus awaiting similar treatment. In the eyes of the IWGC in 1920, all of these casualties were collectively commemorated on the general, nameless memorials erected across East Africa.

The names of the dead and their burial locations were known to the Commission, but burials were abandoned in place of named central memorials.

In the vast majority of cases, the IWGC never knew the burial locations of the 500,000 casualties of the First World War it ultimately regarded as missing. For the most part this was because those casualties never received a formal or registered burial, or because the place of burial was destroyed or lost during the war. However, there were occasions when known burials were 'sent missing', which is to say they were deliberately lost, placing them in the same category as the majority of non-European burials in Africa. There appear to be two variations to this category across the IWGC's estate. The first was the erection of collective memorials within permanent cemeteries rather than individual headstones for those buried. The second was named commemoration on central, public memorials even though individual gravesites were known – a dynamic particularly prominent within West Africa, which was driven largely by colonial authorities.

Variation 1 – collective commemoration in permanent cemeteries

This policy was generally applied to Indian burials within East Africa, Egypt and Palestine. These were theatres of war in which the Indian Army was particularly active, suffering over 8,000 casualties combined. Since its establishment, the IWGC had looked for a suitable policy for the treatment of Indian dead that would respect the various religions of those who fought. Indeed, at the Commission's second meeting in February 1918, the Under-Secretary of State for India, Lord Islington, argued that 'there should be nothing in the nature of disparity between cemeteries of Indians and those of Christians'.⁷⁸ As a result, after discussions with the India Office, in September 1920 it was agreed that all Indian burials within Europe would be commemorated 'by individual headstones where identified graves exist'.⁷⁹ However, in December 1920, the IWGC was informed by General Sir Herbert Vaughan Cox of the Indian Army that, within Egypt, 'there should not be individual headstones on Indian graves but a central memorial marking the ground in which the Indians had been buried'.⁸⁰

General Cox had been an officer in the Indian army since the 1880s and had commanded an Indian brigade during the First World War in Arabia, Egypt and Gallipoli. In 1917 he was appointed secretary to the military department in the India Office, and as a representative for the Secretary of State to India had been involved with the IWGC from its inception. At the behest of the IWGC, in November and December 1920 Cox had toured seven Indian cemeteries in Egypt – Alexandria, Abbasiya, Ismailia, Suez, Port Said and two at Kantara, collectively commemorating over 700 burials or cremations – to make suggestions about the appropriate form of commemoration. Based upon the

⁷⁸CWGC/2/2/1/2, *Commission Meeting No.2*, 20 November 1917.

⁷⁹CWGC/2/2/1/26, *Commission Meeting No.26*, 21 September 1920, pp. 6–7; CWGC/1/1/7/E/56, 'Indian graves in Macedonia', 15 December 1921, p. 62.

⁸⁰CWGC/2/2/1/28, *Commission Meeting No.28*, 20 December 1920, p. 4.

recommendations of the Council of India, he suggested that names only needed to be recorded on nominal rolls and tablets, as Muslims and Hindus placed 'no importance' on the names of the deceased being recorded on an individual grave. At only two sites – the Alexandria Indian Cemetery (containing 112 Muslim graves) and Port Said (containing 24 Muslim graves) – did he specifically report that identification of the graves was 'in most cases impossible'.⁸¹ Following these recommendations, in August 1921 the IWGC agreed that Indian graves in Egypt and Palestine would not receive individual headstones, and that instead 'in each cemetery where identified graves exist' a central memorial bearing their names would be erected.⁸² However, as Table A5 within Appendix 1 shows, when these cemetery memorials were actually erected, the names of the Indian dead were only included in the cemetery registers, as the memorials themselves simply referred to the number buried nearby.

Although he was drawing on the recommendations of the Council of India, Cox remained hugely influential in this process, as the IWGC and its local committee in Egypt effectively devolved all responsibility to him.⁸³ Whilst Cox did seek advice from a Sikh and Dogra officer regarding the best treatment for those cremated, and must have been well versed in various customs given his lengthy service, the non-erection of headstones for others was born out of a specifically British understanding of Indian burial customs, with no evidence of consultation. Indeed, the committee established to act as the IWGC's agent in Egypt was made up entirely of British representatives – four drawn from various government departments and two army officers.⁸⁴ Although IWGC policy would always need to be dictated by the needs of the majority rather than the wants of the individual, it is interesting to note that there is even evidence to suggest some Sikhs were willing to eschew cremation if burial would provide a headstone and more personal commemoration.⁸⁵ Nevertheless, though exceptions exist, collective rather than individual commemoration became standard IWGC policy for the treatment of all Indians, regardless of religion, outside of Europe.⁸⁶ This was partly influenced by the belief that Indians would not undertake commemorative pilgrimages to these sites like they might those in Europe, but it is likely that the potential for cost savings was not lost on the British Indian government, which repeatedly worked with the IWGC to find ways to reduce this burden.

In some circumstances, a similar approach was adopted for African burials in permanent cemeteries, for which further recommendations were produced, again likely between 1921-2. As with Indian

⁸¹CWGC/1/1/9/D/12, 'Report by General Cox to IWGC Principal Secretary', 30 December 1920, pp. 36–40; CWGC/1/1/7/E/56, 'Extract from the Minutes of the Fifteenth Meeting of the Anglo-Egyptian War Cemeteries Committee', 29 November 1920, p. 60.

⁸²CWGC/2/2/1/36, *Commission Meeting No.36*, 1921, pp. 2–3.

⁸³CWGC/2/2/1/27, *Commission Meeting No.27*, 13 October 1920, p. 2; CWGC/1/1/9/D/12, 'Report by General Cox', p. 40.

⁸⁴The Committee members in December 1920, when Cox outlined his report, were Mr J. Langley, Mr C. de Cosson, Dr W. Hastings, Mr A. Holden, Major F. Athill and Major R. Hilson. The first four were involved in the first Anglo-Egyptian committee, established in 1918, which also had as a member the Deputy Assistant Director of the DGRE, Eastern Branch, Major Palmer, see CWGC/2/2/1/3, *Commission Meeting No.3*, 24 July 1918, p. 1; for 1920 composition, see CWGC/2/2/1/28, *Commission Meeting No.28*, 20 December 1920, pp. 3–5.

⁸⁵See Basu, Shrabani, *For King and Another Country, Indian soldiers on the Western Front 1914–18* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).

⁸⁶CWGC/1/1/7/E/56, 'Recommended approach to Indian burials', c.1921–22, p. 48.

graves, where African burials were within the selected permanent cemeteries, these graves would be grouped and marked by shared tablets – the two exceptions being for ‘Christian Natives’ and for Cape Corps and British West Indies Regiment (BWIR) burials, which were to be treated as Europeans. It is worth noting, however, that even these exceptions were not uniformly applied. For example, within Morogoro Cemetery in Tanganyika (now Tanzania), the marked graves of 49 soldiers and followers within the ‘Native Christian’ portion – including two Cape Corps burials and one for a soldier of the BWIR – were ‘obliterated’.⁸⁷ Whilst a proposal had been made to ‘quietly’ move and mark with individual headstones the five who were believed to be Christians, this was dropped when nearly all the casualties in the section were authenticated as such.⁸⁸ Instead, irrespective of policies specific to religion or unit, no individual headstones were provided for these casualties within this portion of the cemetery and named commemoration was done collectively by tablets.⁸⁹ A further 16 BWIR and 59 Cape Corps casualties were already buried within the main Christian section of the Cemetery rather than the ‘native’ portion, and here they received individual headstones, in line with standard IWGC policy.

Standard policies also dictated that African burials outside the permanent cemeteries would only be considered candidates for exhumation and concentration if they were authenticated as practising Christians or Muslims. To guard against ‘arousing Native superstition’, it was decided that the remains of all other African soldiers and carriers would not be interfered with and the ground in which they stood would be allowed to revert to its natural state as rapidly as possible. In East Africa, monuments to these men were originally planned for Nairobi, Mombasa, Kampala, Dar es Salaam and Zomba, ‘designed and inscribed so that they may be an evident tribute to all the Native Africans, including Carriers, who gave service to the Allies and died through war operations’.⁹⁰ While these policies were not always applied uniformly, they speak of a general approach adopted by the IWGC in East Africa and the Middle East in the 1920s, of which evidence is widespread.

Variation 2 – collective commemoration on central memorials

At the 75th Commission meeting in March 1925, Fabian Ware stated that there were 109 graves in British Somaliland that required attention: 2 European, 32 Somali and 75 Indian. The Europeans would receive individual headstones, but for the Somalis and Indians:

⁸⁷Of this number, 48 were identified and named. The term ‘obliterated’ was used by the IWGC to describe how a grave had, or would be, smoothed over so it was no longer visible. In some cases, this was done by the army or IWGC, in their eyes to protect the grave from desecration where it was deemed immediately vulnerable or ultimately unmaintainable. This practice was known to have occurred in some circumstances in East Africa, Persia, Mesopotamia and along the North West Frontier of India. See, for example, CWGC/2/2/1/57, *Commission Meeting No.57*, 18 July 1923, pp. 8–9.

⁸⁸CWGC/1/1/9/D/29, ‘Report on rulings for Indian and Native burials’, 27 July 1925, p. 18.

⁸⁹CWGC/1/1/7/E/56, ‘Report by the Director of Works to Financial Adviser on East Africa Construction, 1st Programme’, 16 August 1922, pp.21–6; CWGC/1/1/7/E/56, ‘Recommendations on African native burials’, c.1921–2, pp. 49–50; see also the Grave Registration Report at <https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/124552/PIET%20MOTLAKOANE/#&gid=1&pid=1>.

