The Commemoration and Care of First World War Dead Buried in the United Kingdom through the lens of the Organisational Culture of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 1917-1939

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Abstract

This thesis explores the commemoration and care of First World War dead in the United Kingdom by the Imperial (later known as Commonwealth) War Graves Commission. While much research has previously discussed the work of the Commission within the context of its work overseas, and visits to the battlefields have increased in popularity over the decades since the conflict ended, the graves of those buried on home soil have received little to no attention from both the public and academics. The thesis aims to challenge the preconceived notions surrounding the work of the Commission and the broader historiography of Remembrance in the United Kingdom through highlighting the ways within which the memorialisation practices found here both conform to and contrast with the styles utilised at overseas cemeteries. Furthermore, the thesis highlights the adaptability that the Commission had to utilise in order to extend its remit to United Kingdom-based war graves, particularly when considering the moral, financial and legal involvement of the bereaved.

Across the five chapters that formulate the main body of the text, various aspects of the Commission's work will be explained. This includes the organisational, legal and administrative histories of the organisation in addition to the impact, both emotionally and spatially, that these sites of memory have had on the broader rites and rituals associated with Remembrance. In contrast to current beliefs surrounding this topic, the thesis highlights that the interactions between the public and these sites of memory conform more towards attitudes associated with civilianised attitudes to grief and bereavement, rather than being completely omitted from Remembrance ceremonies from the outset.

Moreover, the thesis highlights the influence of other similar organisations on the work of the Commission in relation to its task in Britain. Utilising a case study of the creation of Cannock Chase German Cemetery in the 1950s and 1960s, the thesis highlights that the Commission adapted its own practices based on the precedents set by other similar organisations. This raises further questions surrounding the challenges of ownership over war graves, and how the legal and moral impact of these queries often made the Commission's task in the United Kingdom unique when compared to the cemeteries and memorials in its care overseas.

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List of Abbreviations

ABMC: American Battle Monuments Commission.

CWGC: Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

IWGC: Imperial War Graves Commission.

OGS: Oorlogsgravenstichting.

ONAC: Office National des Anciens Combattants.

VDK or Volksbund: Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge.

WI: Women's Institute.

Introduction

Since the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, the conflict has continued to dominate discussions among both academics and the public. The conflict has been considered to be the first example of modern, mass-industrialised warfare and is often discussed within the context of total war, with mass-death on a scale never experienced before. This has been further perpetuated by the continued remembrance rituals associated with commemorating the First World War; in a British context, this includes participating in Remembrance Sunday services and being surrounded by local war memorials bearing the names of the dead lost within that community more than a century ago.

This significant loss of life has also enabled the mainstream media to utilise it successfully to emphasise the impact of the First World War. From *Blackadder Goes Forth* (1989) to adaptations of Vera Brittain's *Testament of Youth* (1979 and 2015), the overwhelming themes highlighted in these stories include the "Lions led by Donkeys" rhetoric and the "Lost Generation" that was a favoured perception during the latter half of the twentieth century. While the historiography has largely moved on from this limiting viewpoint, the fact that the public invariably continue to see depictions of the First World War in this way means that this memory continues to have strength and popular appeal.

A continued interest in remembering the dead has dominated the British attitude towards the First World War. Indeed, it is almost expected that a trip to the former Western Front will occur during secondary school education, with many individuals deeming it their duty to continually make a pilgrimage to these locations and pay their respects at the gravesides of the dead. Whether the cemeteries and memorials they visit include long-lost relatives or not, there is an expectation of acknowledging the sacrifices made by the dead by continuing to visit the final resting place of their loved ones and honour their memory in perpetuity. The organisation tasked with ensuring that these sites are cared for in perpetuity is the Commonwealth (formerly known as Imperial) War Graves Commission, who care for more than 1.7 million individuals from the British Empire's Armed Forces who lost their lives during the two World Wars. The Commission undertakes this task in more than 150 countries and territories worldwide, at more than 23,000 locations[1] and the organisation's work is synonymous with the commemoration and care of war dead from the early twentieth century. This thesis is, in its nature, an organisational history of the Commission through the lens of its work in the United Kingdom.

The modern-day Commonwealth War Graves Commission began during the First World War as the Graves Registration Commission, which came under the British Army in 1915. Tasked with recording

1 Commonwealth War Graves Commission, 'About Us,' *CWGC*, 2020. Available at: https://www.cwgc.org/about-us [Accessed 20th April 2020].

and caring for the graves it could find under the leadership of Fabian Ware, a commander of a mobile unit of the British Red Cross whose idea this task was, the organisation was established by Royal Charter in 1917 as the Imperial War Graves Commission.[2] Many of the key figures of the day had some involvement at its inception: Sir Herbert Baker, Sir Reginald Blomfield and Sir Edwin Lutyens were chosen as the Commission's Principal Architects while Rudyard Kipling served as the organisation's Literary Advisor. In the aftermath of the war, the Commission sent the then-Director of the British Museum, Sir Frederic Kenyon, out to the former battlefields in order to consider how would be best to commemorate the dead. The outcome of Sir Frederic's work for the Commission was the Kenyon Report, which was published by His Majesty's Stationery Office in 1918 and provided the framework for how the Commission was going to undertake its monumental task. In his report, Sir Frederic outlined the main principles of commemoration that the Commission would follow. They were that:

1. Each of the dead should be commemorated, by name, either on a headstone or a memorial.
2. The headstone or the memorial should be permanent.
3. The headstones should be uniform.[3]

As can be expected, there was some backlash from members of the public at the time about these decisions. Many of the grieving families took umbrage at the decision to not lift the non-repatriation ban imposed by the British Army in 1915, and some would have preferred a cross to mark the grave of their loved one as opposed to a grave marker that did not obviously show the religious beliefs of the casualty from a distance.[4] Signatories wrote to the President of the Commission, HRH the Prince of Wales, demanding for his intervention in the matter. In 1920, the matters came to a head with a parliamentary debate regarding the work of the organisation; the issue was settled and withdrawn in the favour of the Commission.[5] The first three 'experimental cemeteries,' Le Treport, Forceville and Louvencourt, were completed in the same year, partially in the hope of providing the public with a physical representation of the Commission's plans and consequently gain the support of the majority of the bereaved.

The organisation was renamed as the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in 1960 in order to reflect the changing landscape of the former British Empire and its transition into the modern

2 Ibid.
3 References throughout Frederic Kenyon, *War Graves: How the Cemeteries Abroad will be Designed* (London: HMSO, 1918); condensed version as found on Commonwealth War Graves Commission, 'About Us,' *CWGC*, 2020. Available at: https://www.cwgc.org/about-us [Accessed 20th April 2020]
4 Commonwealth War Graves Commission Archives (hereafter CWGC), CWGC/1/1/5/21 (WG 783 PT. 1), War Graves Association, 1st May 1919-2nd January 1925. References to this can be found in Alex King, *Memorials of the Great War in Britain: The Symbolism and Politics of Remembrance* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014); p. 187, Richard Van Emden, *Missing: The Need for Closure after the Great War* (Yorkshire: Pen and Sword Military, 2019), p. 153 and (2018), *CWGC Interns Handbook* [Unpublished guide to the various pieces of information imparted onto the CWGC Centenary Interns during their training], p. 26.
5 King, *Memorials of the Great War*, p. 187.

Commonwealth. Due to the fact this thesis covers the entirety of the organisation's history, it will be referred to as "the Commission" throughout.

As has been highlighted in the literature review later on in this section, and indeed throughout this thesis, while there is a great deal of both academic work and public history output relating to the First World War there are significant gaps in the historiography and popular memory that need to be addressed. In addition to the Non-Commemoration Report and Special Committee created by the Commission to address inequalities on the basis of race that appear in its work, a task that is still ongoing at the time of writing this thesis,[6] the obvious lack of discussion relating to the First World War dead buried in Britain and cared for by the Commission needs to be acknowledged. This thesis hopes to begin a conversation around this topic through highlighting the breadth of the work undertaken by the Commission in the United Kingdom, and emphasise how this gap in the historiography significantly limits current historiographical debates that relate to the culture and memory of the First World War in Britain.

Prior to explaining the methodology and structure of this research, it is important to provide a brief overview of the work of the Commission in the United Kingdom, and some of the reasons why the discussion of this particular area of First World War history is important. There are more than 306,000 commemorations in the United Kingdom and Ireland cared for at over 13,000 locations, which means that the United Kingdom and the island of Ireland have the second highest concentration of World War burials, falling only behind France. This also means that there are, in fact, more war graves in the United Kingdom and Ireland than there are in Belgium.[7] Among these commemorations are approximately 170,000 burials, of which over 37,000 are marked with private memorials chosen by the family in lieu of a standard Commission headstone.[8]

Furthermore, these war graves are not often found in set war graves plots, as they would be overseas; instead, they are often buried close to their family's home in the local churchyard or municipal cemetery. Consequently, 90% of the sites found in the United Kingdom and Ireland contain fewer than ten war graves. In addition, most of these sites are not directly owned by the Commission; instead, these locations are operated and maintained by local authorities, churches, private companies or individuals that the Commission have to liaise with in order to undertake its maintenance work.[9]

6 More information on this topic can be found on the CWGC's website. Commonwealth War Graves Commission, 'Report of the Special Committee to Review Historical Inequalities in Commemoration,' *CWGC*, 2022. Available at: https://www.cwgc.org/non-commemoration-report/ [Accessed 22nd July 2022].
7 *Commonwealth War Graves Commission in the United Kingdom and Ireland*, leaflet, 2020, p. 2. The number listed in the main body of the thesis relates to the number of casualties in the Commission's care from the First and Second World Wars.
8 Ibid., p. 4.
9 Ibid.

These factors that are unique to the United Kingdom and Ireland enable the current historiography to be challenged by looking at these situations, but also provide us with a number of unique opportunities.

The situation in the United Kingdom enables us to look at an alternative history in real time, which is a rarity: that of what could have happened, had the Commission not come into existence and the commemoration and care of war dead had been placed within the hands of the families. The inconsistent styles within which individuals chose to commemorate their loved ones often meant they could not be easily spotted as war dead, especially as time has moved along and the individuals have moved outside of living memory. Moreover, this highlights how class distinctions could have been made, which the Commission strove to avoid in its own work; those from lower incomes may have been buried in unmarked or multiple-occupancy graves, while more affluent families could have created dramatic mausoleums and statues that dominated the cemetery. Whilst it is arguably clear to modern visitors that the Commission's approach may have been a more effective way of commemorating the war dead, these examples nevertheless provide us with an insight into how people chose to express their grief publicly and privately, and thus enable us to gain a better awareness of how individuals grieved the loss of their loved ones as a result of the First World War.

Moreover, it challenges the popular perception of the Commission as being an organisation that was unwavering in its rules, with its rigidity providing us with the beautiful sites overseas such as Tyne Cot and Thiepval that hundreds of thousands of people visit each year. Through the case study of its work in the United Kingdom, the public and academic worlds can see a different attitude from the Commission: one of compromise and adaptability, where it was appropriate to do so. This completely contrasts to the current historiography of the Commission, as it shows how the exceptionalism that is found in significant cases in the United Kingdom meant that the Commission had to show flexibility in a way that it was not required to do elsewhere. This compromising attitude shown by the Commission was often based on pragmatism, and the fact that it often did not have the same legal backing that they found overseas due to families owning grave rights, but it was also based on moral issues and viewpoints.

Indeed, it is clear that the Commission placed great emphasis on its own public image over sticking to the rules outlined in its charter, and through this carefully constructed image it could control the narratives around its work. This may also explain why the war graves in the United Kingdom have not previously received the same amount of attention as war graves elsewhere: as they did not follow the usual rules, the Commission instead opted to draw media and public attention towards its core sites overseas. Although it is clear that the war graves in Britain did initially receive some attention, as families moved away from locations and the individuals shifted out of living memory there was not

the same degree of attention placed upon them by both the public and the Commission itself as the cemeteries and memorials found overseas.

It is also worth noting why there are casualties from the First World War in the United Kingdom. The following reasons can possibly answer this question. A casualty may be commemorated in the UK due to the fact that:

- They died of sickness or disease in a military hospital after being repatriated back to the UK for treatment.
- They died due to training or other accidents whilst in service.
- They died due to enemy action over the UK, such as air raids.
- They were killed in action in the air or at sea, and their bodies were later washed ashore.

However, this ignores some casualties that challenge the Commission's rules: those who were transported back to Britain. This task was often undertaken through a private agreement between the families and those who exhumed the remains, but it should not be ignored that those who died pre-1915 did not come under the guidance of the non-repatriation policy.[10] This list is not an exhaustive one, and every case holds a different story. However, for the purposes of this thesis, these finite rules will be utilised to begin the conversation about casualties commemorated in the United Kingdom and whom are in the Commission's care. There are also a number of different cemetery 'types' that are found in the UK that should be noted. These are:

- Directly maintained sites.
- Military cemeteries.
- War grave plots.
- Screen walls.
- Scattered graves.

Each of these differ in size and how much involvement the Commission has in maintaining the sites. More discussion into specific cases at each site type will be considered throughout this thesis.

The fact that there are a range of site types in Britain also challenges the public's perception of the work of the Commission in the United Kingdom. As will be shown in a later chapter, the impact of these sites on the public varied over the last century, and there was considerable Press coverage when cemeteries and memorials were constructed in Britain. Once again, these records can enable historians to gain an insight into public versus private mourning practices during this period in a way that has not been done before, and ensure that the nuances surrounding this topic are fully appreciated.

