

CWGC seeks to erect signs at 3000 UK cemeteries and burial grounds with war graves

Most people know about the war cemeteries abroad – in France and Belgium, in the desert and in the far east. The rows of gleaming white headstones, immaculate testimony to the sacrifice of the fallen from the Commonwealth in both world wars.

One of the new signs at Newcastle's West Road Cemetery.



Less widely known are the 300,000 war graves here at home – in every corner of the United Kingdom. To try to put that right – so that people know about the war graves in their neighbourhood – the Commonwealth War Graves Commission has begun a project to put up thousands of signs. In churchyards and cemeteries and burial plots throughout the land, the Commission is making it clear where the war graves are located.

The Commission is seeking permission from local authorities to erect three thousand signs – and this will cover only a fraction of the sites. Altogether there are war graves at 12,300 sites in the UK.

A second phase of the plan will involve seeking permissions from church authorities. So far there's been a positive response from hundreds of sites and the work of erecting the signs, from Edinburgh to Enfield, has begun. More than 150 signs have been erected so far, with permissions granted for 130 more and permissions pending for a further eighty.

The man leading the project is the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's UK Operations Supervisor, Andrew Crompton. He says it's a massive task just seeking all the necessary permissions, but the project is now picking up speed. His regional supervisors have been busy overseeing the erection of signs at the sites where permissions have been secured, and there's been good progress in areas where there were many visitors for the Olympics -- in the London area, and around Weymouth, for example, where the sailing events were held.

Installing one of the new signs at Comely Bank Cemetery in Edinburgh, which has 302 war graves. The signs can be erected on walls or railings or on a post near the cemetery.



Ultimately, the Commission would like to have a sign saying "at this location there are Commonwealth War Graves" at every site. The Director of the Commission's UK Area, Barry Murphy, said: "We are keen to raise awareness of these burials and to remind people that they do not necessarily need to go to France or Belgium to visit war graves. Nearly every town and village has war graves within its own local cemetery or churchyard, they can be found almost on your own doorstep."

The Commission's UK Area also looks after the Commonwealth War Graves in Iceland, so Akureyi Cemetery in Iceland has been given a new sign too.



Local authorities and other organisations keen to see the signs erected at their cemeteries can contact Andrew Crompton directly. Andrew says the signs measure 43cm in width and 23 cm in depth; and they will be erected by Commission staff. His email address is Andrew.Crompton@cwgc.org



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