⁹⁰CWGC/1/1/7/E/56, ‘Recommendations on African native burials’, c.1921–22, pp. 49–50.

The Acting-Governor considered it undesirable to erect headstones on the graves of the Somalis owing to religious prejudices. The same reason applied to the graves of Indians in Somaliland, who were all Mahomedans, the Hindus having presumably been cremated. The graves were scattered throughout the Protectorate in cemeteries none of which could be properly maintained. Climatic conditions were also believed to be against the erection of headstones.

For these reasons, the acting governor proposed that the Indians and Somalis should be commemorated on tablets, which would be erected in the Fort at Burao. Sir Alexander Cobbe, representing the Secretary of State for India, added that he 'thought they should accept the views of the local governor ... [as] conditions in the country were difficult'. With the support of the IWGC Commissioners, this approach was approved.⁹¹ As such, although many Indians and Somalis were buried in cemeteries with marked and identifiable graves, it was decided not to provide individual headstones.⁹² To date, there are 114 names currently registered on the Commission's database for Somalia: five are British officers with marked graves, the remaining are commemorated on the Berbera Memorial.

Within Gold Coast (now Ghana), Nigeria and Sierra Leone, which had around 600 burials combined, no African fatality of the First World War is commemorated with a headstone. The IWGC had no officials on the ground in West Africa and instead worked through the local administrations, ultimately adopting a policy that would see that 'all known European graves in West Africa will have headstones and all Natives (whether buried in known graves or not) will be commemorated on memorials'.⁹³ This decision was informed by different factors but, critically, was largely dictated by the colonial regimes of West Africa. One of the most significant issues forcing the Commission's hand was that many of the main monuments – four in Nigeria and one in Gold Coast – were not built by the organisation. These unit memorials, paid for via public subscription and erected by the colonial governments, commemorate by name the soldiers of the Nigeria Regiment and Gold Coast Regiment, regardless of whether they had a known burial. The contradictions and inconsistencies shown in commemorative practice here are novel because in both cases it was the governors who opposed the erection of individual headstones, and it was their wishes that were enacted in contradiction of IWGC principles.

IWGC records from April 1923 show there were burials for 7 'white officers' and 108 'natives' within Gold Coast. A later report raised the total number of British burials to ten, each of which is now marked with a Commission headstone.⁹⁴ In contrast, each of the 108 African dead is commemorated by name on the Kumasi memorial. Yet initially at least, the IWGC pushed the Gold Coast authorities to consider marking those African graves which were thought to be identifiable. This process started

⁹¹CWGC/2/2/1/75, *Commission Meeting No.75*, 11 March 1925, pp. 9–10.

⁹²See, for example, <https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/1419807/%20NUR%20MUHAMMAD/#&gid=2&pid=1>; <https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/1419827/%20ADAN%20MUHAMMAD/#&gid=2&pid=1>.

⁹³CWGC/1/1/7/E/62, 'Browne to Captain King on West Africa', 4 September 1930, pp. 110–11.

⁹⁴CWGC/1/1/7/E/67, 'Memo: P.A.S., Arthur Browne', 4 April 1923, p. 4; CWGC/1/1/7/E/62, 'Summary of Graves', 6 December 1929, p. 101.

in August 1922 when the Governor of the Gold Coast, F.G. Guggisberg, informed the Colonial Office that a central memorial for the dead of the Gold Coast Regiment was planned for Kumasi. This decision was claimed to be in line with a June 1921 despatch circulated to British territories by that office and signed by Winston Churchill, the then Secretary of State for the Colonies. Sent on behalf of the IWGC and lifting much of its content from earlier correspondence sent to the Colonial Office by Arthur Browne, this circular stated that collective memorials rather than individual headstones should be erected for Africans in Africa.⁹⁵ Despite his role in shaping the despatch, Browne responded to Guggisberg stating that whilst 'this suggestion would be in accordance with the practice of this Commission in other parts of Africa where the graves of natives are not recorded, but inasmuch as identified graves would appear to exist in most cases in Gold Coast Territories, the question is one which requires consideration ... with the Governor'.⁹⁶

The pressure to reconsider the approach in Gold Coast appears to be unique and was most likely connected to the lack of progress already made there. This contrasted somewhat with interactions in Nigeria, where the governor, Sir Hugh Clifford, was already overseeing the construction of a number of regimental memorials.⁹⁷ When Browne wrote to Clifford in 1923 setting out the role of the IWGC and outlining the options of individual and collective commemoration for the 294 Africans buried in Nigeria, the Governor was resolute that the latter would suffice.⁹⁸ With the potential to alter the decision in the Gold Coast, Browne organised a meeting with Guggisberg in London on the 18 May 1923, where Guggisberg claimed that:

the average native of the Gold Coast would not understand or appreciate a headstone and that the original suggestion of the O.C. Troops, viz:- a central statue of a soldier of the Gold Coast Regiment – was a more reasonable suggestion. Such a memorial would be understood and greatly appreciated by the tribes from whom the majority of the men in the Regiment were recruited.

In a response showing what he may have considered foresight, but one that was explicitly framed by contemporary racial prejudice, Browne stated that, 'in perhaps two or three hundred years' time, when the native population had reached a higher stage of civilisation, they might then be glad to see that headstones had been erected on the native graves and that the native soldiers had received precisely the same treatment as their white comrades'. Like Clifford, however, Guggisberg remained satisfied with the idea of collective commemoration.⁹⁹

⁹⁵CWGC/1/1/7/E/67, 'Letter: F.G. Guggisberg to Winston Churchill', 9 August 1922, p. 81; for the Colonial Office despatch and Browne's influence on it, see, CWGC/1/1/7/A/10, pp. 17–18, 28–9.

⁹⁶CWGC/1/1/7/E/67, 'Letter: Browne to the Under-Secretary of State, Colonial Office', 5 April 1923, p. 89.

⁹⁷CWGC/1/1/7/E/63, 'Report: Graves in Nigeria', 27 August 1924, pp. 169–72.

⁹⁸CWGC/1/1/7/E/63, 'Letter: Browne to Governor of Nigeria', 12 April 1923, pp. 128–32; in response, the IWGC was informed that as memorials with names were already under construction at Zaria, Lokoja, Ibadan and Calabar, 'the erection of individual memorials to African soldiers is unnecessary' – CWGC/1/1/7/E/63, 'Letter: Government of Nigeria to IWGC', 11 January 1924, pp. 140–3. Of the 294 Nigerians who were known to be buried within Nigeria, 114 were buried across 18 cemeteries, and 180 were buried across 54 grave sites, see CWGC/1/1/7/E/63, 'Registrar to Director of Records on Graves in Nigeria', 24 December 1925, p. 243.

⁹⁹CWGC/1/1/7/E/67, 'Browne interview with Sir Frederick Guggisberg', 18 May 1923, p. 95.

Despite further attempts by Browne, in June 1925 the Commission received a report stating that most 'native' burial locations in Gold Coast were no longer identifiable.¹⁰⁰ As the Kumasi Memorial was accepted as an adequate form of commemoration, those grave sites which remained were left unmarked and the names of those commemorated were transferred to the Kumasi Memorial register.¹⁰¹ The reason for this, as Arthur Browne ultimately put it in November 1925, was that keeping their names in the cemetery registers, too, would 'be unnecessarily drawing attention to the fact that we have neglected to commemorate by a headstone'.¹⁰² This process appears to have been very effective, as by 1930 no African burials were recorded within the Gold Coast.¹⁰³ Oddly, the same tidying up does not seem to have taken place in Nigeria, where in June 1930 the Director of Works asked whether he should be marking the 5 Nigerians buried in Kaduna cemetery and the 9 (out of a total of 29) still identifiable in Ikoyi cemetery.¹⁰⁴ As their names had long since been sent for commemoration to the Ibadan memorial in line with local policy, this enquiry went no further.

The IWGC was not the driving force behind the forms of commemoration ultimately pursued in Somalia and West Africa. In fact, despite outlining its own decisions in East Africa, it is clear the Commission expected the local authorities in Nigeria and Gold Coast to mark the graves of all their fallen soldiers – African and European – as they appeared to be 'known in every case'. Nonetheless, in line with Fabian Ware's instruction for the Commission to align itself with the needs or desires of colonial administrations, the IWGC worked against its own principles and made itself complicit in a deliberate decision to commemorate African dead unequally.¹⁰⁵

The names of the dead were known to the Commission but not the place of burial; commemoration on memorials was by number alone, with names held in memorial registers.

Examples of this category can be seen on memorials erected to the Indian Army in Egypt, East Africa and Iraq, and for those erected for certain African dead in Nigeria and Sierra Leone. In the case of the former, the decision not to include names was shaped by a number of linked issues but was driven primarily by cost saving on the part of the British–Indian authorities, by a lack of satisfactory records and by the belief that these sites would never be visited by mourning Indians. In the case of West African dead, it was shaped more by colonial authorities and a perceived 'lack of civilisation' or interest amongst the carriers who were excluded.

¹⁰⁰CWGC/1/1/7/E/67, 'Letter: Browne to Governor of Gold Coast', 29 May 1923, pp. 96–100; CWGC/1/1/7/E/67, 'Letter: Director of Records to Browne on Graves in the Gold Coast', 9 June 1925, p. 123.