10 The non-repatriation policy was not lifted until the 1950s after the Korean War. For further information, see Kim Sengupta, '"Diana Effect" Blamed for War Weariness,' *Independent*, 2010. Available at: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/diana-effect-blamed-for-war-weariness-1936009.html [Accessed 8th April 2020].

Of course, it cannot be ignored that this thesis is merely a starting point for these discussions rather than the definitive discussion. Due to the breadth of the study and the need to ensure that the case studies shown were given the appropriate amount of discussion and analysis, research had to be narrowed to only include the First World War graves found in England; while this thus makes the thesis limited in its discussion of regional and national differences, it is hoped that the study will provide a base-line from which further research can begin. As will be mentioned in the conclusion of the thesis, in addition to looking at regional differences in commemoration within England, there is an opportunity to look at case studies within the other nations that make up the British Isles in future research. This will continue to aid the historiography of this topic to grow, and for unique situations to be acknowledged. Indeed, this could also be extended to a comparative study of battlefield sites versus those individuals buried closer to home elsewhere, in order to see how far state-sponsored memorialisation practices outweighed the individual grief being expressed by families.

Moreover, there is an opportunity in the run-up to the centenary of the outbreak of the Second World War to begin case studies that compare how they are remembered in cemeteries across Britain, and how this differs from the First World War dead. Based on preliminary research into this area, it is clear that the Commission was able to assert more authority over how these individuals were commemorated, not least because they were already established as the organisation caring for war dead at this time. This explains why, when we visit cemeteries in Britain with both First and Second World War dead, the First World War graves are often found scattered throughout a location while the Second World War dead have generally been placed within designated war graves plots. More research into this area, which is outside of the scope of this thesis, is required in order to ascertain further detail into this area; nevertheless, these distinctions will provide a fascinating insight into the grief and bereavement practices associated with the two World Wars, and perhaps enable further explanations into the reasons why these conflicts continue to dominate popular memory among the British public.

Methodology

Prior to explaining how this thesis is structured, it is important to emphasise the ways in which this research was conducted. Researching and writing a thesis during a global pandemic, whereby many archives were closed and face-to-face interactions were not possible, meant that the methodology to complete this thesis needed to be adapted greatly to suit the current climate. Thus, much of the research into primary resources relied heavily on the digital documentation available. In this section, how this research was conducted will be briefly explained in order to provide an overview of the research methods behind this thesis.

The primary research method utilised for this thesis, as can be expected for a history-related PhD, was to utilise archival documentation. The main archive for this research was the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's own organisational archives at its Head Office in Maidenhead with supplementary files being found at regional and local archives, as well as the National Archives, Parliamentary Archives and British Newspaper database created by the British Library. A large proportion of this needed to be done remotely and utilising digitised collections initially. The records that were available online guided much of the focus of this thesis, and enabled a discussion around a range of different topics that had not previously been considered when preparing for the thesis.

Recent directives by Mass Observation during the centenary period were also considered in order to understand the public's perception of the First World War; while these were useful to some extent, the focus was often more to do with broader commemorative practices and not as useful as had been hoped. The apathy by the British public during the centenary overshadowed the responses in the directives, and it became clear that much of the focus of the report was on overseas war dead through questions relating to the recently-built Fromelles (Pheasant Wood) Cemetery. Therefore, the information provided within other archival documents were seen as more pertinent to this thesis.

The importance of digitised records, particularly during a global pandemic, cannot be overstated in aiding the completion of this study; without these files already being available from a remote location, the research would have had to pause indefinitely and the number of records looked at would not be as many as there are. Indeed, by supplementing in-person visits with online catalogues searches and studies of PDF versions financial costs and time constraints were mitigated, and research could continue even when an in-person visit was impossible. Moreover, through these files the patterns and subject matters that needed to be prioritised emerged and thus when archives did open it was easier to concentrate on which ones to visit as a matter of urgency. The breadth of files available digitally was second to none; from Enquiries records to newspaper cuttings, and from meeting minutes to works orders, the breadth of the work of the Commission in Britain and its impact could be further explored.

However, archival documentation was not the only research method utilised during this process, as it was important to visualise how these sites look today in order to draw comparison to original ideas and the ways these locations have altered over time. When it was possible to do so, site visits were of paramount importance to this study in order to gain an idea of the types of memorials individuals would see if they made a pilgrimage to these locations; this also enabled further archival research to explain why there were particular idiosyncrasies at a site that may not be seen elsewhere. While this was primarily based around sites near to my home, or close to locations that were already being visited, and thus cannot provide a full picture of every story, it enabled the information held within archival documentation to have a real-life impact and ensure that this research both supports further

study by both academic researchers and the general public with an interest in this topic. Indeed, it is very clear that the circumstances faced during the process of undertaking this research gave a methodological stimulus that may not have been utilised otherwise.

Structure

When structuring this thesis, it was felt that breaking down the information thematically would be the best way to explain the research; this was particularly important given the breadth of the study. The three core themes identified by this study were administrative history, reactions to the topic by the bereaved and the broader impact of the work in the United Kingdom by the Commission over the last century.

In chapter one, an introduction to the administrative and organisational history of the Commission will be provided, in order to provide an overview of its work. In the chapter, it will be argued that the Commission had to be considerably more flexible than it had been overseas when dealing with requests from the families and it was through this flexibility that the many exceptions to its rules were created. The flexibility was not a choice completely undertaken by the Commission, as it had to factor in the additional difficulties relating to the delicate situation surrounding grave ownership and the proximity of the families to the graves. Indeed, as the Commission did not always have sole rights to the graves, and the families could easily view changes being undertaken and complain prior to work being completed, the Commission had to be much more adaptable than it was overseas in order to ensure all parties were happy with the memorialisation of a particular individual.

This chapter also enables a broader debate into how these sites of memory, and the administrative and organisational practices associated with them, differed from those enforced overseas and what the practicalities behind these decisions were. In particular, it enables a broader study of how these unique situations and regulations came into being, and the ways in which the Commission adapted its policies to suit the needs of the environment it was working in. While this can be seen in some cases of its work elsewhere, arguably this pragmatism and flexibility cannot be seen to the same level anywhere else in the organisation's work.

In the second chapter, the focus will shift more towards some of the case studies found as part of this research in order to illustrate some of the work that the Commission does in the United Kingdom. Using the enquiries, or "e," files released by the Commission in April 2020 this chapter will highlight how these enquiries from the bereaved differ from those with loved ones buried overseas. These files will then be utilised to highlight the broader emotional reactions felt by the grieving families in

Britain, and how they chose to interact with the Commission in order to ensure that their loved ones were not forgotten.

Once again, the contents of this chapter highlights that the decisions made by the Commission when considering how to conduct its duties in the United Kingdom relied more on pragmatism than on what it wanted to do or could realistically enforce; unlike the sites overseas, these records were more about informing the Commission out of courtesy than to seek permission. This differing role held by the Commission in this scenario thus meant that it had to adapt how it interacted with the relatives in order to address this new dynamic, and ensure that it could have some say in what was being undertaken to the graves in spite of having no real legal backing.

In the final chapter, the broader impact of the Commission's work in the United Kingdom will be discussed, in order to highlight that the popular perception of this work has not always been to view it through a secondary lens. Indeed, rather than it being a secret that was not acknowledged by local communities, ceremonies to unveil sites were fairly well-publicised by regional media and attended by Commission staff at the highest level. The chapter will argue that the interaction between local war dead and the public has evolved over time and mirrors more civilianised rituals surrounding remembrance, which again challenges the ongoing narrative surrounding memorialisation rites associated with British commemorative practices. Moreover, the media reportage of these events enables a challenging of how hierarchies within these rituals has previously been perceived. In particular, the representation of veterans and their roles within these ceremonies has been somewhat altered through these records, to again emphasise that veterans were not always left on the periphery of such practices.

This chapter aims to shift the focus away from war memorials and back towards the gravesides themselves, in order to highlight that there is more nuance between the public versus private mourning that took place in the aftermath of the First World War. Indeed, it can be argued that the ceremonies that took place at gravesides provide the perfect example of Victorian mourning practices being utilised to come to terms with the mass-scale losses experienced as a consequence of the First World War, and enable the historiography to better reflect the fact that the primary mourning location for the bereaved was not always an abstract, state-sponsored war memorial that listed the names of all those who died within a local community.

Literature Review

Now that the thesis has been appropriately introduced and its contents outlined, it is important to recognise the works that have previously discussed similar topics and have thus influenced this research. Although there has not been much direct debate relating to this specific topic, there have been some conversations that can both be supported and challenged by the findings of this thesis. For ease of understanding, the literature review has been broken down into thematic sections; in each section, the current and historic historiographical debates of that topic have been acknowledged, before emphasising the gaps within that particular discussion that this thesis hopes to close.

Histories of Commemorating War Dead

Prior to the First World War, casualties of a conflict could expect little in death. If a group of visitors were to make a pilgrimage to the former battlefields upon which the Battle of Waterloo was fought, for example, they would not find the same style of commemoration as those found in Commission cemeteries; in fact, most of the casualties of this conflict were either repatriated at the cost of their families or buried in mass unmarked graves.[11] There was a shift away from this commemorative practice during the mid to latter part of the nineteenth century, with many of the casualties from the American Civil War having a final resting place in organised, dedicated plots with uniform headstones.[12] This continued into the South African, or Boer, War of 1899-1902; indeed, some of the sites created to commemorate the British dead of this conflict are now cared for by the Commission on a contractual basis.[13] These shifts in how the public remembered the dead of their armed forces may have inspired how the Commission chose to deal with its monumental task, and some similarities can clearly be seen in the sites maintained by the organisation today.

While there has not been extensive research into UK-based war graves as forms of memorialisation, the wider topic of memorialisation has been discussed at length by a range of academics. Memory and memorialisation are interesting to research as they constantly evolve and are reconstructed to suit the needs of the audience at the time. As Susanne Brandt has acknowledged, popular culture can utilise certain areas of history in order to perpetuate myths or alter opinions on certain events and leaders through the media type. Indeed, a well-known example of this is the famous final scene in *Blackadder*

11 Gavin Stamp, *The Memorial to the Missing of the Somme* (London: Profile, 2006), p. 74.
12 Ibid., p. 76.
13 *CWGC Interns Handbook* [Unpublished guide to the various pieces of information imparted onto the CWGC Centenary Interns during their training] (2018), p. 7.

Goes Forth with the main cast knowingly going "over the top" to their deaths before being phased into a field of poppies.[14]

The First World War has a completely different image to other conflicts, such as the Second World War, and many arguments that began in the 1960s continue to be a part of commemoration. Rituals that began as a way of helping bereaved families to deal with their loss have morphed into acts by those who may not have ever met a First World War veteran or experienced the war first-hand, yet are expected to uphold the values behind the commemoration without questioning. This has been discussed by Lucy Noakes within the context of the centenary period. In her research, she states that as wartime bereavement experiences began to move out of living memory, the image of the 'sacrificial, male, combatant' became 'enshrined at the heart of British war remembrance' and continues to hold its place in commemorative practices.[15] She also argued that many of the formal and public acts of remembrance during the centenary were 'deeply political'[16] and that the cultural memory of the war as 'a time of loss, grief and bereavement' shaped many community heritage projects.[17]

Stéphane Tison argued in an online article in 2019 that monuments can provide a way for families to 'obtain public recognition of their sorrow' while simultaneously providing a 'political dimension' to the grief of the living.[18] The so-called 'cult of the dead' synonymous with the First World War was physically represented on a national level through the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior and the Cenotaph. On a local level, the thousands of war memorials in almost every town and village in the United Kingdom provide a place for regional focus.[19] War memorials often stand in churches and churchyards no more than a few feet from a war casualty, yet the focal point of the commemoration is not the grave of the casualty. Indeed, many who visit the war memorial will not realise they are not as far from a war casualty as popular culture would lead them to believe.

The political aspect in memorialisation has also been studied extensively. Leanne Cutcher et al argued in their 2016 work 'Spaces and Places of Remembering and Commemoration' that there is a focus on

14 Susanne Brandt, 'Memory of the War: Popular Memory 1918-1945, 1945 to the Present,' *1914-1918 Online*, 2017. Available at: https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/memory_of_the_war_popular_memory_1918-1945_1945_to_the_present?version=1.1 [Accessed 17th November 2019], p. 3.
15 Lucy Noakes, 'Centenary (United Kingdom),' *1914-1918 Online: International Encyclopaedia of the First World War*, 2019. Available at: https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/centenary_united_kingdom?version=1.0 [Accessed 16th November 2019], pp. 4-5.
16 Ibid., p. 5.
17 Ibid., pp. 9-10.
18 Stéphane Tison, 'Commemoration, Cult of the Fallen,' *1914-1918 Online*, 2019. Available at: https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/commemoration_cult_of_the_fallen?version=1.0 [Accessed 17th November 2019], p. 7.
19 Ibid., p. 9.

individual memories in most research into remembering and commemoration. They argued that organisational remembering and commemoration are often 'deliberately structured in order to produce certain relations between the past […] and the present, with the aim of influencing possible futures'[20] which highlights the inevitable inaccuracies and altering needs of commemorative practices.

John R. Gillis has supported this in the edited work *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (1996). He states that the memorials built in the interwar period were qualitatively and quantitatively different from anything that had gone before them. Indeed, due to the mass-scale of the death that occurred, the major combatant nations eventually chose to erect tombs of unknown soldiers, which served as a way of 'remembering everyone by remembering no one in particular.'[21] By the 1960s the period of national commemoration was slowly coming to an end, and in this decade there was an opportunity to bequeath later generations with a 'plethora of monuments, holidays, cemeteries, museums, and archives'[22] that would ensure that the memory of the war and its dead would continue to live on. However, there has been the rise of the anti-monument movement in recent times, who advocate a rejection of the notion of memory sites while simultaneously deritualising and dematerialising remembering.[23] This highlights that, while commemorative practices continue to be a part of national and individual identities, the sites at which these events would occur are being rejected due to a lack of relevancy in the modern age.