¹⁰¹See CWGC/1/1/7/E/67, 'Correspondence between Director of Records and M.M. Branch (Memorials to the Missing Branch)', 29 April 1929 – 1 May 1929, pp. 191–7; CWGC/1/1/7/E/62, 'Director of Records to Browne on Memorials in West Africa', 2 October 1928, pp. 47–9.

¹⁰²CWGC/1/1/7/E/67, 'Letter: Browne to Director of Records', 24 November 1925, p. 130.

¹⁰³CWGC/1/1/7/E/62, 'Summary of Graves', pp. 96–103.

¹⁰⁴CWGC/1/1/7/E/63, 'Director of Works to Browne regarding commemoration of burials in Nigeria and the Gold Coast', 12 June 1930, p. 371; for the list of names of those buried in the Lagos Ikoyi cemetery, see the Grave Registration Reports at CWGC/1/1/7/E/63, pp. 63–5; Including those mentioned, a total of 72 'native' graves were still listed in the report for Nigeria, spread out across 11 cemeteries, see CWGC/1/1/7/E/62, 'Summary of Graves', pp. 96–8.

¹⁰⁵CWGC/1/1/7/E/53, 'Letter: Fabian Ware to J.N. Cormack', 23 June 1922, pp. 35–6.

In October 1925, the IWGC Director of Records wrote to the Principal Assistant Secretary clearly stating the Commission's policy regarding the commemoration of Indian personnel, who would be treated the same as British soldiers in Europe, Gallipoli, Somaliland and India. However, in Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Iraq and East Africa (with the exception of Dar es Salaam), Indian cemeteries would be marked with central memorials, while outlying graves and the missing would be commemorated numerically on memorials.¹⁰⁶ These policies can be seen in practice on the original Port Tewfik Memorial, which commemorated the 4,000 Indian dead from the campaign in Egypt and Palestine who had no known grave. In the early 1920s it seems the IWGC worked on the assumption that the names of these soldiers would be inscribed, however, when it was unveiled in 1926, they appeared only in the memorial register – the panels carried just the number of dead and regimental titles.¹⁰⁷

Around the same time the Indian government was also involved in conversations concerning memorials to the missing in Gallipoli, East Africa and Mesopotamia, where it ultimately agreed to the construction of combined British and Indian monuments. Driven primarily by reasons of economy sought by the British–Indian administration, these shared memorials promised to lessen the burden on their finances. Given the discussions underway elsewhere, the IWGC questioned whether these memorials would include the names of the missing or general statements of numbers and regiments. In response, General Cobbe of the India Office was immediately unhappy at how this would appear, it being 'invidious if such memorials should have the Individual names of British missing, and only the names of Units and numbers of Indian missing'.¹⁰⁸ Nonetheless, prior to 2003, the British and Indian Memorials at Dar es Salaam and Nairobi relegated Indian names to the memorial registers.

Perhaps most significant of all in these calculations is the Basra Memorial. One of the largest memorials to the missing built by the Commission after the First World War, it commemorates more than 40,600 servicemen of the British Empire, most of them Indian, who have no known grave. Though it has frequently been assumed that this was due to the nature of the fighting – mobile, in isolated locations and at times unsuccessful – the main reason so many Indians were unaccounted for was because of a decision taken by the Indian General Staff in 1918. As the majority of Indian graves had not been properly marked in the theatre, and because cremations did not appear to have been properly registered by the Indian Army in the field, the Grave Registration Units of the DGRE were instructed to focus their efforts exclusively on British burials. A shortage of fuel forwards of Basra also meant that all the dead had been buried as the campaign progressed, and the failure to adequately mark the graves meant that retrospective cremation could not be done without risking

¹⁰⁶CWGC/1/1/9/D/29, 'Director of Records to Arthur Browne on the commemoration of Indians and other Native soldiers', 20 October 1925, pp. 35–6.

¹⁰⁷Arthur Browne raised the question of individual names in CWGC/1/1/9/D/12, 'Letter: Browne to Colonel Chitty, India Office', 17 December 1921, p. 59. In September 1922 it was noted by Browne that the Government of India and the India Office had 'for various reasons decided that the names of individual Indian soldiers should not be included on the Memorial, but only the names of units' – CWGC/1/1/79/D/12, 'Letter: Browne to Colonel Chitty', 7 September 1922, pp. 139–140.

¹⁰⁸CWGC/1/1/9/D/12, 'Letter: A.S. Cobbe to Arthur Browne', 29 September 1922, p. 141.

the bodies of those for whom this was inappropriate. As a result, a very small number of marked burials survived in Iraq, while the remaining Indian casualties were made missing.

It was for these men that the Basra memorial was constructed, but it was built under pressure due to the uncertainty of the British position in the country. Indeed, owing to internal political issues and the dangers of working there, the IWGC wanted the memorial to be built quickly, otherwise it was feared it would never be completed.¹⁰⁹ However, problems quickly arose around the lists of the missing, which while easily obtained for British regiments and for British Indian Army officers, were found to be incomplete and inconsistent in the spelling of names and other details for Indian other ranks. In France, the IWGC had faced similar difficulties compiling an accurate list of missing Indian servicemen for the Neuve Chapelle Memorial, although the number requiring correction – 4,600 compared to 30,000 – was vastly different. In the search for an acceptable and prompt solution, the IWGC consulted the India Office and outlined three potential solutions to the problem:

- To build one memorial for the British missing and another memorial for the Indians when the lists were available and the political climate improved.
- To build a memorial with space for the names of the Indian soldiers, which would be added later.
- To commemorate the Indian soldiers numerically.

In a later meeting with the Military Secretary to the India Office and his assistant, a provisional decision was reached to get around these issues whereby all memorials to Indians missing outside of Europe would contain only the names of the regiments concerned ‘followed in each case by the names of the British Officers (and non-commissioned officers if any), the names of the Indian officers and the number of native non-commissioned officers and men.’¹¹⁰ Although the names would not go on the memorial, the Indian government was insistent that the names should appear in the memorial and cemetery registers in all cases. As such, when it was unveiled on 27 March 1929, the Basra memorial looked as had been agreed. The names of the rank and file commemorated numerically on the memorial, as well as all those commemorated elsewhere in Iraq, are currently held in two memorial registers on display at the HQ of the CWGC in Maidenhead.

On top of general difficulties connected to the spelling and accuracy of Indian soldiers’ names and a lack of information concerning their places of death, the decisions that dictated the IWGC’s efforts in relation to Indian dead also suggest cost-cutting was at work. The way in which contributing governments funded the Commission was based on a primary calculation of the number of graves it cared for from each contributor. This figure was then turned into a percentage of the total budget,

¹⁰⁹CWGC/1/1/7/E/77, ‘Lecture delivered by Colonel Durham (Director of Works)’, 5 May 1924, pp. 14, 38.

¹¹⁰The Military Secretary was General Sir Alexander Cobbe and his assistant was Colonel Walter Willis Chitty, both long-serving Indian Army officers who saw extensive service in Mesopotamia during the war. CWGC/1/1/9/C/26, ‘Letter: Lord Arthur Browne to Under-Secretary of State, Military Department, India Office’, 14 March 1924.

which in turn was used to generate a figure for those commemorated on memorials. As a result, by marking only 5,556 graves, the Indian government's contribution was capped at only 1.02% of the total budget.¹¹¹ Though it does not take account of the large numbers of Indian soldiers who would have been cremated and commemorated on memorials anyway, the cost-saving implications for memorial commemoration could be huge. Though it cannot at this stage be shown, commemoration by number alone on memorials may have been deemed cheaper still. As such, it was financially less burdensome for the British-Indian administration to declare more of its personnel missing, especially if they were to be commemorated on joint British-Indian memorials by number.

Within West Africa, the Commission erected monuments within Sierra Leone (Freetown) and Nigeria (Lagos), which included names within the memorial register but not on the actual monuments. Within Nigeria this was at the behest of the Governor, whilst in Sierra Leone, it was guided by personalities within the Commission.¹¹² Although the inscription for the Lagos memorial only listed the names of the regiments, the Freetown memorial was much more selective, as the names of 229 soldiers and engineers were inscribed onto it, but the names of 795 carriers were not. Yet unlike Basra, this selectivity was not the result of inaccurate records or the requirement for quick construction, it was directly linked to prejudices regarding a 'lack of civilisation' amongst those it excluded.

The IWGC turned its attentions towards Sierra Leone particularly late, as it was only in January 1923 that the Commission agreed for a local committee to officially act as its agent in the country.¹¹³ Progress was initially slow and the registration of graves and the production of cemetery plans, and the return of both to the IWGC took a number of years. By 1926 it was clear that, although they knew the cemeteries in which many Sierra Leonians had been buried, the nature of their burials meant the graves were unidentifiable. In just one example, at Wilberforce Cemetery in Freetown – in the vicinity of the principal barracks of the West African Regiment and the main African burial ground – little or no attempt had ever been made to mark the graves, and the cemetery itself was said to be in a 'shocking state of neglect'. This site fell under the jurisdiction of the 'Headman of Wilberforce Village', and the regiment's commanding officer believed its condition reflected the fact that, 'the marking of ... graves with headstones does not appeal to the West African soldier'.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹It was decided at the Imperial War Conference in 1918 that payments into the IWGC would be 'borne by the respective Governments in proportion to the number of the graves of their Dead'. These percentages, and the total money provided, were set out in each annual report produced by the IWGC. CWGC/1/1/9/D/12, 'Letter: Controller & Financial Adviser to Browne', 4 August 1922, p. 133.

¹¹²CWGC/1/1/7/E/63, 'Letter: K.L. Hall for Acting Chief Secretary of the Government of Nigeria to IWGC Secretary', 14 July 1928, pp. 268–9.

¹¹³This committee was established in July 1922, encouraged by the June 1921 Colonial Office despatch on the role of the IWGC, see CWGC/1/1/7/E/68, 'Record of a Committee to enquire into and report on graves in Sierra Leone', 26 July 1922, pp. 39–42; on its becoming the IWGC's agent in Sierra Leone, see CWGC/1/1/7/E/68, 'Letter: Browne to Sierra Leone Colonial Secretary', 24 January 1923, pp. 62–5. As part of its membership, a captain of the West African Regiment was appointed to assist in matters relating to the graves of West African soldiers.

¹¹⁴CWGC/1/1/7/E/68, 'Local Agency in Sierra Leone to IWGC Secretary London', 14 June 1926, pp. 92–3; CWGC/1/1/7/E/68, 'Notes on Browne's Meeting with Lt-Col. A.E. Norton (commanding West African Regiment)', 28 July 1926, p. 99; CWGC/1/1/7/E/68, 'Letter: Norton to Secretary of Local IWGC Agency in Sierra Leone', 24 May 1927, pp. 116–18.

By 1927 the same commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel A.E. Norton, began applying pressure for the construction of a central memorial as he believed his unit and its men had not received adequate recognition.¹¹⁵ With the likely difficulty in marking graves and the alleged lack of indigenous interest in the practice, as well as the African cemetery at Wilberforce rarely seeing visitors, he recommended a memorial in a more public space. Unlike in East Africa, there appears to have been strong local feeling – particularly from regimental officers – that names were required to provide proper recognition of the sacrifices made. As the president of the local agency put it, ‘it is now more than eight years since the termination of the War ... yet up to the present time no memorial whatever has been erected in this colony to those Africans who gave their lives ... in what is after all their home’.¹¹⁶ The local agency in Sierra Leone and the IWGC subsequently approved the idea of a central memorial in Freetown and accepted that any non-European graves would be allowed to revert to nature. However, when it came to the question of which names would be included on the memorial, Browne and the Director of Records, Henry Chettle, accepted that the soldiers had been considered capable but that the carriers were not ‘sufficiently civilised to justify the inclusion’.¹¹⁷ Naturally, given their much larger numbers, it was also cheaper and considerably easier to include the names of the carriers in the register rather than on the memorial itself.

The final figures for the Freetown Memorial would include 61 other ranks of the West African Regiment, 55 of the Sierra Leone Battalion of the West African Frontier Force and 113 Royal Engineers (Inland Water Transport); they would omit the names of 795 Sierra Leonians who lost their lives while working as carriers during the war, who would instead be remembered in number alone. This same fate would be shared by two men of the Inland Water Transport and three of the Sierra Leone Medical Corps who had died as part of a contingent en route to Mesopotamia that was seconded at Dar es Salaam to act as carriers. Although Chettle did propose including these five names on the memorial given their original units, the Sierra Leonian authorities stated they were now classified as carriers.¹¹⁸ This commemoration by number remained until after the Second World War, when the design of the memorial panels was altered to include the greater number of casualties from that conflict. All the First World War deaths were confined to a single panel and all trace of the Sierra Leone Carrier Corps was removed, apart from within the Commission’s registers (and now on the casualty database). Although these carriers are ‘assigned’ to the memorial in the casualty database, they are still not present on the memorial itself.

Ultimately, the 952 names that were originally left off the Lagos memorial are now inscribed onto the renamed and reworked Abuja memorial, completed in 2016. Whilst this does not remove the

¹¹⁵The West African Regiment was not part of the West African Frontier Force. It was a regular unit that predated the WAFF, with its headquarters situated in Freetown.

¹¹⁶CWGC/1/1/7/E/68, ‘Letter: Local Agency in Sierra Leone to IWGC Secretary London’, 25 May 1927, pp. 113–15.

¹¹⁷CWGC/1/1/7/E/68, ‘Browne to Director of Records’, 17 September 1927, p. 131; CWGC/1/1/7/E/68, ‘Director of Records to Browne’, 29 October 1927, p. 134; CWGC/1/1/7/E/68, ‘Letter: Browne to Fabian Ware on Sierra Leone’, 17 November 1927, pp. 139–40.

¹¹⁸CWGC/1/1/7/E/68, ‘Director of Records to Sierra Leone Colonial Secretary’, 4 October 1929, p. 222; CWGC/1/1/7/E/68, ‘Sierra Leone Colonial Secretary to Director of Records’, 8 January 1930, p. 256.

impact of those past decisions, it does provide the equality in commemoration expected today. A decision on where to inscribe the names of the Sierra Leone carriers and those missing from the Basra Memorial is still to be made.

The names of the dead and places of burial were unknown to the Commission, which resorted to commemoration by general, nameless memorials.

The most significant omissions from the CWGC's database and memorials are those about whom the organisation has never had details – neither their names nor their places of burial. This is known to be a particularly significant issue across East Africa and Egypt. The war in Africa was fought as much against climate and terrain as it was the enemy, with transport proving one of the most significant hurdles. With no metalled roads and tropical diseases making it impossible to keep pack animals alive, there grew an almost insatiable need for carriers to keep the armies fed and fighting. As a result, it has been estimated that around 50,000 African soldiers and upwards of one million African followers (labourers, carriers or porters) were in British and colonial service. As outlined earlier, at least 100,000 and potentially up to 300,000 died owing to overwork, malnutrition, and disease.¹¹⁹

Many of these men were raised locally, often through varying degrees of compulsion. It has been argued that this lack of formality left a dearth of paperwork, meaning it is just as hard to predict how many ultimately served as it is to predict how many perished. In the 1920s, based upon the information available, the IWGC worked on the assumption that around 5,000 African soldiers and between 40,000–50,000 carriers had died and were in need of commemoration within East Africa. However, in almost all cases they did not know their names or burial locations, and it seems that no complete or even partial record was ever sent to, or actively sought out by, the IWGC.¹²⁰ In a report by the East African Grave Registration Unit in December 1919 it was stated that, despite the substantial estimated numbers already given, there were 'located graves' for 2,729 Europeans, 322 Indian troops and 350 African troops – no reference at all was made to carriers or other non-combatants. This report, as well as many others, also noted that 'it was somewhat rare to find the graves of Native Troops marked for future identifications and this also applies to Indian Troops'.¹²¹

In January 1920, George Evans, prior to commencing his work with the Commission, wrote to the IWGC to say that while some 50,000 members of the Military Labour Corps had died, no marks of identity had ever been placed over their graves. He also noted that 'most of the Natives who have

¹¹⁹See for example Hodges, 'African Manpower Statistics', p. 116; Killingray, David, 'Repercussions of World War I in the Gold Coast', *Journal of African History*, Vol. xix, No. 1 (1978), pp. 39–56; Killingray and Matthews, 'Beasts of Burden', pp. 17–18; Pesek, Michael, 'The war of legs. Transport and infrastructure in the East African Campaign of the First World War', *Transfers*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (2015), pp. 110–13; Paice, Edward, *Tip and Run – the Untold Tragedy of the Great War in Africa* (London: Weidenfield & Nicolson, 2007), pp. 392–3; Strachan, Hew, *The First World War in Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 3.

¹²⁰See, for example, CWGC/2/2/1/88, *Commission Meeting No.88*, 12 May 1926, pp. 8–11; According to Killingray and Matthews, the nominal roll of the West African carriers sent to East Africa, or 'Red Book', was lost somewhere between East Africa, West Africa and the United Kingdom. See Killingray and Matthews, 'Beasts of Burden', p. 21.

¹²¹CWGC/1/1/7/E/52, 'Memorandum on Located, Unlocated and Unmarked Graves by Capt. G.B. James, Ag. OC GRU, to Director General, DGRE London', 11 December 1919, p. 57.

died are of a semi-savage nature' and that the 'erection of individual headstones would constitute a waste of public money'. He did, however, suggest that those Indian and African troops who had been buried in 'proper cemeteries at the various Bases' should receive individual headstones. For 'those buried in the bush, as in the case of porters', however, Evans considered 'some form of Monument characteristically depicting the Indian soldier, the African Askari and Porter' would suffice.¹²² While such views and the language used to express them run contrary to the IWGC's core principles, it was the claimed practical considerations that won through, reinforced by correspondence with the Colonial Office in 1927, which stated nominal rolls for 'native' casualties had never existed within East Africa.¹²³ Armed with these justifications, the Commission felt at ease with its decision to erect central, nameless memorials for the African dead. Reflecting on this, Evans' successor, J.N. Cormack, stated:

No invidious comparison could ... be drawn between the tribute paid by the Imperial War Graves Commission to the Indian and African Troops in the undeveloped and widely distributed areas of East Africa, in which the circumstances of war have made individual identification for those nationalities impossible, except in a very limited number of cases.¹²⁴

While the research supporting this report has not yet found conclusive evidence to contest the claims that these names were unavailable, it is believed that records for at least some of the potentially hundreds of thousands of men who died doing carrier service must have existed. At least in part, this belief is driven by Lieutenant-Colonel Oscar Watkins' advocacy for carrier compensation after the war, as well as a reflective report in which he outlined the existence of detailed death lists.¹²⁵ It is the strong recommendation of this Committee that the CWGC search for evidence of this sort as soon as circumstances permit.