However, Thomas Laqueur argued in the same edited work as Gillis' research that the Cenotaph and the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior are able to 'concentrate the hypernominalism of the headstones and inscriptions,'[24] and thus enable the public to have a focal point for their grief. Laqueur has also highlighted that war graves have a place in memorialisation, as the names and headstones represent the war dead to the living in their 'ungraspable quantitative specificity.'[25] However, this appears to focus on specific war grave sites as opposed to the scatter graves typical of UK sites, which emphasises the need for research into this area of memorialisation and commemoration.

The link between memorialisation and medieval memory has been discussed greatly in relation to the First World War. Stefan Goebel stated in *The Great War and Medieval Memory: War, Remembrance and Medievalism in Britain and Germany, 1914-1940* (2009) that cultural memory, as opposed to communicative memory, has to rely on a 'system of memory aids' such as the rites, myths or

20 Ibid., p. 5.
21 John R. Gillis, 'Memory and Identity: The History of a Relationship' in John R. Gillis (ed.), *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 11.
22 Ibid., p. 14.
23 Ibid., p. 17.
24 Thomas W. Lacqueur, 'Memory and Naming in the Great War' in John R. Gillis (ed.), *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 163.
25 Ibid., p. 164.

monuments that encapsulate much of the British Great War commemoration.[26] As a result of this, he argues that there are three dimensions when studying war memorials: 'their iconography, epigraphy and ceremonial role.'[27] While the act of naming casualties was crucial to remembrance rites, it was not always practicable to do so; therefore, symbolic language was required to represent the war dead.[28] Consequently, this created a 'cult of the fallen soldier' as described by George Mosse in his seminal works on the topic.[29] Mosse was vital to the advancement of the interpretation of the political function of war memorials; using mostly German and Italian case studies, his work explores how the political landscape within which these war memorials were built enabled the creation of the cult of the fallen soldier in order to make the dead properties of the state.

The cult of the fallen soldier, and its impact on the public's memory of the First World War, can be seen in countless war memorials across the UK on both a national and local scale, with 'honour' and 'glory' used regularly on monuments. Moreover, there was a connection to the history of warriors and religion through the use of biblical phrases such as "THEIR NAME LIVETH FOR EVERMORE". However, while there was initially a focus on these memorials relating to the 'honour' upheld by those who died during the conflict, the 'mud, blood and futility' narrative perpetuated among some scholars in the 1960s and 1970s now largely dominate modern memorialisation. The fact that this school of thought continues to have such an impact on commemorative practices emphasises the need of the public to have their own views of the war be recognised in war memorials.

War memorials themselves continue to be contested sites, as there are varying beliefs regarding who should be on a war memorial. Some include the names of all those who died from that particular village, while others list all those who served from that village regardless of whether they survived or not. Much of the discussion has focused on these sites of memory without addressing the war graves in the UK, which can easily be seen as sites of memory in their own right. This thesis aims to bridge the gap between these two elements of commemoration in order to create a narrative that appropriately represents local and national grief as a result of the First World War.

Of course, it cannot be ignored that the most seminal works on the history of the commemoration of the First World War have been written by Jay Winter, and his work *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* is a seminal work on any reading list for a scholar on the topic. Winter argues in this work that war memorials inhabit three distinct spaces and periods: scattered on the home front prior to

26 Stefan Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory: War, Remembrance and Medievalism in Britain and Germany, 1914-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 16.
27 Ibid., p. 23.
28 Ibid., p. 32.
29 Sonia Letitia Batten, 'Memorial Text Narratives in Britain, c. 1890-1930' (PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 2011), p. 15.

1918, in postwar churches and civic sites in the decade following the Armistice and in war cemeteries.[30] Unlike Mosse's work, which provided a functional interpretation of the memorial, Winter focused on the emotional impact of memorialisation after the First World War. He argues that these sites of memory were immensely important for the bereaved, particularly as touching the names of those who had died in the conflict was often an important aspect of the 'rituals of separation' described by Winter.[31] This viewpoint has been supported by some of the primary evidence relating to the topic, and particularly in relation to battlefield tourism; a key part of the trip was often to visit a physical grave or name on a memorial to the missing and touch it to feel connected to the lost individual.

However as with much of, if not all, of the literature covering the commemoration of the First World War, Winter's presumes that the British Empire's war dead and the bereaved were separated spatially from each other with visits to the battlefields often occurring infrequently. His work neglects those who, similarly to French soldiers, were buried closer to home and thus are adjacent as opposed to completely included in his three spaces. Indeed, while the dead may be buried in churchyards or designated war cemeteries they were often kept separate from centralised public mourning rituals. This omission also ignores the gap between civilianised graves versus the "true" war graves found at war cemeteries overseas; in relegating the war dead buried in the United Kingdom to a secondary role, it ignores the immense impact these sites had on personalised memorialisation. Personalised memorialisation can be incredibly difficult to document, which may explain this oversight in such an iconic work, but it does not mean that it is of less importance when discussing commemoration of the First World War. This thesis will build on works such as Winter's to challenge the perceived social norms, and to bring in more areas of discussion and exceptionalism into this aspect of the historiography of the First World War.

As will be highlighted throughout the thesis, many of the commemorative practices and memorials that were initially constructed to support bereaved families through their grief continue to dominate public understanding of the First World War in Britain. The rituals associated with remembering the dead of the Great War, particularly Remembrance Sunday services, have been practised for more than a century and are designed to ensure that the sacrifices made by those in modern conflicts are not forgotten. Indeed, rather than creating entirely new set of rituals for more recent wars, the formalities surrounding remembering the dead of the First World War have instead been extended to include every conflict and skirmish that the British and Commonwealth Armed Forces have been involved in since the cessation of the Great War. The theme of remembrance itself is related to a variety of

30 Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 79.
31 Ibid., p. 113.

physical acts, from wearing a poppy to hearing the Last Post, and these displays of public mourning transform into strong impacts on societal understanding of their significance. Furthermore, these practices, both physical and societal, continue to dominate the popular memory of the First World War in Britain.

In the public's viewpoint of the First World War, memorialisation is an expected part of its commemoration as has been shown in surveys undertaken by Mass Observation that will be outlined in this thesis. Civic memorials, which generally sit outside of the scope of the Commission, vary in size, scale and purpose. Indeed, as shown in the works of other historians such as Alex King, memorials could be as small as private shrines created within family homes to as grand as the state sponsored war memorials still heavily featured in remembrance events. Local memorialisation itself began very quickly, with many of these monuments being unveiled in public ceremonies prior to 1920.[32] There was not a set design for civic monuments, so they were produced in a variety of forms. Generally, however, civic memorials can be categorised into two key forms: utilitarian and traditional.

Utilitarian memorials are often those that are ignored by the public today, but at the time of their unveiling would have been fundamental to the community. By creating spaces for the local people to use, such as village halls and memorial gardens, the public could quietly reflect on their loss without being forced to acknowledge the rationale behind generating the space. Traditional memorials tend to be preferred in a modern setting, as it is clear that their purpose is to create a public place to grieve at the heart of the community in mourning. These imposing designs often have religious connotations, such as crosses, included in their architecture and are often placed where they would be seen by as many people as possible.

Regardless of the precise memorial chosen to remember the dead in the civic world, there was usually a key feature included for the first time: the names of the dead. Indeed, what is unique about the designs of the First World War memorials when compared to monuments to earlier battles is the presence of names, and Stefan Goebel has referred to this phenomenon as having triggered 'an explosion of naming.'[33] Prior to the Great War, it was uncommon to see the names of all of the dead on war memorials, if they were even created; the focus was instead on the wider Regimental or battle history. By including names on war memorials, local authorities and memorial committees theoretically enabled communities to ensure that their loved ones were remembered[34] and shifted the

32 Adrian Gregory has noted that of the 5,930 First World War memorial unveilings catalogued by the UK National Inventory of War Memorials at the beginning of the twentieth century, more than 5,150 had occurred by 1920. Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 257.
33 Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory*, p. 29.
34 Ibid.

focus away from nameless, common sacrifice towards individual loss.[35] Furthermore, the decision to name the dead on memorials had a function within the commemorative narrative of remembrance; in many villages, a list that named all of the war dead from that community were read aloud on Armistice Day and as part of many services to remember the First World War.[36]

Whilst civic war memorials are outside of the scope of this thesis, it is important acknowledge the similarities between how the Commission chose who it should mention by name at its sites and how local institutions opted to commemorate their dead. Much like the Commission, civic organisations could veto or include names as they saw fit; there was not a set guide on who could be included. However, unlike the Commission, due to the sheer number of different groups tasked with naming local war dead, inconsistencies began to appear based on the viewpoints of the boards of these organisations. Indeed, as they did not often work as a cohesive unit and there was no set governmental policy, the civic institutions tasked with creating war memorials had to rely on their own viewpoints in order to name the local war dead. As a consequence of this lack of uniformity, there are examples of some casualties being named on multiple memorials thanks to connections to a number of groups and areas, whilst the names of others deemed unworthy of being mentioned by the memorial committees being omitted entirely. In particular, the discrepancies in naming all those who served in the conflict, as opposed to those who died on active service, may cause confusion for modern researchers used to the Commission's policies of commemoration. Although these exceptional circumstances do not follow the expected rules, they nevertheless provide a fascinating insight into the priorities of the war memorial committees themselves.

Rituals and memorialisation dominate our understanding of the impact of the First World War and one key feature of the British commemoration of the conflict is the rituals associated with Armistice Day. It was apparent that Britain required a national shrine of remembrance at home, and these were provided by both the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior and the Cenotaph, which were unveiled on Armistice Day in 1920.[37] For the bereaved, these key sites in the heart of London provided a focal point for national and individual remembrance. For grieving relatives, the individual buried as the Unknown Warrior could be imagined as their missing loved one, enabling them to feel physically close to them once more. Furthermore, these relics enabled individuals today to feel part of the history and mythology surrounding the First World War; by participating in the remembrance of the war and

35 Hannah M. Jeruc, '"To Whom Does the Body of the Dead Soldier Belong?": An Examination of British Imperial Strategy and the Making and Meaning of World War I Memorials,' *Lawrence University Honours Projects,* Vol. 87 (2016), p. 5.
36 Gregory, *The Silence of Memory*, p. 23.
37 Gerard DeGroot, *Back in Blighty: The British at Home in World War I* (London: Vintage, 2014), p. 424.

imagining how their ancestors would have felt, modern audiences may feel they have gained a significant understanding of the conflict and the experiences of those who served.[38]

The functionality of memorials has received increasing debates within the historiography of the First World War, as they dominate popular narratives about the conflict. Alex King has highlighted two main schools of thought: some have argued that the principle force of memorialisation was 'the affirmation and propagation of political ideas about wars and the nations which fight them,' whilst others have described them as being required to enable families to cope with their grief.[39] Hannah M Jeruc has argued that the intense presence of British First World War memorials, both in the domestic sphere and on an international scale, was a nationally inclusive effort as it was a consequence of combined contribution across all levels of society.[40] Jeruc includes the architecture of the cemeteries and memorials created by the Commission within this strategy, as these locations are arguably as recognisable as a local war memorial.[41]

Whilst it is apparent that all levels of society were involved in the permanent memorialisation of their dead, it is important to note that in many cases that those who were the decision-makers were usually a small group drawn from the social and political elites.[42] This suggests that, in spite of the equality of treatment attempted in memorialising all local dead, the viewpoints of those directly impacted by the First World War were overshadowed by the voices traditionally heard. As highlighted by John Wolffe, the phenomenon of widespread memorialisation in the interwar period should be viewed within the context of the broader British landscape. This means acknowledging the fact that the monarchy, state and the Church were at the centre of memorialisation at both a national and local level.[43]

Furthermore, memorialisation and commemorative practices provided reflections of the trauma experienced. In lieu of the traditional rituals undertaken at a grave site, war memorials were able to function in many ways as a substitute grave for the dead.[44] However, while this may explain attitudes experienced by families of those remembered far away, it does not accurately represent the more

38 T.J. Godden, 'Stopping Time: Architecture as Landscape Memory,' *Geometry of Sleep*, 2017. Available at: https://geometryofsleep.wordpress.com/2017/06/01/stopping-time-architecture-as-landscape-memory/ [Accessed 8th April 2020].
39 King, *Memorials of the Great* War, p. 6.
40 Hannah M. Jeruc, '"To Whom Does the Body of the Dead Soldier Belong?": An Examination of British Imperial Strategy and the Making and Meaning of World War I Memorials,' *Lawrence University Honours Projects*, Vol. 87 (2016), p. 3.
41 Ibid.
42 Gregory, *The Last Great* War, p. 261.
43 John Wolffe, '"Martyrs as really as St Stephen was a martyr"? Commemorating the British Dead of the First World War,' *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (2015), p. 35.
44 Stefan Goebel, 'Re-membered and Re-mobilised: The "Sleeping Dead" in Interwar Germany and Britain,' *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol 39, No. 4 (2004), p. 487.

complex relationship between war memorials and those whose loved ones were buried locally to them. Moreover, it does not acknowledge the variety of viewpoints that were held regarding memorialisation of the First World War more generally; for example, while many visitors may marvel at the Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial, war poet Siegfried Sassoon famously referred to it as a 'sepulchre of crime.'[45] Looking at broader opinions about memorialisation enables those who study to the topic to begin to appreciate the complexities of building such monuments, and connect this work to modern-day memorialisation practices.

In addition, it should not be ignored that not all towns and villages lost people due to the First World War. The writer Arthur Mee coined the phrase "thankful village" in the 1930s to describe a handful of communities across the British Isles who did not suffer any military fatalities in the First World War.[46] Again, this challenges the narrative of settlements across the United Kingdom being united in their grief for their lost kinsmen, as the popular belief of a "Lost Generation" is not wholly accurate. In spite of not losing anyone from the village, some "Thankful Villages" may have chosen instead to erect a memorial to celebrate the men and women who served and who returned home.[47] Thus, it can be argued that the cult of the fallen soldier acted as a force of social integration by bringing people together. While commemorations were not exclusively focused on managing bereavement, it would be equally limiting to see them solely as a form of political manipulation.[48]

However, it should also be acknowledged that not everyone found peace through the erection of monuments. The poet and writer Siegfried Sassoon, who had served with the Royal Welch Fusiliers during the conflict, was an outspoken critic of war memorials and condemned them as 'a pile of peace complacent stone, a sepulchre of crime.'[49] Sassoon's viewpoint was not an exceptional one, with many veterans struggling to find peace through memorials. This again emphasises that not everyone's grief was pacified through the process of memorialisation; instead, it can be argued that the impact that memorialisation had on the public was a more individualised feeling.

45 Siegfried Sassoon, 'On Passing the New Menin Gate,' *All Poetry*, 2023. Available at: https://allpoetry.com/On-Passing-The-New-Menin-Gate [Accessed 8th April 2023].
46 There are around 52 of these across England and Wales. Jon Kelly, 'Thankful Villages: The Places Where Everyone Came Back from the Wars,' *BBC*, 2011. Available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-15671943 [Accessed 7th April 2020].
47 For example, Upper Slaughter in Gloucestershire is a "Thankful Village." In the village hall, there are two wooden plaques displayed to celebrate the men and women from the village who served in the First and Second World Wars and all returned home. Ibid.
48 Stefan Goebel, 'Re-membered and Re-mobilised: The "Sleeping Dead" in Interwar Germany and Britain,' *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol 39, No. 4 (2004), p. 488.
49 Catharine Arnold, *Necropolis: London and its Dead* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2006), pp. 252-3.

Histories of the First World War

The historiography of the First World War, its origins and its impact have altered dramatically over the last century, with many of the shifting attitudes being attributed to large-scale commemorative events such as the 50th and 100th anniversaries of the outbreak of the war. Mainstream media has played a significant role in the cultural shifts towards the memory of the First World War, with television programmes such as *The Great War* (1964) encouraging a rising interest in the conflict. Consequently, new areas of research and viewpoints have been discussed across a number of different academic disciplines, thus maintaining the fascination in the war in both academic and public history circles. While this thesis does not directly engage with the historiography surrounding the origins of the First World War, the influence that key historiographical turning points have had on debates relating to the conflict have inevitably affected some of the wider discussions surrounding the cultural memory of the First World War.

Writing during the centenary period, Jay Winter identified four 'generations' of historical writing about the Great War, each with their own focus and distinctive views. He argued that the initial response, which occurred during the war and prior to the outbreak of the Second World War, tended to focus on the 'traditional' aspects of warfare, such as the political and military ideologies and events that governed the various campaigns associated with the wider conflict. This viewpoint was altered during the 1960s, influenced by the rise of popular media such as television, when the focus shifted towards the history of societies and onto recording the oral testimonies of ageing veterans and the last witnesses of the Great War. By the 1970s, the emphasis moved towards cultural history and the believed victims of the war, while the current paradigm concentrates on a transnational approach to the war by reflecting a global viewpoint of wartime experiences.[50]

Memoirs, diaries, poetry and other forms of popular media proved popular from the outbreak of war, and many of the 'lessons' relating to the various battles within the conflict continue to be synonymous with understandings of the lived experience of the war. Indeed, the education system across the United Kingdom continues to highlight the work of key artists and poets from the period, such as Paul Nash, Wilfred Owen, and Rupert Brooke, to explain modern and historic warfare. Many of these works continue to be recited in accordance with Remembrance Day traditions in order to highlight why Britain and her allies continue to commemorate the war dead more than a century on.

With the rise in the popularity of the Marxist paradigm in the mid-twentieth century, the historiography shifted towards a 'bottom-up' approach to understanding the conflict and began

50 Antoine Prost and Jay Winter, *The Great War in History: Debates and Controversies, 1914 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 1.

specifically looking at the survivors of the First World War of all classes and the different individual experiences. As a result of this and the more general anti-war sentiment during this period, the 'mud, blood and futility' and 'lions led by donkeys' rhetoric that continues to be acknowledged by the public today came into fruition, led by individuals such as Marc Ferro and Paul Fussell and challenged in the work of Gordon Corrigan.[51] In addition, much of the key archival material from the First World War became accessible in the 1960s, which enabled the history of the politics and decision making to be explored in greater detail.[52] Furthermore, public history gained popularity, with many now-elderly veterans beginning to tell individuals outside of the ex-servicemen clubs and associations about their wartime experiences for the first time.

It has been highlighted by more recent works from historians such as Dan Todman that the popular myths of the war have not remained constant over time; however, some of the rhetoric that stressed the conditions relating to trench warfare and the wartime experiences and continues to manifest in some ways in the public's perception of the war.[53] The futility and the returning of battle-scarred individuals that continues to dominate popular memory can be attributed again to widespread media, such as the highly regarded *Blackadder Goes Forth* (1989) and in particular its iconic final scene. However, there has been a shift in academic debates in recent years about the conflict, and it is hoped that these begin to debunk the widely believed myths associated with the First World War. This is because these myths simplify complex events that, when placed into a modern context, lose their meaning.[54]

Histories of the War Graves Commission

The work of the Imperial War Graves Commission continues to be synonymous with both academic and popular understanding of the Great War. The cemeteries and memorials in the organisation's care continue to evoke 'awe and emotion' in the extensive numbers of visitors who travel to such sites each year,[55] and have become a crucial part of the remembrance and commemorative process that dominates in the former British Empire. However, while there are hundreds of thousands of visitors to the sites each year, many members of the public do not know much about the variety of sites in the Commission's care. Much of the key works on the organisation's history have been presented by non-academics such as Philip Longworth, G. Kingsley Ward and Major Edwin Gibson and David Crane and much of the academic literature produced by these individuals has tended to be Western-Front

51 See Gordon Corrigan, *Mud, Blood and Poppycock* (London: Cassell, 2004); Marc Ferro, *The Great War: 1914-1918* (United States: Military Heritage Press, 1989).
52 Prost and Winter, *The Great War in History*, p. 6.
53 Dan Todman, *The Great War: Myth and Memory* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2005), p. 1.
54 Ibid., p. xiii.
55 Paul Gough, 'Memorial Gardens as Dramaturgical Space,' *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (1998), p. 200.

centric. Indeed, the discussion of UK-based sites across these works has tended to be little more than a paragraph in the wider narrative of their discussions, thus ignoring the significant number of sites that contain war graves.

The organisation's External Relations Team recently published *A Guide to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (2018), which is an accessible public history piece on the Commission's foundations and how its work continues to be undertaken. The work comprehensively undertakes an organisational history of the Commission and makes its history, from its foundation to the present day, easily accessible. It also acts as a tour guide through its provision of potential 'tours' of key battlefields, emphasising the sites synonymous with its work and key campaigns in the two World Wars. Whilst it is apparent that such a text will automatically have its own prejudices towards a positive projection of its organisational reputation, its explanations of key debates emphasises a self-awareness of its history and provides explanations for the decision-making processes its founding members made. However, the piece generally focuses on sites already familiar to the public that provoke connotations to remembrance as opposed to highlighting lesser-known sites.

Research into the work of the Commission has tended to be complimentary of the organisation's work, with the sites held in its care being described as 'invariably neat and regimented'[56] and consistently linked with popular understanding of memory and memorialisation of the two World Wars. This inevitably makes it difficult to find research into the places that fall outside of the 'typical' narrative of the sites with casualties cared for by it. Furthermore, this causes discussions into the successfulness of the organisation in achieving its aims of equality in treatment of the war dead to be increasingly challenging. The interest in the work of the Commission and its founder, Sir Fabian Ware, has predominantly been due to the fact that the work undertaken by it has been perceived as ground-breaking, especially as sites of memory and mourning were not, and have not, been constructed in the same way as Commission works were designed. The astonishing number of casualties, 1.1 million in the First World War and 600,000 in the Second World War according to Philip Longworth,[57] in the care of the Commission highlight the difficult task for the organisation. Indeed, the organisation's work was not without controversy; Longworth highlights that about ninety letters per week came to the Commission, calling for repatriation, and many groups argued that the grave markers should be crucifixes as opposed to the standard Commission headstone associated with Commonwealth war sites today.[58]

56 Ibid., p. 199.
57 Philip Longworth, *The Unending Vigil: The History of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (Yorkshire: Leo Cooper, 2003), preface.
58 Ibid., p. 47.

David Crane followed the ideas emphasised in Longworth's work, focusing on the origins of the Commission. He argues that equality in death was always a key aspect of its work, possibly as a result of Ware's Plymouth Brethren background and the Milnerian attitudes that were popular at the time.[59] However, Crane is slightly more critical of the Commission's work by stressing that the 'equality' it strived to uphold did not always occur.[60] This argument supports the work of Michèle Barrett and her research into commemoration on the African continent, in which she has shown that there was a distinctly different treatment for those who died in Africa who were white and those who were native Africans.[61] Indeed the work of Barrett, and the 2018 Channel 4 documentary *The Unremembered: Britain's Forgotten War Heroes*, provoked public outcry, and was one reason for the production of a non-commemoration report by the Commission in 2021.[62] While this research is insightful and begins the discussion of exceptional circumstances in the Commission's key policies outlined in the Kenyon Report of 1918, it does not highlight that such disparities can be found outside of Africa, and the treatment of First World War dead by the organisation varies widely.

The works of Longworth, Kingsley ward and Gibson and crane all are seminal works in understanding the reasoning behind some of the decisions that the public has come to associate with the Commission's work, as they highlight the early challenges identified by the organisation along with public perceptions. However, they fail to detail the fact that, as with all organisations, for every rule there is an exception. While they mention the reactions at home to those who were not repatriated, they ignore the fact that those casualties who perished in the United Kingdom were often returned to their families. Furthermore, these works ignore the fact that UK sites do not conform to the preconceived notions about what constitutes a 'war grave' or a 'war graves site;' many are under the care of the local council or church community, with private memorials being common. Therefore, such works do not comprehensively highlight the nuances in such cemeteries, nor do they encourage visits to locations more local to the British population. Instead, they conform to the viewpoint emphasised in wider histories of the First World War that casualties lie in perpetuity in a foreign field, and not in their local churchyard or municipal cemetery.

In addition, the works fail to highlight the different types of private memorials in UK-based sites that could confuse potential pilgrims to the locations, such as the presence of some private memorials not holding the corporeal remains of the casualty, and instead serve as a symbolic representation of a

59 David Crane, *Empires of the Dead: How One Man's Vision Led to the Creation of WWI's War Graves* (London: William Collins, 2013), 24.
60 Ibid., p. 123.
61 Michèle Barrett, 'Subalterns at War: First World War Colonial Forces and the Politics of the Imperial War Graves Commission,' *Interventions*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (2007), p. 453.
62 Work at the time of writing this thesis is still ongoing, but details of the findings of this report can be found on the CWGC website. Commonwealth War Graves Commission, 'Non-Commemoration Report,' *CWGC*, 2021. Available at: https://www.cwgc.org/non-commemoration-report/ [Accessed 8th July 2021].

grave to provide the family with the opportunity to use the plot as a place of remembrance that is local to them. It is hoped that, through this thesis, the nuances among the war graves in the UK will be explored and explained using local examples, so that future works will include cemeteries that do not conform to the well-manicured and regimented 'silent cities' of the Western Front that were suggested by horticulturalists of the day such as Gertrude Jekyll. By providing examples of exceptions to rules, visitors to local cemeteries will be empowered with knowledge about the differences found in UK-based sites and provide them with connections to other war grave locations they may be more familiar with.

Histories of Battlefield Pilgrimage and Tourism

It has become apparent that when individuals, from both the past and in the present day, consider the sites that they associate with the work of the Commission they tend to focus on pilgrimages they have made to the former battlefields. It is often mentioned by such pilgrims that the sites in the Commission's care are beautiful, with much research being conducted by botanists and gardeners into the planting techniques present in the sites.[63] It is clear in the records of the early Commission that the aesthetics of the cemeteries was of paramount importance to the key figures within the organisation. Sir Frederic Kenyon stated that the option to have cemeteries designed to have rows of headstones of uniform height would ensure cemeteries were 'easier to maintain, more satisfactory in effect' and ensured that the sites were 'better adapted for decoration by flowers.'[64] Whilst it is clear that there are a variety of reasons as to why individuals would visit the Western Front, the fact that the cemeteries were designed with an awareness of the impact they would have on visitors highlights the thought that went into creating these 'silent cities.' In addition, studies into battlefield tourism can enable those researching to better understand some of the reasons behind why visitors, particularly those who are travelling from the United Kingdom, visit the former battlefields but not to their local churchyard with a single war casualty.