A similar example was witnessed in Egypt following the loss of between 16,000 and 50,000 personnel of the Egyptian Labour Corps and Camel Transport Corps. The vast majority had no marked graves, and the IWGC was not provided with a record of their names. As such, a general memorial was again proposed, although the style differed from those within East Africa. Indeed, between 1920 and 1922 a series of suggestions were made by the Egyptian authorities to commemorate those who died, from erecting a mosque to establishing an educational scholarship fund.¹²⁶ Eventually, at the Commission's forty-first meeting in January 1922, it came down to two options: to build two elementary schools at Port Said and Suez, or to erect a memorial laboratory connected to an Ophthalmic Hospital in Giza. The Egyptian government supported the second option, costing £6,600, and this was approved and unveiled in 1925.¹²⁷

¹²²CWGC/1/1/7/E/52, 'George Evans, OC GRU East Africa, to IWGC Director of Works', 31 January 1920, pp. 73–4.

¹²³CWGC/1/1/9/D/29, 'Letter: Sir Charles Strachey (Colonial Office) to Arthur Browne', 12 July 1927, pp. 69–72.

¹²⁴CWGC/1/1/7/E/56, 'Memo by J.N. Cormack to Controller and Financial Adviser', 2 May 1922, pp. 57–62.

¹²⁵Though it does not detract from this point, it is worth noting that Watkins corresponded indirectly with the IWGC over the erection of the East African memorials but did not comment on the availability of names. TNA, CO 533/216, 'Report by Lt-Col. O.F. Watkins, Director of Military Labour to the B.E.A. Expeditionary Force on the period from August 4th 1914 to September 12th 1919', pp. 18–19; CWGC/1/1/9/D/32, 'Memo by O. F. Watkins', 9 October 1924, p. 29.

¹²⁶CWGC/2/2/1/28, *Commission Meeting No.28*, 20 December 1920, pp. 3–4; CWGC/2/2/1/36, *Commission Meeting No.36*, 1921, pp. 3–4.

¹²⁷CWGC/2/2/1/41, *Commission Meeting No.41*, 17 January 1922, pp. 8–9.

Despite these seemingly logical solutions to a trying problem, there is also clear evidence to suggest that some names could have been recovered by the IWGC but that it chose not to do so. In the 1920s the Commission was aware that the King's African Rifles (KAR) was building a war memorial at Zomba in Nyasaland (now Malawi). It was also aware that it would have the names of over 1,200 soldiers from the first and second regiments inscribed onto it, and that these men were not in the Commission's registers. It would seem that having been told by the Colonial Office that the full lists of KAR casualties did not exist in Britain or East Africa, and that the Zomba lists made up only a portion of the entire KAR casualties, the IWGC chose not to record what was available or to adopt the memorial. In fact, although the IWGC would state that it believed another publicly erected memorial at Kampala provided 'adequate' commemoration for Ugandan dead, there is no evidence it was formerly adopted either.¹²⁸

A similar process occurred, albeit on a much smaller scale, at Mwele Ndogo in Tanganyika (now Tanzania). Here the IWGC was aware not only of a collective grave housing 14 men of the Arab Rifles, which was 'allowed to revert to nature' in 1924, but also of a privately erected memorial that included the names of the fallen in Arabic.¹²⁹ However, whilst the Commission acknowledged its existence, it did not adopt it, nor did it extract the names for inclusion into its casualty registers.¹³⁰ Instead, it was agreed in 1925 that all Arab fatalities across East Africa, (except for Somalia), would be adequately commemorated by the central nameless memorial in Mombasa.¹³¹ This approach was continued across Kenya, where in the 1920s the IWGC was alerted to a small number of known African graves around Nairobi but instructed that staff should not be 'employed trying to trace graves which will be entirely allowed to revert to nature'.¹³²

On a separate occasion in 1923, the IWGC's Deputy Director of Works in East Africa, J.N. Cormack, wrote to the Director of Records to say that he had come across 'a large file of unclassified returns' in the War Records Office in Nairobi that he believed could help identify the names and details of casualties of the King's African Rifles. He stated that 'in a multitude of returns full particulars could doubtless be traced (and duplications avoided) of the individually reported casualties of all ranks. Similarly other Native Regiments such as the Arab Rifles could be investigated'. Nonetheless, he went on, 'It would be an expensive matter to classify these casualties ... and I think that no particular object would be served in the meantime by the compilation of formidable lists of individual native names with particulars of their ranks, units, dates and places of death, etc.'¹³³ Cormack's reluctance to spend money on this exercise will have been influenced by the Commission's existing commitment to build

¹²⁸See the file CWGC/1/1/10/E/14.

¹²⁹See <https://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty-details/124906/JOHN%20LACHLAN%20MACKINTOSH/#&gid=1&pid=2>.

¹³⁰In 2005 the memorial at Mwele Ndogo appeared to be intact and well maintained.

¹³¹CWGC/1/1/9/D/29, 'Director of Records to Arthur Browne on Commemoration of Indian and Other Native Soldiers', 20 October 1925, pp. 35–6.

¹³²CWGC/1/1/7/E/56, 'Memo: Interview with the OC Troops Kenya Colony (Colonel G. Phillips) by Cormack and Rapley', 8 June 1922, pp. 99–100; CWGC/1/1/9/D/29, 'Director of Works to Director of Records on Graves of 1/ KAR – Kenya', 25 February 1924, p. 6.

¹³³CWGC/1/1/10/E/14, 'Letter: J.N. Cormack to Director of Records', 20 December 1923.

nameless memorials to these men, something confirmed by the appointment of an architect a year before.¹³⁴ It is, however, an indisputable example of the organisation knowingly passing up an opportunity to fill a significant gap in its database of named war dead. It is impossible to know how many names might have been extracted or whether the material still survives, but there is the possibility that the 5,000 African soldiers missing from the East African campaign could have been present and identified. What is telling is that only five men of the Arab Rifles are currently commemorated by name, and whilst more than 4,200 KAR are known to have died during the conflict, only 401 are commemorated by name – more than half of whom are British officers and Non-Commissioned Officers.¹³⁵

In 1924 Arthur Browne had requested Rudyard Kipling provide an inscription for the memorials in East Africa, as given 'these soldiers and followers are not commemorated individually even where they have graves these monuments are the collective record of all the dead'.¹³⁶ The Commission built these memorials because it did not know the vast majority of names and burial locations of the African dead in the theatre, but it also enabled them to overlook the opportunity to individually remember those it did know or those it could still have found. In the century that has now passed, it is likely to have become increasingly difficult to rectify that decision in line with the Commission's original mandate. Nevertheless, it is the view of this Committee that this should not prevent the CWGC from continuing to try and do so.

¹³⁴CWGC/1/1/9/D/28, 'Letter: Director of Works to Browne', 28 December 1922.

¹³⁵CWGC/1/1/10/E/14, 'Enclosure 2, KAR casualties', 2 October 1923.

¹³⁶CWGC/1/1/9/D/32, 'Letter: Browne to Rudyard Kipling', 29 May 1924, p. 11.

PART 4 - SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

i. Conclusions

In many ways it is understandable that IWGC operations during and following the First World War were not perfect. The organisation was forged in the chaos of conflict and its work revolved around the ravaged battlefields of the world, and that work was novel, untried and conceptually challenging. The IWGC was writing the rulebook as it went along, not because it was unprepared or inefficient, but because it was a pioneer. Beyond these challenging beginnings and the limitations they placed on the organisation, however, it is also clear from the evidence presented here that the IWGC was responsible for or complicit in decisions outside of Europe that compromised its principles and treated war dead differently and often unequally. The reasons for this were many and varied, and in very few cases did it act unilaterally. Nonetheless, the findings of this report run contrary to the common narratives of the IWGC's history. This history needs to be corrected and shared, and the unfinished work of the 1920s needs to be put right where possible.

This study has shown that, in most cases, the IWGC relied on others to seek out the bodies of the dead. Where it could not find them, it worked with the offices of state to produce lists of those who did not return and remained unaccounted for. Given the pressures and confusion spun by such a war, in many ways it is hardly surprising that mistakes were made at both stages. What is surprising, however, is the number of mistakes – the number of casualties commemorated unequally, the number commemorated without names and the number otherwise entirely unaccounted for. In some circumstances there was little the IWGC could do: with neither bodies nor names, general memorials were the only way in which some groups might be commemorated at the time. Nonetheless, there are examples where the organisation also deliberately overlooked evidence that might have allowed it to find some of those names. In others, Commission officials in the 1920s were happy to work with local administrations on projects across the Empire that ran contrary to the principles of equality in death. Elsewhere, it is clear that Commission officials pursued agendas and sought evidence or support locally to endorse courses of action that jeopardised the same principles. Finally, in a small number of cases where Commission officials had greater say in the recovery and marking of graves, overarching imperial ideology connected to racial and religious differences were used to divide the dead and treat them unequally in ways that were impossible in Europe.

From the outset, it was known that this report could not be conclusive. The timeframe and the conditions under which it has been researched and written meant that its reach was unavoidably limited. Nonetheless, in the course of its completion the research team has been able to identify potential avenues of enquiry that could not be explored as part of this project but should be explored in the future. This includes documentary collections held overseas, as well as IWGC activity during the Second World War and during the period of colonial retreat.

More than a century since this work began, it is time to put right the mistakes and inappropriate decisions of the past. To do so, the recommendations of this Committee centre on three central themes:

- Extending geographically and chronologically the search in the historical record for inequalities in commemoration and acting on what is found.
- A renewed commitment to equality of sacrifice through the building of physical or digital commemorative structures.
- The acknowledgement and acceptance of this difficult history and its communication to all the communities of the former British Empire touched by the two world wars.

ii. Recommendations

The following recommendations represent the combined thinking of this Committee in response to the evidence presented in this report. They are interlinked but also flexible, so as not to constrain the CWGC in ways that might prevent it from adapting to change in the future. Whilst it is accepted that in many cases the passage of time and the survival of evidence may prevent the realisation of equality in death to all casualties as originally defined, these recommendations are designed to encourage new ways of acknowledging these contributions and raising their profile within the communities from which they came. Above all else, whatever action is taken by the CWGC to put right these wrongs, it should represent complete parity with any operations – past or future – in Europe or elsewhere.

- 1. Ongoing commitment to continue the search for the unnamed war dead and those potentially not commemorated** – research suggests there are collections held globally that may fill gaps in commemoration. The CWGC should commit to actively continuing the search for these men and women and state what resources it is willing to put behind this.
- 2. A commitment to transparency online** – in our increasingly digital world, it is the CWGC's online presence that will provide most interactions between the organisation and the global public. The CWGC should be upfront about this difficult history across the website and should highlight and share its progress in putting right the wrongs of the past.
- 3. Flexibility in evidence criteria for specific non-commemoration cases** – the minimum evidence requirements set by the CWGC to support cases of non-commemoration may exclude many from parts of the world where paperwork does not survive or was never produced. The CWGC should develop and publish new criteria that allows for flexibility where it is required.

- 4. Establish a consultative committee** – this process has demonstrated how beneficial external contributors are to the way in which the CWGC reflects on its own history and interacts with those affected by its work. The organisation should commit to establishing an appropriately diverse independent consultative committee with a global reach to advise the CWGC on points of history, policy and outreach.
- 5. Community engagement and education** – engagement and education programmes that highlight the sacrifices made by communities currently underrepresented through commemoration could be just as powerful as permanent monuments. The CWGC should, directly or through its Foundation, reach out to these groups. It should also ensure that its own staff engage with and understand this history.
- 6. Digital rather than physical commemoration** – to reach new generations and connect them with this difficult history, and to encourage grassroots research that might support the search for those not commemorated, the CWGC should develop digital platforms and encourage broad, global participation.
- 7. Context panels for existing memorials** – recent history has demonstrated how important it is that historical memorials with their historical flaws are fully and honestly explained. The CWGC should follow this trend and explain why some memorials do not carry names.
- 8. Inscription of recovered names on existing memorials** – where names have been recovered for casualties who were ‘sent missing’ and assigned to nameless memorials, the CWGC should inscribe the names directly or find ways to display the names.
- 9. Adoption of third-party memorials** – several memorials containing names not held by the CWGC are now known to exist. The CWGC should adopt these as places of commemoration and add the names to its casualty database.
- 10. New memorials or commemorative structures** – where there is a clear omission in current commemorations for a particular group that cannot be served by an existing memorial, it might be appropriate to build some form of new commemorative structure or space, not necessarily a memorial. This should only be pursued in collaboration and must be of value and use to the communities it is built to serve and represent.

APPENDIX 1 - TABLES QUANTIFYING INEQUALITIES IN COMMEMORATION

The following tables show the workings of the calculations in Part 1(ii) and help further illustrate some of the findings within the main body of this report. At this time, many of the figures quoted here should be treated as working estimates given the limited evidence currently available to inform them.

Issue 1: Number of casualties commemorated on general, nameless memorials

Table A1: Estimated number of casualties commemorated by nameless memorials

Theatre/ Region	Country	Memorial	Estimated potential total:
East Africa	Zambia	Abercorn Memorial	1,467
East Africa	Kenya	Mombasa African Memorial	50,000 - 300,000
East Africa	Kenya	Nairobi African Memorial	
East Africa	Tanzania	Dar es Salaam African Memorial	
Egypt	Egypt	Giza Memorial	16,000 - 50,000
Mesopotamia	Iraq	Basra (Tanooma Chinese) Memorial	227

As the main body of the report sets out, the total number of casualties commemorated by these memorials is based on limited evidence and so, at present, they should be considered estimates. This lack of evidence is largely the result of recruitment practices, record-keeping and the failure of various institutions – including the IWGC – to pursue the records in the aftermath of the First World War. As the report sets out, it is hoped some may yet be found in the countries in which these men were raised.¹³⁷

As previously explained, at the time of their construction the IWGC believed these six memorials commemorated anywhere between 66,000 and 100,000 casualties. However, modern estimates now widely accept that at least 100,000 African soldiers and carriers are commemorated across East Africa alone.¹³⁸ As such, in devising the baseline estimate of at least 116,000 commemorated on nameless memorials, the authors have added the minimum contemporary IWGC estimate for Giza (16,000) to the now widely accepted minimum number of deaths among African soldiers and carriers within East Africa (100,000).

¹³⁷Difficulties in calculating the total number of colonial forces who died in the First World War was an issue shared by the French authorities. This raises interesting questions about the wider cost of the war. See Koller, Christian, 'The recruitment of Colonial Troops in Africa and Asia and their deployment in Europe during the First World War', *Immigrants and Minorities*, Vol. 26, No. 1/2 (2008), pp. 120–1.

¹³⁸The figure of around 100,000 for East Africa is set out in, amongst others, Paice, *Tip and Run*, pp. 392–3; Fogarty, Richard and Killingray, David, 'Demobilisation in British and French Africa at the End of the First World War', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (2015), p. 105; Hodges, 'African Manpower Statistics', p. 116.

The upper end of this estimate – 350,000 – is almost entirely reliant on circumstantial evidence, such as demands for recruits and estimated wastage statistics.¹³⁹ It must also be noted that many of these examples do not disaggregate those discharged unfit, those who deserted or those declared missing.¹⁴⁰ Without the appropriate records, this number will remain an estimate. The potential global figure of up to 350,000 is, then, speculative and likely overinflated, but it has not been discounted.

Issue 2: Estimated number of casualties who received an unequal form of commemoration

Tables A2 to A6 set out the estimated number of casualties who received an unequal form of commemoration from the IWGC. This took three forms: 1) commemoration by number on central memorials with names held in registers; 2) no mention on central memorials with names held in registers; and 3) collective commemoration on memorials even though a known grave existed. The justifications provided for these forms of treatment are set out in the main body of the report. The following tables show the three parts to this calculation in order, which, when added together, creates the working estimate of between 45,000 and 54,000.

Table A2: Indian casualties commemorated numerically rather than by name on memorials

Theatre/ Region	Country	Memorial	Total Commemorated (including British casualties, where appropriate)	Number of Indians commemorated by number alone	Year Corrected
Mesopotamia	Iraq	Basra (British & Indian)	40,641	32,435	TBD (To be determined)
Egypt	Egypt	Port Tewfik	3,726	3,726	1978
East Africa	Tanzania	Dar es Salaam British & Indian	1,529	1,388	2004
East Africa	Kenya	Nairobi British & Indian	1,234	1,147	2004
Total			47,130	38,696	

¹³⁹See, for example, Pesek, 'The war of legs', pp. 113–4; Iliffe, John, *A Modern History of Tanganyika* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 249–50; Killingray and Matthews, 'Beasts of Burden', pp. 18–9.

¹⁴⁰Within Watkins' report of 1919, for example, he noted that desertions were common, especially when men were 'impressed' by the army. He also stated that many provided false names, meaning one man could potentially have been recruited and have deserted multiple times. See TNA, CO 533/216, 'Report by Lt-Col. O.F. Watkins', Appendix 1, Table 7. Note also that this was an issue for all colonial armies active in the region. See, for example, Moyd, Michelle, 'Centring a sideshow: local experiences of the First World War in Africa', *First World War Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (2016), pp. 116–8.

At the seventy-second Commission meeting in December 1924, Fabian Ware stated that Indians declared missing in Europe would be commemorated by name. Outside of Europe, the British Indian government agreed that the names of Indians should not be individually inscribed on memorials but held in memorial registers.¹⁴¹ As the main body of the report set out, this form of commemoration was justified using a variety of arguments including cost, the quality of records, and the belief that commemorative pilgrimage would not be undertaken by the families of the deceased.

Table A3: Names included in the memorial registers but excluded from the memorials themselves

Theatre/ Region	Country	Memorial	Total originally named on Monument	Names in registers only	Year Corrected
West Africa	Sierra Leone	Freetown	229	795	TBD
West Africa	Nigeria	Lagos	Nameless	952	2016
Asia	Hong Kong	Hong Kong	Nameless	945	2006
Total				2,692	

The figures provided under ‘Names in register only’ are those that the IWGC was aware of when the memorials were built. The total commemorated on the reconstructed Abuja Memorial, which replaced the original Lagos Memorial, is 944 (likely owing to the removal of duplicated names). Those named on the reconstructed Hong Kong memorial amount to 963.

The totals set out in Table A4 on the following page are a working estimate. In the case of Persia (Iran) and India, which almost exclusively concern Indian casualties, it is an upper estimate based on those commemorated on central memorials or those reported as having died within the official statistics.¹⁴² In both cases it is known that policies were enacted that saw the collective commemoration of casualties after individual burials were abandoned or left unmarked.