Battlefield tourism is now inherently connected with memorialisation, and excursions to the places previously generally unknown to the British public have become synonymous with both private and public acts of mourning. Over the centenary period, there were many conversations on social media regarding the number of tourists who attend the Last Post Ceremony at the Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial each evening, in addition to noting the altering attitudes towards wider commemorative

63 See works such as Sarah Joiner, 'The Evolution of the Planting Influences of the Imperial War Graves Commission from its Inception to the Modern Day,' *Garden History*, Vol. 42, Supp. 1 (2014), pp. 90-106 and Paul Gough, 'Conifers and Commemoration – the Politics and Protocol of Planting,' *Landscape Research*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (1996), pp. 73-87.
64 Frederic Kenyon, *War Graves: How the Cemeteries Abroad will be Designed* (London: HMSO, 1918), p. 7 as found in Sarah Joiner, 'The Evolution of the Planting Influences of the Imperial War Graves Commission from its Inception to the Modern Day,' *Garden History*, Vol. 42, Supp. 1 (2014), p. 91.

practices that have been in place since the 1920s. Historians of battlefield tourism have emphasised that these sites have been places of pilgrimage for the bereaved families and ex-service personnel since the war itself,[65] with Ypres becoming 'almost a Mecca for the pilgrim'[66] according to Graham Seton Hutchison. Places where the heavy fighting took place hold large numbers of the bereaved's loved ones, and early pilgrimages were designed to enable the bereaved to confront their grief and let go of the past.[67] However, as David Lloyd has highlighted in his seminal work *Battlefield Tourism. Pilgrimage and the Commemoration of the Great War in Britain, Australia and Canada, 1919-1939* (1998), even from the outset such journeys were not without their controversy. Many veterans of the Great War chose not to visit the former battlefields and confront the 'nightmare' of the First World War,[68] and could often exhibit signs of guilt at their survival while their fallen comrades lay in a foreign field in perpetuity.[69]

Veterans guilt itself has been discussed extensively in the works of George Mosse from the German perspective, and it can be connected to the wider guilt by those left behind after a sudden death more generally. Julie-Marie Strange has highlighted that sudden deaths provoke feelings of anger, disbelief and shock in the immediate aftermath and those that are experienced as a result of a violent or accidental death are often more shocking. This is due to the fact the corpse is more likely to be disfigured, which adds to the juxtaposition between a "good" death and a death in warfare.[70] This grief would often discourage veterans from visiting such locations, as it often meant the veterans returning to their own painful past and opening up memories that they hoped to forget.[71] Perhaps this explains why veterans' involvement in commemorative practices have largely been seen as secondary to the primary role of the families; they too were grieving, but they also needed to process their own involvement in the past and acknowledge any potential survivors' guilt felt.[72]

Tension arose around public acts of commemoration and how far the pilgrims could share the experience of their lost loved ones.[73] David Lloyd's work has shown that many pilgrims undertook both public and private acts of commemoration, with many taking photographs, kissing the headstone

65 See D.W. Lloyd, *Battlefield Tourism. Pilgrimage and the Commemoration of the Great War in Britain, Australia and Canada, 1919-1939* (Oxford: Berg, 1998).
66 Graham Seton Hutchison, *Pilgrimage* (London: Rich and Cowan, 1936), p. 13.
67 Lloyd, *Battlefield Tourism*, p. 137.
68 Ibid., p. 152.
69 Ibid., p. 139.
70 Julie-Marie Strange, *Death, Grief and Poverty in Britain, 1870-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 57-8.
71 Pat Jalland, *Death in War and Peace: A History of Loss and Grief in England, 1914-1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 71.
72 For more information on this topic, see Natasha Silk's 2021 University of Kent PhD thesis (embargoed at the time of writing this thesis).
73 Lloyd, *Battlefield Tourism*, p. 169 and 177.

of a loved one or tracing a name on paper.[74] Indeed, many pilgrims chose to carry diaries and letters written by the fallen in order to recreate elements of their loved one's experiences.[75] How far they could fully comprehend the things their loved ones had seen was debated heavily both at the time and in the present. Many parallels can be drawn between the arguments of the time of 'pilgrim versus tourist' to modern discussions about behaviours at sites of memory along the former battlefields.

From a religious history perspective, work into battlefield tourism history can also enable discussions relating to the rise in spiritualism in the interwar period. The increased interest in psychics and mediums by the bereaved families is now well-known, but Lloyd has highlighted that religion itself offered the pilgrims to the sites a 'source of strength and the promise that they might meet their loved one in the afterlife.'[76] The sites that contain a significant number of casualties in the care of the Commission, and are recognisably 'war graves,' attract visitors in part because they appear to have an otherworldly power to focus on the sacrifices of the fallen within the context of the former battlefields. As UK-based sites tend not to have such a regimented and recognisable format, in addition to having a variety of difficulties in relation to ownership, it could perhaps explain why people choose to visit these sites over more local cemeteries.

In addition, it can be seen from contemporary writing that the cemeteries and memorials synonymous with the fighting were often written about in a hagiographical style, with their 'beauty' and 'dignity' being discussed by BS Townroe in his 1927 work *A Pilgrim in Picardy*.[77] The sites noted in his work emphasise the stark contrast between Commission sites and the cemeteries and memorials of other nations, particularly the French, who chose to place their fallen 'so close together' without the grass or flowers around their graves.[78] While much discussion has been made about the beauty of the sites on the former Western Front, they do not represent the entire repertoire of the Commission. By ignoring UK-based sites and their nuances, researchers of commemoration and the First World War cannot provide an in-depth debate into the many difficulties faced by the Commission in its formative years. Furthermore, it can be argued that many of the sites in the UK have their own unique stories and are beautiful in their own right.

74 Ibid., p. 135.
75 Ibid.
76 Ibid., p. 145.
77 B.S. Townroe, *A Pilgrim in Picardy* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1927), p. 186.
78 Ibid.

Grief and Bereavement in Britain during the late Nineteenth Century

The work of the Commission is inextricably connected to death and bereavement practices, particularly as its attitudes to appropriate commemoration of the war dead marked a shift in how war casualties were remembered. Therefore, it is paramount that an understanding of death and bereavement practices before, during and after the First World War is present in the thesis.

In order to fully comprehend the academic debates in this subject, it is important to define what is meant by "grief," "bereavement" and "mourning." Bereavement is understood by sociologists as the objective status of an individual who has experienced a loss through death, which is both a source of grief and mourning, while grief is referred to as the subjective response to the loss which can involve a variety of psychological symptoms as well as physical ones. In contrast to the private or individual processes that relate to bereavement and grief, mourning has been perceived as being a public or interpersonal practice, which consists of expectations and traditions of a particular group.[79] As this area of research has been studied across a variety of disciplines, it is clear that there are conflicting views regarding these definitions; however, for the purpose of this thesis, these definitions will be used to outline the three words.

There are a number of academics interested in the history of death and bereavement, and the literature into the subject is widespread in both its depth and breadth. Philip Ariès' 1994 work *Western Attitudes toward Death from the Middle Ages to the Present* began many of the discussions towards death and mourning. Ariès' translated work highlights that tombstones were places of pilgrimage even in the years prior to the First World War, with 'hero cults' being formed throughout Western civilisation in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[80] Ariès has also provided a useful way of describing the mourning, now that it is no longer a set or necessary period imposed by society; he states that mourning has become a 'morbid state' which must be 'erased by the "doctor of grief."'[81] This work is particularly interesting as it reverses the roles of life and death in the 19th and 20th centuries; however, as with any work that covers a broad expanse of history, its arguments often aren't as robust as works that discuss a particular period greater detail. While his work only briefly mentions the impact of the First World War on wider bereavement attitudes, his research has sparked an important debate into the evolving nature of mourning and can enable individuals to better understand the altering narrative towards bereavement over the last century.

79 See Henk Schut and Margaret Stroebe, 'Culture and Grief,' *Bereavement Care*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (1998), pp. 7-11.
80 Philippe Ariès, *Western Attitudes toward Death from the Middle Ages to the Present,* Translated by Patricia M. Ranum (London and New York: Marion Boyers, 1994), p. 79.
81 Ibid., p. 100.

Thomas Laqueur's 2015 work *The Work of the Dead* has continued the grand narrative discussed by Ariès, as he explores the question 'when did mankind begin to care for their dead?'[82] He looks at this question from a social history viewpoint, investigating the introduction of phraseology such as 'cemetery' and 'churchyard' and concluding that caring about and for the dead is not a new idea that appears during the rise of Victorian Evangelical attitudes. He also emphasises the often-political nature of naming the dead, as it can 'legitimately claim space, and attention' in order to play a part in a 'publicly important narrative.'[83] However, as with many works that bring attention to the Commission's policy of non-repatriation, he does not acknowledge the fact that approximately 60 repatriations known to the Commission took place during this period; most of them were of the officer class, and the majority were repatriated from France or Belgium either prior to or just after 1915. Many were transported to locations close to the coast, presumably due to the fact it was easier to bury them near to the ports at which they were brought to.[84]

Moreover, Lacqueur's work completely ignores the unique situation in Britain. While the term "repatriation" may not be a wholly accurate way of describing the movement of remains to cemeteries and churchyards closer to home if they died in the United Kingdom, arguably this went against the Commission's policies of moving the deceased to locations a significant distance away from where they died. Indeed, many of the casualty stories discussed in this thesis were those who had been moved closer to their living relatives at the request of the bereaved, and thus this challenged the authority of the Commission and its regulations. While much of this work pre-dates the establishment of the Commission's work in the United Kingdom, the exceptional situation found in Britain and state-sponsored directly challenges the preconceived notions of the British Empire's policies towards its war dead.

Pat Jalland has extensively studied the differing bereavement and mourning attitudes in Britain during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in both open access articles and her 1996 work *Death in the Victorian Family*. She has argued that the cultural norms in Britain relating to death and mourning changed dramatically over the last century, and much of this cultural shift can be attributed to the decline of religion, the advances in medicine and the two World Wars.[85] Whilst it has been clearly outlined in works previously discussed in this literature review that religion and spiritualism

82 Thomas W. Laqueur, *The Work of the Dead* (New Jersey and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2015), p. 4.
83 Ibid., p. 424.
84 Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet listing casualties known to be repatriated to the United Kingdom. Information supplied by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, 1st January 2021.
85 Pat Jalland, 'Bereavement and Mourning (Great Britain),' *1914-1918 Online*, 2014. Available at: https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/bereavement_and_mourning_great_britain?version=1.0 [Accessed 17th November 2019], p. 2.

held a space in the mourning practices of the time, the ways in which people grieved naturally changed during the interwar period.

Jalland has stated that, while some individuals went to great lengths to bring back their comrades from no-man's-land in order to give them an appropriate burial,[86] many soldiers and bereaved families chose to repress their emotions and cope in silence instead of actively engaging in public mourning practices.[87] She has also highlighted that class played a part in mourning practices, with the working-classes being deeply affected by the war due to the presence of so-called 'Pals Battalions.'[88] In the upper-classes, the wives and daughters left behind in particular found it 'invaluable' to share their grief through the epistolary form and in verbal conversations, in addition to keeping remembrance books for their loved ones.[89] Many of these acts of remembrance represent the voices associated with wider commemorative practices from the period, and their opinions are still utilised heavily in public mourning over a century on.

In addition, Jalland highlights the importance of the research conducted by David Cannadine and Jay Winter, who have argued that interwar England was 'obsessed' with the so-called 'cult of the dead' due to the fact that Victorian mourning practices, which focused a great deal on the corporeal remains of the deceased, no longer seemed adequate or appropriate in enabling the bereaved to complete their mourning process.[90] However, it can be seen that the corporeal remains were still important to an extent, through pilgrimages and the use of symbolic memorials such as the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior and the Cenotaph.[91]

The Victorian mourning practices that Jalland references have been a main topic for discussion by academics, with Catharine Arnold, Thomas Laqueur and Philip Ariès being among the more familiar names for their research into this area. In Arnold's 2006 work *Necropolis: London and its Dead*, she argues that the great cemeteries of the nineteenth century show innovation by the Victorians, who could confront both the issues of death and the disposal of the dead.[92] Arnold's work is of particular interest due to the fact she offers a view across all denominations of cemeteries within the London parishes in addition to those just outside of the area. This includes Brookwood in Surrey, which was originally designed as a place to receive the dead from the capital[93] but now has the largest

86 Ibid., p. 3.
87 Ibid.
88 Ibid.
89 Ibid., p. 4.
90 Ibid., p. 6.
91 Ibid., p. 7.
92 Arnold, *Necropolis*, p. 123.
93 Ibid., p. 166.

Commission cemetery in the United Kingdom.[94] The indisputable connection between the Victorian approach to commemoration appears in a variety of forms in UK-based sites with war graves.

Arnold's work also discusses the Victorian attitudes towards what constituted a "good death" and a "bad death." By her definition, and supported by research by Allan Kellehear and Patricia Jalland, a "good death" meant 'dying peacefully in your own bed, surrounded by family and friends, with a clergyman on hand to administer the Last Rites and your children brought in to kiss you goodbye.' Customs associated with a "good death" were designed to support the idea that a good death meant transitioning from a natural sleep to the sleep of death.[95] In contrast, a "bad death" included incidents whereby the death was not peaceful; examples of this include those who died unmourned and unloved, such as prisoners and the poor. Many deaths could be deemed a "bad death" in this period, from 'unbaptised babies to criminal suicides.'[96] As many service personnel would not die in circumstances that constituted the historic "good death," it is clear that these attitudes soon became outdated for the grieving families. This has been also acknowledged by Patricia Jalland, who has stated that war deaths were 'far removed' from the desired peaceful, gradual deaths in the family home of tradition. Many deaths in conflict occurred suddenly, violently and prematurely, with bodies 'often smashed and unidentifiable, and burial at home impossible.'[97] While the last part of that statement is not wholly true, as this thesis hopes to show, it does emphasise the cultural shift that the Commission were having to consider during the early stages of its existence.