In the case of West Africa, the rounded figure of 1,000 is based on the total number of ‘identified’ burials that were originally listed, but subsequently removed, from the tabulated totals set out within IWGC Annual Reports in the 1920s. It is difficult to say how many were locatable at the time, but IWGC officials in the 1920s stated that burials in Gold Coast and Nigeria were thought to be ‘known in every case’. In the 1950s the IWGC was also informed that there were still many

¹⁴¹CWGC/2/2/1/72, *Commission Meeting No.72*, 10 December 1924, pp. 10–11.

¹⁴²For Persia, this is the total number of Indians, excluding British officers, commemorated on the Tehran Memorial. For India and Pakistan, the figure is based on the total listed as dead under ‘Frontier Operations’ within *India’s Contribution to the Great War*, p. 177.

identifiable burial sites for African soldiers in the British Mandated Cameroons.¹⁴³ Only two African soldiers of the First World War have individual headstones in West Africa.¹⁴⁴

Table A4: Estimated number of casualties commemorated on central or cemetery memorials, irrespective of whether a known grave existed

Theatre/Region	Total	Countries
Middle East	2,019	Egypt, Israel/Palestine, Lebanon, Syria
East Africa	920	Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Somalia, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe
Mesopotamia	431	Iraq
West Africa	Potentially up to 1,000	Cameroon, Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Togo
Persia	Potentially up to 3,352	Iran and neighbouring areas
India	Potentially up to 4,667	India, Pakistan
Total	3,370 - 12,389	

The figure for East Africa is made up of 878 casualties commemorated at the ten sites set out below, as well as a further 42 casualties – 24 Gold Coast Regiment and 18 Northern Rhodesia Police – identified as buried at 17 abandoned locations within modern day Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe, who were sent for named commemoration onto the Kumasi Memorial in Ghana, and the Livingstone Camp Memorial in Zambia.¹⁴⁵

The first table below sets out the number of cemetery memorials, which originally offered numerical or general forms of commemoration, and the year in which they were ‘corrected’ (if applicable). The second table sets out examples of collective commemoration by name, irrespective of whether a burial within a cemetery was known. In all cases, the totals given are for identified casualties only, whose names were known to the IWGC.

¹⁴³See for example CWGC/1/1/7/E/62, ‘Letter: General Sir Frank Simpson, Advisor to the West Africa Committee, to IWGC Secretary’, 1 October 1956, pp. 116–7.

¹⁴⁴These headstones are in the Limbe Botanical Gardens in Cameroon and were erected in 1969. Prior to this, the two casualties were commemorated by name on the Freetown and Ibadan memorials, while their burial sites were marked with wooden crosses. See <https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/casualty-details/418665/%20SAMBA%20SARACOULI/#&gid=2&pid=1>.

¹⁴⁵These 42 additional names were drawn from IWGC archive documents. The Gold Coast Regiment casualties were listed as buried within the following 12 cemeteries. In Tanzania: Kilwa Kivinje cemetery, ‘native’ section. In Mozambique: Natovi ‘native’ cemetery, Ankuabe ‘native’ non-Christian cemetery, Wanakote ‘native’ cemetery, Koranje ‘native’ cemetery, Balama ‘native’ cemetery, Namala (Namarala) ‘native’ cemetery, Bandari ‘native’ cemetery, Namarika Rock ‘native’ cemetery, Medo ‘native’ cemetery, Meza ‘native’ cemetery, Nampula ‘native’ cemetery. The Northern Rhodesia Police casualties were recorded as buried in the following 5 places within Zambia and Zimbabwe: Kasama/Kasama cemetery, Lundazi, Salisbury, Ikawa (Old Fife) ‘native’ war cemetery, Saisi cemetery.

Table A5: List of cemetery memorials, since corrected, which originally offered nameless or numerical forms of commemoration

Country	Cemetery / Memorial	Total named	Notes:	Year Corrected
Egypt	Abbasiya Indian Cemetery	75	Memorial erected/rebuilt in cemetery to commemorate by name the 75 Indian casualties whose graves are unmarked in this cemetery.	1996
Egypt	Ismailia War Memorial Cemetery	17	Memorial erected in Ismailia War Memorial Cemetery to commemorate the 17 Indian casualties buried or commemorated in Ismailia Indian Cemetery (which became part of the War Memorial Cemetery in 1956) whose graves are unmarked.	2001
Egypt	Kantara Indian Cemetery Memorial	283	Memorial erected in Kantara War Memorial Cemetery to commemorate the 283 Indian casualties buried or commemorated in Kantara Indian Cemetery (which was declared unmaintainable in 1961) whose graves are unmarked.	2000
Egypt	Manara Indian Muslim Cemetery	108	Memorial erected/rebuilt to commemorate by name the 108 Indian casualties whose graves are unmarked in this cemetery.	2002
Egypt	Port Said Muslim Civil Cemetery	33	Memorial erected/rebuilt to commemorate by name the 33 Indian casualties whose graves are unmarked in this cemetery.	2001
Egypt	Suez War Memorial Cemetery	201	Memorial erected in Suez War Memorial Cemetery to commemorate the 201 Indian casualties buried or commemorated in Arbain Indian Cemetery (which later became part of the War Memorial Cemetery) whose graves are unmarked.	1997
Israel / Palestine	Deir el Belah War Cemetery	64	Memorial erected to commemorate the 64 Indian casualties buried or commemorated in Deir el Belah Indian Cemetery (which later became part of the War Cemetery) whose graves are unmarked.	1998

Israel / Palestine	Gaza War Cemetery	44	Memorial erected in Gaza War Cemetery to commemorate by name the 40 Indian casualties who were buried or commemorated in Gaza Indian Cemetery and the 4 Egyptian casualties who were buried in Gaza Turkish Cemetery (both of which later became part of the War Cemetery) whose graves are unmarked.	2000
Israel / Palestine	Haifa Indian Cemetery	46	Panels added to existing memorial to commemorate the 44 identified and 3 unnamed Indian and 2 identified Egyptian casualties whose graves are unmarked in this cemetery.	2001
Israel / Palestine	Haifa War Cemetery	23	The names of 22 Egyptian Labour Corps and 1 Egyptian Camel Corps are currently included in the cemetery register only, as alongside 86 unidentified Egyptian Labour Corps buried in the Egyptian section, they are commemorated numerically on a cemetery memorial.	TBD
Israel / Palestine	Jerusalem Indian War Cemetery	79	Memorial created to commemorate the 79 identified and 2 unidentified Indian casualties whose graves are unmarked in this cemetery.	2001
Israel / Palestine	Ramleh 1914-1918 Memorial	589	Originally built in 1961 to commemorate 76 known Commonwealth casualties (74 Indian and 2 Egyptian), as well as 277 unidentified Egyptian Labour Corps, buried in 7 cemeteries which could no longer be maintained. In 2014 the memorial was completely rebuilt and it now commemorates, in addition to 72 of the original 74 Indians and 2 Egyptians, the 453 Indian and 62 Egyptian casualties known to be buried in Ramleh War cemetery whose graves are unmarked.	2014
Israel / Palestine	Tul Karm War Cemetery	2	Panels added to rebuilt memorial in cemetery to commemorate by name 2 known Indian casualties and 1 unknown Indian and 80 unknown Egyptian casualties whose graves are unmarked in this cemetery.	1999
Lebanon	Beirut Maronite Cemetery (Indian Section)	43	Memorial rebuilt/erected to commemorate by name the 43 Indian casualties whose graves are unmarked in this cemetery.	1997

Lebanon	Beirut War Cemetery	265	Memorial erected in Beirut War Cemetery to commemorate the 95 Indian and 170 Egyptian, as well as 24 Turkish, casualties buried or commemorated in Beirut (Saida Road) Indian & Egyptian Cemetery (which later became part of the War Cemetery) whose graves are unmarked.	1996
Syria	Aleppo War Cemetery	91	Memorial erected in Aleppo War Cemetery to commemorate by name the 91 Indian casualties buried or commemorated in Aleppo Military Cemeteries No. 1 and No. 2 which had become unmaintainable. 18 sets of unidentified remains were recovered and transferred to Aleppo War Cemetery in 1954.	1999
Syria	Damascus 1914-1918 Indian Memorial	56	Memorial erected in Damascus War Cemetery to commemorate by name, if known, the 49 Indian (2 of which are unidentified), 10 Egyptian (1 of which is unidentified) and 2 Turkish casualties (both of which are unidentified) originally buried or commemorated in Damascus Indian Cemetery. The remains of these casualties were transferred to Damascus War Cemetery in 1961.	1997
Kenya	Maktau Indian Cemetery	15	Panels added to existing memorial in cemetery to commemorate by name the 15 known Indian casualties whose graves are unmarked in this cemetery.	2000
Kenya	Taveta Indian Cemetery	1	Panels added to existing memorial to commemorate the 29 Indian casualties (only one of whom had been identified) whose graves are unmarked in this cemetery.	2000
Mozambique	Lumbo British Cemetery Memorial	12	New panels added to existing structures in Lumbo British Cemetery to commemorate the 1 Indian and 11 African casualties by name buried elsewhere in Lumbo Cemetery (previous panels had no names).	2012
Mozambique	Pemba Memorial	81	New panels added to existing structures in Pemba Cemetery to commemorate the 22 Indian and 59 African casualties by name buried elsewhere in Pemba Cemetery (previous panels had no names).	2011