Arnold emphasised in *Necropolis* that many of the traditional ways of grieving a loved one went into decline due to the war eroding old traditions. Many families, particularly the lower middle and working classes, initially upheld the strict mourning traditions of the previous era,[98] but the Great War enabled the decline in such traditions due to their impractical nature and potential for it to harm public morale. Arnold notes that the last thing the returning troops wanted to see was swathes of women wearing black, thus highlighting the human cost of the horrors from which they had just returned.[99]

Arnold's work links well to Deborah Lutz's 2017 work, *Relics of Death in Victorian Literature and Culture*. Lutz highlights that the use of keepsakes, often known as *memento mori* (Latin for 'remember you will die'), was not a new phenomenon in the First World War,[100] but it was a popular

94 Commonwealth War Graves Commission, 'Brookwood Military Cemetery,' *CWGC*, 2020. Available at: https://www.cwgc.org/find/find-cemeteries-and-memorials/44400/brookwood-military-cemetery [Accessed 6th January 2020].
95 Arnold, *Necropolis*, p. 182.
96 Ibid., p. 185.
97 Pat Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 6.
98 Arnold, *Necropolis*, p. 253.
99 Ibid., p. 255.
100 Deborah Lutz, *Relics of Death in Victorian Literature and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 1.

idea that was cherished by many of the bereaved. Lutz appears critical of the so-called empty graves that came into existence after the war; while she appreciates that they became a ritualistic process, she argues that the proliferation of these cenotaphs can be perceived as being 'part of the expanding consumer culture of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.'[101] Her research into the impact of the First World War on traditional attitudes to grief and mourning does not seem to acknowledge that some families had plots local to them in which their loved ones were buried, which could challenge these public and ritualistic approaches to remembering the Great War dead in the interwar years.

In contrast, Allan Kellehear has argued that death has become even more conflicted in recent times, with the experience of dying becoming gradually more private and recognition of the death becoming 'more publicly controlled and defined.'[102] Patricia Jalland has echoed this, stating that mourning customs can offer 'therapeutic benefits' to the bereaved in comparison to suffering in private. [103]This hypothesis could potentially explain why so many families chose to visit the battlefields in the aftermath of the Great War and yet were unaware of casualties in local churchyards and municipal cemeteries.

Research into death and bereavement can also provide insights into contemporary responses to the ideas perpetuated by the Commission. Patricia Jalland emphasised in *Death in the Victorian Family* some of the more prominent outpourings of grief as a result of the First World War. She firstly discusses William Cecil, the Bishop of Exeter, who burned all the letters of condolence he received. His sentiment was echoed by HH Asquith, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom between 1908 and 1916, who stated that the 'numberless letters' did not help him to overcome his grief.[104] This was reiterated by Yvo Charteris' family, with his sister being particularly vocal about her difficulty to accept her brother's death due to the lack of corporeal remains.[105] Jalland has directed her readers' attention to David Cannadine's research into what he describes as the 'cult of the dead' which appeared in the interwar years as a mass display of bereavement.[106] The 'mass outpouring of sorrow' that occurred both during and after the First World War suggests that many families did not recover from the deaths of their loved ones;[107] however, it does not explain the practices experienced by families with loved ones buried in the UK who could theoretically uphold traditional Victorian funerary practices.

101 Ibid., p. 167.
102 Allan Kellehear, *A Social History of Dying* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 251.
103 Jalland, *Victorian Family*, p. 193.
104 Ibid., p. 372.
105 Ibid., p. 375.
106 Ibid., p. 380.
107 Ibid.

Lucy Noakes has similar explored death, grief and bereavement in her 2020 book *Dying for the Nation: Death, Grief and Bereavement in Second World War Britain*. While it primarily focuses on the Second World War, and how bereavement practices continued to alter during the mid-twentieth century. Noakes argues in her work that the experience of death and loss found in the Great War combined with the fear of aerial warfare to produce a 'potent and apocalyptic vision' of future wars, with the memories of the Western Front framing the expectation of numerous and horrible deaths from the outbreak of the Second World War.[108] However, rather than being pushed back towards the rituals associated with Victorian-era Britain, Noakes argues that the bereaved showed little public display of grief or the mourning rites that pre-dated the First World War.[109] This, combined with the spaces of towns, cities and villages being shaped by the erection of war memorials and core dates of remembering, enabled a shift in the culture of grief and bereavement in Britain that had begun during the Great War.[110] While this particular study is outside of the remit of this particular thesis, the research provides a fascinating insight into the broader impact of grief and bereavement in Britain during the twentieth century that will also be acknowledged and furthered by the research found in this study.

As with previous sections in this literature review, death and bereavement literature can provide some useful points for discussion relating to attitudes towards grief and mourning that existed in Britain prior to, during and after the First World War. However, much of its research either ignores UK-based war graves and focus on casualties commemorated overseas. This thesis hopes to bridge the gap in the topic in order to enable further discussion into the exceptions to the Commission's work rather than the rules.

Histories of Remembering and Forgetting

Although this thesis is primarily about *how* the war dead in the United Kingdom were remembered differently, it cannot be ignored that they have largely been forgotten from the popular narratives surrounding the First World War. Thus, a study of the history of remembering and forgetting was paramount to ensuring that this area of the history was appropriately acknowledged. This also covers an interdisciplinary approach of the historiography of the First World War and its impact; without the work of psychologists, anthropologists and sociologists to explain the long-lasting effects of the First World War, this area of the culture and memory of the conflict could not be appropriately explained.

108 Lucy Noakes, *Dying for the Nation: Death, Grief and Bereavement in Second World War Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), p. 7.
109 Ibid., p. 23.
110 Ibid., p. 30.

Maurice Halbwachs is often heralded as being one of the key figures behind memory studies, and has written a significant number of works on the subject. In his work *On Collective Memory*, he notes that everyone has a capacity of memory that is individual to them. This *mémoire*, however, is also nevertheless part of a collective group memory; thus, memories can be altered over time to support the popular narrative, and thus ignore individual differences.[111] This rationale can perhaps explain why the individual memory of war dead has been lost over time, and thus the lack of discussion that UK-based war dead have experienced in the broader historiography.

Halbwachs' work has influenced a number of other scholars researching the topic of remembering and forgetting, with Paul Connerton in recent years being considered the leading figure studying this area. In his book *How Modernity Forgets*, Connerton argues that acts of remembering are often site-specific, but they are not undertaken in the same way.[112] Connerton chooses to focus his study of the site-specificity of remembering through looking at memorials. In this work, he argues that memorials are created due to a fear of 'cultural amnesia,' yet memorials themselves conceal the past as much as they enable the public to remember.[113] He further argues that, when the war dead are commemorated on an annual basis, the 'maimed and mutilated' are forgotten from the rhetoric as far as is possible;[114] this could perhaps be extended to the neglecting of visiting the individual graves in nearby cemeteries as part of Remembrance rituals. Thus, Connerton's work provides a useful point from which to explore the public versus private attitudes of memory, and how this has evolved as those eventually forgotten shifted out of living memory.

In his later work *The Spirit of Mourning: History, Memory and the Body*, Paul Connerton argues that there are seven types of forgetting that can be seen and defined within the context of mourning; these include prescriptive forgetting, structural amnesia and planned obsolescence.[115] While Connerton acknowledges in this work the 'mutilated survivors' of the conflict being among those forgotten through the ritual observance of ceremonies associated with the war dead, he fails to equally acknowledge the differences in remembrance between those buried overseas and those found closer to home. Indeed, much of his argument relating to those forgotten who were among the living can easily be translated to the dead; rather than it being possible to talk about remembering and forgetting in the First World War contexts based in these binary ways, the reality is a lot more nuanced.

111 Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, Translated by Lewis A. Coser (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 53.
112 Paul Connerton, *How Modernity Forgets* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p.7.
113 Ibid., p. 29.
114 Ibid.
115 Paul Connerton, *The Spirit of Mourning: History, Memory and the Body* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 57.

The phenomenon of individual versus collective forgetting highlighted by Connerton and Halbwachs was further studied by Adrian Forty and Susanne Kuchler in *The Art of Forgetting*. In the preface of this work, David Lowenthal acknowledges that there is a significant difference between the experiences of individual forgetting versus 'collective oblivion.' He argues that individual forgetting, which would have been experienced within the family or closely-connected individuals of the war dead, is largely involuntary while the collective forgetting shown within broader communities and nations is often deliberate, purposeful and regulated.[116] Lowenthal further highlights this point by recognising that collective well-being required for a society to function needs the sanitisation of what the passage of time has rendered either unspeakable, unpalatable or generally outdated;[117] this has been further supported by Paul Ricoeur in *Memory, History, Forgetting* where he ponders the question 'whose memory is it?'[118] Once again, these questions enable this research to appropriately consider these questions, and once more highlight the distinctions found between remembering and forgetting in the United Kingdom that have not previously been explored.

The history of remembering and forgetting also connects greatly to the wider history of emotions that has gained popularity in recent years. One of the pioneers of this subcategory of history is Jan Plamper, whose 2017 work *The History of Emotions* provides a succinct summary of a burgeoning field of enquiry that is useful to historians studying conflict. Plamper highlights that anthropological studies of emotions have destabilised the idea that the ways in which feelings are organised in different cultures are universal, but that certain emotions such as anger and sadness are universal.[119] This research emphasises the importance of viewing emotions within the context of the nation or culture it is expressed within, but also reiterates that feelings of grief and bereavement are universal. Indeed, while the acts associated with remembering and forgetting may differ between communities, they nevertheless are utilised in order to explore wider feelings of sadness, anger and loss.

As has been highlighted in this section of the literature review, the impact of memory studies and particularly research into forgetting has been paramount to the examination found in this thesis. The work undertaken by scholars in this field has highlighted the grey areas within this study which had not previously been obvious, and have provided the thesis with the opportunity to discuss elements of the primary sources in a way that acknowledges the inconsistencies and provides some possible

116 David Lowenthal, 'Preface' in Adrian Forty and Susanne Kuchler (Eds), *The Art of Forgetting* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2001), p. xi.
117 Ibid., p. xii.
118 Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting* (London and Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. xxi.
119 Jan Plamper, *The History of Emotions: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 77 and p. 149. See also Claire Langhamer, Lucy Noakes and Claudia Siebrecht, *Total War: An Emotional History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

explanation regarding why these existed. The history of forgetting and remembering is still a relatively new field of study, and it is hoped that its use within this thesis continues to highlight the importance of this area of history in order to enable historians to explain the past more effectively.

Local Histories of the Impact of the First World War

While the wider narrative of UK-based war graves is important to future discussions relating to the cultural impact of the First World War on modern memory, it is important that breadth does not outweigh the depth of the study. Therefore, sites for discussion have been chosen to specifically highlight an overview of the different types of war grave sites in the UK without being overwhelmed by data and localised beliefs.

One area that could have been discussed in this thesis is undivided Ireland, as its unique nature could provide examples of interesting and individualised attitudes towards the war dead. The works of historians such as Richard S Grayson, Catriona Pennell and Fearghal McGarry all provide informative contexts to Irish attitudes towards the First World War that would prove useful; however, due to the complex nature of the state during and after the war, it would be difficult to provide a comprehensive analysis of this without sacrificing important debates into the other nations that make up the British Isles.

Furthermore, while there has not been a great deal of discussion into Welsh and Scottish memorialisation within academic circles, it would again be difficult to provide a comprehensive analysis of these areas without researching memorials that contain Gaelic and Welsh language texts.[120] While translations or transliterations of both Scottish and Irish Gaelic and Welsh could enable this discussion to occur, without prior knowledge of the language it could mean that phrases on memorials and personal inscriptions could be misrepresented and thus an inaccurate portrayal of those individual responses could occur. Therefore, it has been decided that the focus of this thesis will generally be on English attitudes, responses and sites in order to begin discussions of key sites within this nation.

There has been some discussion within local history books about local war dead[121] and where they were laid to rest, which provides some useful information about the lives of the casualties. These have

120 For more information of Welsh Language research, see Jennifer Turner, '"Mewn Angof Ni Chânt Fod": The Welsh Language and Great War Commemoration, 1914-1939' (MA Dissertation, University of Kent, 2018). Jennifer Turner's ongoing PhD research at the University of Kent will extend this study.
121 Some for the Nottinghamshire area include Howard Fisher, *Keyworth and World War One: Those Who Died and Those Who Returned* (Nottingham: Keyworth and District Local History Society, 2011) and John Hook, *"Warriors for the Working Day": The Air Raids in Nottinghamshire during the Great War* (London,

been invaluable in providing a starting point for research into local war grave sites, and have helped to shape the narrative by providing background information. However, as these works tend to not look at the wider narrative, it is hoped that this thesis will bridge the gap between local and national histories, in order to have a more comprehensive account of the sites of memory and contemporary and modern reactions to these.

Cemetery Features of a Commission Site

Before moving onto a formal discussion of the Commission's administrative history, it is important to highlight some of the key features of a location cared for by the Commission. Many of these designs are synonymous both with the work of the Commission and the memory of the two World Wars, and are often included in sites across the United Kingdom. These features enable the dead buried closer to home to be connected to their comrades who are commemorated overseas, and thus highlight their shared sacrifice.

There are three key features associated with the work of the Commission: A Commission Headstone, the Cross of Sacrifice and the Stone of Remembrance. At least one of these features will usually be visible at a Commission site. As they are fundamental to the public's understanding of the Commission, it is important to explain its design and purpose.

The standard Commission headstone is an iconic motif associated with remembrance. They replaced the temporary wooden crosses that were erected during the war and were originally carved by hand at workshops worldwide.[122] The headstones measure 991mm x 381mm and are usually set into a submerged base. Although people often confuse the typical cream-white stone used to mark the graves on the battlefields with marble, it is actually made of Portland stone largely quarried from Dorset. However, this is not the only type of stone utilised to mark the graves of the war dead. There are more than 30 different types of stone used by the Commission in its work, and in the case of war graves in the United Kingdom the Commission often used materials that were quarried locally; consequently, these war graves may be made using reddish-brown and green limestone, granite and slate. This decision is a practical one; by using local materials, the headstones are more likely to be able to withstand the typical weather conditions of their region.[123] Furthermore, by utilising these

1994). For Yorkshire, see Anne Christine Brook, 'God, Grief and Community: Commemoration of the Great War in Huddersfield, c. 1914-1929' (PhD Thesis, University of Leeds, 2009). For North East, see Denise Coss, 'First World War Memorials, Commemoration and Community in North East England, 1918-1939' (PhD Thesis, Durham University, 2012). For London, see Mark Connelly, 'The Commemoration of the Great War in the City and East London, 1916-1939' (PhD Thesis, Queen Mary and Westfield College, 1995).
122 *CWGC Interns Handbook* [Unpublished guide to the various pieces of information imparted onto the CWGC Centenary Interns during their training] (2018), p. 26.
123 Ibid., p. 40.

resources, the Commission were able to employ contractors from the region; this enabled it to support the local economy, and perhaps use this business as a way of connecting the community to the war dead commemorated closer to home.

A standard Commission headstone contains as much information that is available about the casualty. This data is corroborated using the individual's service records and the evidence provided to the Commission by the next of kin. Details incorporated into the headstone design can include:

- Regimental/national emblem.
- Service number.
- Last name and initials.
- Any British Empire or Commonwealth gallantry medals won.
- The Regiment they served with.
- Their date of death.
- Their age at the time of their death.
- A religious emblem of some description.
- A personal inscription if their family chose to include this.

Unknown casualties of the First World War will usually have the superscription 'A SOLDIER OF THE GREAT WAR' at the top of their headstone, then a Latin Cross followed by 'KNOWN UNTO GOD' as an inscription at the base of the headstone. The wording at the base of the headstone was one of the many phrases devised by Kipling in his role as Literary Advisor for the Commission.[124]

There are exceptions to some of these generalist images of a standard Commission headstone; for example, there may be occasions where a headstone did not display any religious emblem. In this case, it is usually due to the next of kin expressly wishing for the casualty not to have a religious emblem, or that the casualty was a recipient of either the Victoria or the George Cross.[125] Availability of space on a headstone, particularly if more than one casualty is buried in a grave, can also explain the omission of a religious emblem. Specific situations that may have created a distinct headstone will be covered in more detail during a later chapter.

Furthermore, Personal Inscriptions may not always occur. These were chosen by the family of the individual at a cost of 3 ½ pence per letter.[126] The family could usually place up to 66 characters, including spaces, of script on the stone and the Commission held the right to veto any suggested epitaphs if they were deemed as inappropriate.[127] This policy was a controversial one, as it appeared to contrast with the Commission's policies surrounding equality. Again, Dominion responses varied; Australia and Canada agreed to cover the costs of Personal Inscriptions for those who served in their

124 Ibid., p. 33.
125 Ibid., p. 29.
126 According to The National Archives' Currency Converter, 3 ½ pence in 1920 would equate to approximately 12 pence in 2017. The National Archives, 'Currency Converter,' *TNA*, 2023. Available at: https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/#currency-result [Accessed 6th April 2023].
127 Ibid., p. 32.

Armed Forces, while New Zealand took the decision to forbid all Personal Inscriptions on their headstones. However, the collection of overdue payment was not enforced by the Commission, and the policy was eventually altered so that the cost was at the expense of the casualty's respective member government.[128]

In spite of Pedestal, or "Gallipoli," markers most famously being utilised in warmer climates, they can also be found in the United Kingdom. These are small concrete blocks that contain the same details as a standard Commission headstone.[129] These are generally used where a headstone cannot be erected, so are relatively common installations at the foot of a Private Memorial in the United Kingdom that has become illegible. As the Commission does not have permission to remove and replace the original stone with a Commission grave marker;[130] this is deemed a suitable solution.

The Cross of Sacrifice, alternatively known as the Great Cross in the early years of the Commission, was designed by Sir Reginald Blomfield. It connects the sites to the medieval symbolism evoked throughout the conflict by incorporating the Crusader's sword into its design, with the sword pointing down in remembrance. The Cross of Sacrifice has both symbolic as well as statistical importance; it is generally utilised in order to show the majority of those buried in that cemetery were of Christian faith, and that there are usually more than 40 commemorations within the site. The cross itself can vary in dimension, depending on the size of the cemetery; there are four different sizes to choose from, which range from 4.4m to just over 9m.[131]

The Stone of Remembrance is of equal symbolic importance to the Cross of Sacrifice and is found in many of the larger sites in the Commission's care. Alternatively referred to as the Great Stone or the War Stone, it was designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens and uses a single piece of Portland stone; this is the same material used to make many of the headstones within Commission sites, including those found on the former Western Front. It is made in one size, with the dimensions measuring 8.44m x 3.658m x 1.067m; it weighs around eight metric tons. Designed to resemble an altar, the Stone of Remembrance can be viewed as an abstract symbol that invokes a general spiritual sentiment. A unique feature of both the Cross of Sacrifice and Stone of Remembrance is that there are no straight lines on them; both horizontal and vertical lines are slightly curved. If extended, the curves would form an imaginary sphere with a radius of 900 feet. This is an architectural feature found in many forms of Classical architecture known as entasis, which emphasises the connection between the modern dead and the heroes of classical mythology. Again, the Stone of Remembrance has both a symbolic and a statistical

128 Ibid.
129 Ibid., p. 39; it should be noted that Gallipoli Markers and Macedonian Tablets do not usually have a regimental badge on them due to lack of available space.
130 Ibid.
131 Ibid., p. 24.

feature: it is designed to acknowledge all of the faiths of those commemorated at the site as well as those who had no religious affiliation, in addition to showing that there are usually more than 1000 burials within the cemetery.[132]

Now that these features have been appropriately explained in order to provide a broad introduction to the Commission's work, it is apt to begin with an overview of the administrative work of the Commission in the United Kingdom. In the first chapter of this thesis, the administrative burden faced by the Commission will be discussed and some of the ways it had to adapt its practices in Britain to suit the unique situations it found itself in will be emphasised.

132 Ibid., p. 25.

Chapter One: The Administrative Activities of the War Graves Commission

When beginning to foster an interest in the subject of History, the subgenre of administrative or organisational histories are not the usual way into the subject. Indeed, the words "administrative" and "organisational" often connote feelings of boredom and dread as opposed to a thirst for knowledge. While this thesis is largely an organisational history of the Commission from the perspective of its work in the United Kingdom, it is hoped that this thesis challenges some of those preconceived notions.

Before explaining the administrative activities of the Commission, it is important to acknowledge that administrative histories are a form of political history as it often follows the institutions which shaped the development of the modern nation state (in this case, Britain and the modern-day Commonwealth).[133] This shifted from an initial constitutional history, in order to focus the study to individual institutions of the state and the people involved in them. Since the 1960s, political history had to adapt to the challenges of its narrow definition which has included moving towards a more social and cultural history.[134] While the Commission was not necessarily an organisation created by the government for the purposes suggested in this definition, it largely based its practices on bodies that made up the British Civil Service, and thus its history can be understood through the lens suggested.

In addition to introducing the background of administrative histories, it is also important for scholars to explore how that institution functions in order to understand its intricacies. Indeed, the administrative processes, structures and activities of the organisation can hold a wealth of information. Through considering the forms, meeting minutes and correspondence that enables an institute to function, historians can begin to understand some of the rationale behind the decisions made by such institutions. This is particularly important when placing the impact of these choices into a modern context, which will be done in later chapters; the conversations that took place contemporary to the time can often enable researchers to interpret these records and the broader institution's processes through these accounts, which is especially helpful if a verdict appears strange to a modern audience. Although many organisations choose to keep their records, if they have kept them at all, out of public view the Commission has opted in recent years to share much of its historic archive with society in an increasingly accessible way. This provides a fascinating opportunity for

133 Institute of Historical Research, 'Constitutional and Administrative History,' *Making History*, 2023. Available at: https://archives.history.ac.uk/makinghistory/themes/constitutional_administrative_history.html [Accessed 7th April 2023].
134 Ibid.

historians who are interested in the inner workings of modern heritage organisations, as they are able to view the corporation and its policymakers in its own words and without the potential "spin" that may be seen in its public-facing work, such as its official histories.

The CWGC archives, held primarily at its Head Office in Maidenhead, Berkshire, are a hybrid of both historic and working documents, with the ongoing work and decisions made by the organisation over the last century being detailed within these files. While some of these may remain largely inaccessible, the bulk of this material is in the public domain; consequently, historians and researchers can see the methods by which the organisation continues to choose how to aptly commemorate casualties in its care and maintain the relevancy of its work. When considering the contents of any archive, particularly an organisational one, reflecting upon what has been lost or intentionally removed is just as important as the records available for viewing. For example, some of the enquiries files between the Commission and next of kin were destroyed during the Second World War; nevertheless, there is still a wealth of information available that can be utilised by researchers of the Commission's work. These records can be supplemented and cross-referenced by those found in local archives, where scholars can often find the missing correspondences between the Commission and the next of kin, with the bereaved's notes also featuring on these forms.

It is of paramount importance to firstly represent an organisation through its own records, as it enables the perspective of its employees to be told and understood years later. In this chapter, the administrative work undertaken by the Commission will be explored by highlighting some of the key resources within its archive, including the typical forms sent to families by the Commission and the decisions made during its meetings. Through this study, the chapter will display the discussions relating to UK sites and the lasting impact created by these choices. In addition, this chapter will display the range of bureaucratic problems faced by the Commission when dealing with the questions surrounding how the dead were commemorated in the United Kingdom would be cared for and highlight how the Commission largely modelled its working practices on the Civil Services tasked with organising the various administrative needs required by the British Empire at the time.

From its initial involvement to the impact its work continues to experience today, the Commission have had to recognise that a large proportion of its work relates to those commemorated in the United Kingdom. However, unlike the sites directly owned and maintained by the organisation that are found along the former battlefields, exceptions to policy and a case-by-case attitude was more prevalent within these circumstances found in the UK. This is due to the fact that unique situations occurred more frequently, and the Commission had to adapt quickly to ensure that it was caring for the dead here in the most appropriate ways. While much of the exceptions will be discussed in Chapter Two, where case studies from the enquiries files will be considered, comparing the microhistories found in

those records to the snapshots of the Commission's administrative burden enables researchers to gain a broader understanding of the Commission's work as a whole.

Before considering the exact issues and administrative tasks that the Commission had to resolve in Britain, it is important to acknowledge how the Commission was structured, and who was invited to attend the meetings at which vital decisions were made. The chapter predominately documents the processes outlined by the Commission by using its Meeting Minutes. These meetings were generally an opportunity for the Commission staff to meet with representatives from the various member governments and make decisions to the benefit the group's needs. Although the number of people who attended these meetings varies somewhat, generally the six member governments would be represented by the High Commissioner for that nation or their deputy, with the Vice Chairman and other key individuals such as Heads of Departments also being present. This enabled all those with influence over the Commission's work to raise their concerns, and be part of the decision-making processes that the Commission utilised in order to create its policies.

It should be noted that in amongst its initial structure, however, the Commission did not experiencee any woman Commissioners. While this may have been due to the fact that a large proportion of the Commissioners were the High Commissioners of the Dominion governments, which were male-dominated, there were some individuals invited to sit in on these meetings such as the Principal Architects and advisors. Philip Longworth noted that there were some women's organisations who pressed for feminine representation on these advisory boards, but the Commission was 'imbued with Victorian attitudes' that failed to acknowledge the contribution women had made towards the war effort. Moreover, the Commission failed to see the ways in which bereaved mothers and widows had a right to and could help with formulating policies that would comfort the bereaved;[135] while these interactions will be explored in a later chapter, the fact that women were not welcomed into the Commission at the highest level, while unsurprising when considering gender roles at the time, is interesting given the role of women in relation to mourning practices. As has been highlighted by Pat Jalland's work on grief and mourning, women were traditionally more active in the care of the dying and the performance of rituals facilitating the process of grieving.[136] However, the fact that Jalland's work also emphasised that men were often vital to the organisation of funerals, and women were often excluded from this ceremony, perhaps explains why women were largely excluded.[137] It may have been that the Commission perceived the role of women as mourning the dead, but not creating policies associated with the logistics of this work.

135 Longworth, *The Unending Vigil*, p. 29.
136 Pat Jalland, *Death in War and Peace: A History of Loss and Grief in England, 1914-1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 3.
137 Ibid.

The Introduction of the Work of the War Graves Commission into the United Kingdom

The work of the Commission has fascinated many groups of individuals from a variety of backgrounds for generations; as discussed in the introduction to this thesis, the scale of commemoration created by the organisation had been largely unseen before, and certainly not conducted by an independent institution instead of a government department.