Mozambique	Special Memorial, Pemba	18	Special memorial built in 2019 for those Africans buried in Beira Cemetery but who were originally included in the cemetery register only.	2019
Tanzania	Pugu Road 1914–1918 Memorial	124	New memorial erected in Dar es Salaam (Upanga Road) Cemetery to commemorate by name the 124 African casualties buried or commemorated in Dar es Salaam (Pugu Road) Cemetery. Pugu Road declared unmaintainable in 1959 and initially those buried there commemorated on a small 'no names' memorial in Upanga Road Cemetery.	2003
Zimbabwe	Harare Memorial	66	Memorial created in Harare (Pioneer) Cemetery to commemorate by name 66 Africans who were previously only numerically commemorated on the Harare Park Memorial.	1997
Iraq	Alwiya Indian War Cemetery	1	Within this cemetery is 1 identified and 450 unidentified Indian burials.	TBD
Iraq	Amara (Left Bank) Indian War Cemetery	9	Within this cemetery are 9 identified and over 5,000 unidentified Indian burials.	TBD
Iraq	Baghdad (North Gate) War Cemetery	415	Within this cemetery are 337 Indian casualties in the Hindu and Muslim sections, 32 Indian in the main portion and 46 Arab levies, not individually marked.	TBD
Iraq	Mosul War Cemetery	6	Within this cemetery are 4 identified Indians in the Hindu section, and 2 identified in the Muslim section. A further 185 unidentified Indians are also buried here.	TBD
Total		2,767		

Within the cemeteries of Iraq, owing to the difficulties accessing the country since the first Gulf War of 1990–1, the CWGC has been unable to correct the general forms of commemoration originally constructed by the IWGC in the 1920s. Within Haifa War cemetery in Israel, the names of 23 known casualties are currently included in the cemetery register only.

Table A6: Casualties commemorated on central or cemetery memorials, irrespective of whether a known gravesite existed

Country	Cemetery / Memorial	Total	Notes:
Somalia	Berbera Memorial	109	Constructed at the behest of the colonial Governor to commemorate the 97 Indian and 12 Somali forces buried across 8 cemeteries within Somalia.
Tanzania	Dar es Salaam War Cemetery Memorial Garden	404	Screen wall erected in 1968 to commemorate those formerly buried in the African Christian, non-Christian and Muslim plots of Dar es Salaam Seaview cemetery, which was closed following the construction of a new road. In the 1920s, the individual gravesites were known, but the IWGC chose to liaise with the colonial Governor on the form of commemoration to be adopted. In 1925, the Governor elected not to erect headstones, and instead chose to commemorate these casualties by name on a cemetery memorial. In total this screen wall commemorates 244 Africans, 116 Indians, 26 South Africans, 12 West Indians, and 6 Chinese.
Tanzania	Morogoro Cemetery	48	Screen wall erected in 1929 for those buried in the Christian 'native' portion of the cemetery. Alongside 1 unidentified African casualty are named 41 South African, 6 East and West African, and 1 West Indian.
Total		561	

APPENDIX 2 – COMMITTEE AND PROFILES

Committee Members

Sir Tim Hitchens KCVO CMG (Chair)

Tim Hitchens is a Commonwealth War Graves Commissioner. He is a former British diplomat, having been British Ambassador to Japan 2012–16 and Africa Director 2009–12. He is currently President of Wolfson College, Oxford University.

Professor Michèle Barrett

Professor Michèle Barrett has studied the history of the Imperial War Graves Commission since publishing her first paper on the subject in 2007. This documented the unequal treatment, outside Europe, of colonial forces (largely from India and Africa) who had died. More recently, she has focused specifically on the East African campaign. Her research was televised in the 2019 Channel 4 documentary *The Unremembered*, presented by David Lammy, for which she was the historical consultant. Her other current project is a digital edition of Virginia Woolf's reading and research notes (WoolfNotes.com), which goes live in 2021.

Shrabani Basu

Shrabani Basu is a journalist and *Sunday Times* best-selling author. Her books include the critically acclaimed *For King and Another Country: Indian Soldiers on the Western Front 1914–18*; *Victoria & Abdul: The True Story of the Queen's Closest Confidant*; and *Spy Princess: The Life of Noor Inayat Khan*. Her latest book *The Mystery of the Parsee Lawyer* is to be published in March 2021. She is the founder and chair of the Noor Inayat Khan Memorial Trust, which campaigned for a memorial for the Second World War heroine in London.

Selena Carty

Selena Carty is a cultural and ancestral consultant/genealogist who, through the NGO BlackPoppyRose CIC, has spent the last 11 years exploring the Black, African, West Indian, Pacific Island and indigenous community's participation in wars since the sixteenth century, including the First World War and Second World War.

Blondel Cluff CBE FKCL

Blondel Cluff is chair of the National Lottery Community Fund, having served on the heritage fund of the lottery as a committee chair for over six years. She is also CEO of the West India Committee, a Royal Charter institution that is custodian of a UNESCO inscribed library and collection, and a Consulting NGO of UNESCO on heritage. She is a member of the Royal Mint Advisory Committee with responsibility for the themes and designs of British coinage and medals. She is an author of various works, including *The Caribbean's Great War*, and a member of the Prime Minister's Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, with focus on education.

Professor Mark Connelly

Mark Connelly is Professor of Modern British History at the University of Kent. His main research and teaching interests relate to the First World War and its commemoration and he has worked extensively in the archives of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Among his publications are *Ypres* (with Stefan Goebel), *The British Army and the First World War* (with Ian Beckett and Tim Bowman) and a forthcoming book on battlefield tourism in the 1920s and 1930s.

Terry Denham

Terry Denham is the founder of the *In From the Cold Project*. This voluntary initiative was started twenty years ago with the aim of researching casualties from both world wars who are missing from CWGC's records. Since then, the Project has gathered several hundred supporting researchers around the world and its work has succeeded in locating over seven thousand missing men and women from across the Commonwealth. The project also has a very successful branch specialising in locating the burial sites of these missing names and of casualties currently only listed by CWGC on memorials to the missing.

Amandeep Madra OBE

Amandeep Madra is a founding member of the UK Punjab Heritage Association and chairs its Management Board. He was a curator and researcher for the 3-year UKPHA project "Empire, Faith & War: the Sikhs and World War One".

Edward Paice

Edward Paice is Director of Africa Research Institute. He is the author of *Tip and Run: The Untold Tragedy of the Great War in Africa*.

Trevor Phillips OBE ARCS FIC

Trevor Phillips is a writer and television producer. He is the co-founder of the data analytics consultancy Webber Phillips and Chairman of Green Park Interim and Executive Search. He is a *Times* columnist, shortlisted for Comment Writer of the Year in 2020. He is the Chairman of the global freedom of expression campaign charity Index on Censorship; a Senior Fellow at the Policy Exchange think tank; and a Vice-President of the Royal Television Society. Trevor is a non-executive director of the AIM-listed behavioural science consultancy Mind Gym; he was the President of the John Lewis Partnership Council until 2018 and founding chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

Dr Gavin Rand

Gavin Rand is Associate Professor History at the University of Greenwich. Gavin's work examines the British empire in South Asia in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, particularly the history of the Indian Army.

Dr Anne Samson

South African born Anne Samson is an independent historian of the Great War in Africa. Since 2011 she has run the Great War in Africa Association (<http://gweaa.com>), an online community and information hub. She has been adviser to a whole school development programme in rural Tanzania and Rwanda and advised a West African government on related matters. Since completing her thesis in 2005 at Royal Holloway, University of London, Anne has written, published and presented on a wide range of topics related to the Great War, and supports community groups and individuals across the globe in related research.

Dr Kevin Searle

Kevin Searle is a records specialist at The National Archives, focusing on records that relate to Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups in Britain. He holds a PhD in sociological studies, and has previously worked at the University of Birmingham, as well as at a number of inner-city schools and colleges in London. Searle is the author of *From Farms to Foundries: An Arab Community in Industrial Britain*. He has also had work published in the *Race and Class* journal, and most recently the edited book, *Black British History: New Perspectives*.

Dr Daniel Steinbach

Daniel Steinbach is a Faculty Member of the Saxo Institute at the University of Copenhagen and an Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Exeter. He has written extensively on modern European history, especially on British and German encounters in colonial Africa and the First World War as a global conflict.

Dr Nicholas Westcott CMG

Dr Nicholas Westcott is Director of the Royal African Society and Research Associate at SOAS University of London. He holds a doctorate in African history from Cambridge University, and worked for 35 years as a diplomat for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and European Union, including extensively in Africa. He has published several articles, studies and books on African and international affairs.

Research Team

Dr George Hay

George Hay is the Official Historian of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. He holds a PhD from the University of Kent with a thesis focusing on the social history of the British amateur military tradition in war and peace, a subject that has also provided the bases of several publications. He is an established archival historian, previously holding the post of Head of Military Records at The National Archives of the United Kingdom. He is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society and Honorary Secretary of the Army Records Society.

Dr John Burke

John Burke is a Research Assistant at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. He holds a PhD from Newcastle University with a thesis focusing on how the legacies of British colonialism have shaped the remembrance and representation of conflict on Cyprus. Out of this research, and its connected themes, he has published a book and several articles. He has taught at both the University of Sunderland and at Newcastle University, where he is also currently a Visiting Fellow within the School of History, Classics and Archaeology.

APPENDIX 3 – SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

The following texts and archival records have helped inform the findings of this report. Please note, this is not an exhaustive list of everything consulted, just those directly cited within the footnotes.

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