When discussing the work of the Commission, a phrase often heard regarding its commitment is that the operation was 'the single biggest piece of work since the Pharaohs, and they only worked in their own country.'[138] This phrase, attributed to the Commission's first Literary Advisor Rudyard Kipling, provides a vivid image regarding the scope of the Commission's work in the immediate aftermath of the First World War. Indeed, in hindsight it is incredible to consider that both during and after a global war this fledgling organisation was brokering agreements with a variety of governments and organisations and creating the sites of memory associated with British remembrance more than a century on. While this may conjure up images of the former battlefields, where the Commission were busy organising land agreements and creating the cemeteries and memorials that are synonymous with its work, it also includes the work being undertaken to ensure the war dead buried closer to home were also being appropriately commemorated.

However, from both the records and the Commission's own histories it is clear that the UK-based war dead were not a priority. It appears that its work at home began largely as an afterthought and was brought to the organisation's attention by representatives from the Dominion governments. This is particularly interesting, given that this model reversed the traditional structure imposed on the Empire, with Britain making decisions that affected its territories without much consultation of their governments. The Dominion governments were concerned that, in spite of the Commission having charged itself with the responsibility for war graves in the United Kingdom through its chapter, the work that would be required to undertake this task would take a considerable amount of time to implement when compared to how quickly the work overseas was being completed. This was partly due to the fact that there were difficulties involving tenure of the land and other questions relating to who had legal ownership of the graves. The main concern for the Dominions was that their service personnel lay buried in sites across the British Isles with nothing to mark their graves permanently. This was further exacerbated by the fact that their countrymen, who had initially been charged with caring for them while based in the UK, were being demobilised and returning home. Therefore, it was stated at the 15th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission in October 1919 that it was

138 Glyn Prysor, 'The Biggest Single Project since the Pharaohs,' *Building Design*, 2018. Available at: https://www.bdonline.co.uk/briefing/the-biggest-single-project-since-the-pharaohs/5096101.article [Accessed 12th April 2022].

desirable for the Commission to 'take the matter in hand without further delay.'[139] It appears that, although the Dominion graves were a more pressing priority, the Commission had to acknowledge their equality in death policies and provided a solution for all war graves found in the United Kingdom.

The decision outlined during the 15th Meeting was seen as a positive step by many of the original Commissioners, who believed that the erection of a typical Commission headstone on the graves of the Dominion dead would encourage British families to follow suit. There was some debate, however, over who should do the work; in particular whether, the Commission be in charge of this task from the outset, or if the Dominion Authorities would initially be responsible for creating and organising the cemeteries containing their dead, before handing them over to the Commission for maintenance at a later date. It was ultimately decided that, in order to ensure consistency when commemorating the war dead, the Commission would take on this task from the beginning. The earlier resolutions of the Commission from May 1919 had enabled it to officially take responsibility for war graves in churchyards and civil, naval and military cemeteries in the United Kingdom where they were not maintained by the relatives of the deceased, and so the decision regarding the Dominion graves further extended its reach and legitimacy. Thus, an instruction was given to the Commission's Secretariat to:

> Forthwith proceed with the erection of permanent headstones for all graves of Overseas soldiers and sailors buried in the United Kingdom, attention being paid to the varying requirements of individual cemeteries and due care being taken to provide for Dominion materials wherever possible.[140]

The reference to 'Dominion materials' in this instruction is interesting, as it mirrors the suggestion by Gertrude Jekyll to utilise horticultural features symbolically. In particular, this related to the use of symbolic plants from the home countries of particular members of the British Empire at sites overseas where a large number of their war dead were laid to rest. This may explain why there is often the presence of maple trees in war graves plots with large populations of Canadian casualties, for example. In contrast to sites abroad, in which the foreign governments had gifted land in perpetuity for the casualties to be buried, many of the locations within the United Kingdom were pre-established municipal cemeteries and churchyards. Furthermore, laws were passed in various countries to enable the Commission to undertake its work but not at home; these include one in France in December 1915, Belgium in August 1917, Italy in July 1918, Greece in November 1918 and Egypt in November 1918.[141] Thus, the Commission did not necessarily have the option to construct sites on British soil

139 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/15 (WG 650), 15th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 1st October 1919, p. 8.
140 Ibid.
141 CWGC, CWGC/2/1/ADD.6.2.1 (ADD 6/2/1), Annual Report of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 1919-1920, 1920, p. 11.

that mirrored the designs of those on the former battlefields, and it was often limited in terms of the work it could do within the site and on individual graves. For example, it was rare that the Commission could decide to move graves in order to concentrate burials and construct war graves plots, especially if the dead were buried in family graves.

As part of the development of its work in the United Kingdom and overseas, the Commission appointed a Land and Legal Advisor in 1919. Their role was to 'supervise the acquisition of land in all countries where sailors and soldiers of the British Empire are buried, to supervise the work of the Agencies of the Commission in foreign countries, the Dominions and Protectorates and to advise on questions of law affecting the work, forms of contract' in addition to personnel-related concerns.[142] The appointment of a Land and Legal Advisor seems to have been primarily focused on ensuring that work completed abroad was of an appropriate standard, but it is noteworthy that the acquisition of land in 'all countries' where individuals under the Commission's remit are buried was included in this contract. This is due to the fact that this would theoretically include acquiring land for sailors, soldiers and airmen buried on British soil. The reality of this work is quite limited in comparison to the suggestion, as it is clear that the Commission had not factored in the complications surrounding grave ownership and the wants of families into this idea. Indeed, many families would have already buried their loved ones in family plots or would not want the individual moved from their original resting place. This must have been a complicated situation for the Empire dead, many of whose families were thousands of miles away and thus could not impose their own viewpoints with the same autonomy that families nearby could.

When looking at the Dominion war dead, a point regarding the term "nationality" being used in this context must be raised. In Commission terms, the nationality of an individual was based on their country of service as opposed to country of origin or naturalisation; thus, an individual from Yorkshire could be listed as an Australian if they served with the Australian Imperial Force, for example. The country of service also indicated which nation would cover the cost of that particular grave in perpetuity; therefore, there is a complex situation regarding war dead cared for by the Commission. This logic, when applied to individual cases, this can perhaps explain why some Dominion war dead may not be buried in a separate war graves plot; they may, in fact, be an individual local to the area and thus their grave may be privately owned. Complications such as this are commonplace and will be explored later, but these additional situations further made Commission policies even more difficult to enforce.

142 Ibid.

The viewpoints by the bereaved with loved ones closer to home were often in accordance with the traditional Western attitudes towards death and funerary rights. According to Patricia Jalland, between 1830 and 1920 the emphasis in the West regarding death had moved away from spiritual concerns towards a greater anxiety to minimise the physical suffering the dying faced.[143] Indeed, nursing the sick and dying in their homes was a core part of the process of death, with this care being one of the primary functions of Victorian wife and mother.[144] The deaths experienced in the Great War completely challenged these principles, therefore mourning customs and rituals had to be adapted.

The archival evidence that references nineteenth century mourning rituals suggest that these customs provided the bereaved with the opportunity to express their sorrow in a way that would aid with the grieving process. Indeed, modern psychologists studying bereavement have argued that the mourning rituals began during this period could offer therapeutic benefit and meet the psychological needs of the bereaved. This was often done through structuring death within a system of values that made sense to the key mourners, in addition to ensuring that the community rallied around them to provide comfort.[145] In this period, for many families the grave became the point at which to focus their remembrance upon and enable them to continue to feel a sense of closeness to the dead.[146] Consequently, it was often deemed important to have the dead buried close to where the family where currently living. Moreover, the physical closeness between the grave site and family meant that the bereaved could maintain the plot so that it remained a pleasant location of remembrance.[147] Given that the Great War had challenged the ways in which individuals could be remembered and experience a "good death," families tried to channel much of the mourning rituals in new and innovative ways if their loved ones were buried overseas. However, for those who had loved ones who died in Britain it was easier to uphold the traditional rites; thus, there is a divide between how the grieving process was achieved between the two groups. This will be explored further in a later chapter, but it is clear that these discrepancies in bereavement enabled there to be some difference that has not been explored by the historiography before.

In the 1919-1920 Annual Report of the Imperial War Graves Commission, it was stated that the Commission had begun to take over from the Commands and the Dominion military authorities in the United Kingdom, with the Commission being given the records of the sites known to have war graves in by the authorities, in order to report on their current state. It was stated that, as part of an initial assessment, 30 cemeteries across the British Isles had been visited and evaluated; out of these locations, constructional work had been begun at three sites and a further six cemeteries were having

143 Jalland, *Victorian Family*, p. 77.
144 Ibid., p. 99.
145 Ibid., p. 193.
146 Ibid., p. 291.
147 Ibid., p. 294.

design and working drawings created by architectural teams as part of the plans for permanent commemoration there.[148] The cost of each individual grave was estimated to be at £10 per grave;[149] this is a figure still used, albeit adjusted for inflation, in some cases by the Commission when maintaining historic contracts with various Church and Cemetery Authorities. An additional interesting development in the immediate aftermath of the First World War is the formation of the Enquiries Department of the Imperial War Graves Commission which took over from the Enquiries Branch of the Directorate of Graves Registration and Enquiries in the War Office; however, this branch did not initially cover the work being undertaken in the United Kingdom.[150] Perhaps this was due to the ongoing uncertainties continuing to surround how much impact and influence the Commission could enact on the British Empire graves on British soil. It is clear that the Commission realised this decision would not be the most effective one, however, as one year later it announced that the Department of Records had taken over the Registrars Branch, and the United Kingdom and Effects sections, of the War Office Directorate in London.[151]

This process is relatively similar to those found in other belligerent nations, such as France. As Daniel Sherman has noted, two weeks after the Armistice a government decree in France shifted control from the burial services attached to each of the French army corps to the semiautonomous Office des Sépultures Militaires within the Ministry of War. This new organisation also had an independent high commission to supervise its work, although the burial service's progress remained as stilted as the Commission's in the United Kingdom. The organisation remained chronically understaffed, and this made it ill-equipped to cope with the disorder that the war had created. [152] Although much discussion has been had regarding the decision by the French government to allow the bereaved to reclaim their loved one's bodies at the government's expense in the early 1920s,[153] there is a lack of comparative work contrasting the policies enforced by Britain. Indeed, when considering the policies of British remembrance the focus has primarily been on the non-repatriation policies upheld for overseas war dead. However, as has been highlighted by the issues faced by the Commission when dealing with war dead in the United Kingdom, families whose loved ones died in Britain could utilise similar protocols; thus, more comparison between these two nations' policies surrounding its war dead would

148 CWGC, CWGC/2/1/ADD.6.2.2 (ADD 6/2/2), Annual Report of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 1920-1921, 1921, p. 11.
149 According to The National Archives' Currency Converter, £10 in 1920 would equate to approximately £290.58 in 2017. The National Archives, 'Currency Converter,' *TNA*, 2023. Available at: https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/#currency-result [Accessed 6th April 2023].
150 Ibid., p. 13.
151 Ibid., p. 11.
152 Daniel Sherman, *The Construction of Memory in Interwar France* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 74.
153 Ibid., p. 91.

perhaps make an interesting discussion. While this is outside of the scope of this thesis to discuss this, it is an important factor to consider.

When reading the early Annual Reports of the Commission, it should be remembered that it was dealing with a range of other problems that had marred its plans for work while creating the sites of memory we see today; some of these difficulties were more low-level, whilst others made headline news. One of the biggest types of opposition the Commission faced in its infancy was in relation to its policy of equality of treatment and uniformity. This hostility saw the matter being brought to a head by a debate in the House of Commons on 4th May 1920, which raised a resolution to reduce the vote for a grant in aid of the funds of the Commission. The suggestion was almost unanimously quashed,[154] but nevertheless emphasises that the Commission was not an organisation blindly beloved by the grieving public at this time. Moreover, it should be noted that the Commission's representation as an organisation focused on how it treated all those in its care equally. Whilst an identical treatment of the war dead can be largely stated for much of the former Western Front, many of the other fighting fronts and the dead commemorated in the United Kingdom were not treated in the same way.[155] In the case of the dead commemorated across the United Kingdom, this may be largely due to the delayed response by the Commission in caring for the dead at home. The delay and the lack of proactivity by the Commission initially, combined with the differing wartime policies by the British government regarding the war dead buried in the United Kingdom, enabled families and other organisations to take on responsibility for erecting and maintaining commemorative spaces for lost loved ones, and thus complicated the Commission's task further when it tried to formalise its remit at home.

The year 1920 is arguably when the Imperial War Graves Commission's work in the United Kingdom truly began. In its Annual Report for the financial year, it is noted that the duty of acquiring the exclusive rights of burial in cemeteries and churchyards in the United Kingdom had since been formally transferred to the Commission by the War Office,[156] and some 36,000 graves had already been registered and identified by the organisation. Unlike sites abroad where concentration and

154 CWGC, CWGC/2/1/ADD.6.2.2 (ADD 6/2/2), Annual Report of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 1920-1921, 1921, p. 5.
155 It should be noted that until 2019-20, in light of discussions relating to the commemoration of black African soldiers fighting in East Africa, the Commission used to emphasise it had four main principles of commemoration, including equality in death regardless of race. This has since been altered, and a committee to discuss how to appropriately commemorate black African soldiers in East Africa was appointed. At the time of writing, this work is ongoing. Commonwealth War Graves Commission, 'Report of the Special Committee to Review Historical Inequalities in Commemoration,' *CWGC*, 2022. Available at: https://www.cwgc.org/non-commemoration-report/ [Accessed 22nd July 2022]. Additional information can be found in John Siblon, 'Negotiating Hierarchy and Memory: African and Caribbean Troops from Former British Colonies in London's Imperial Spaces,' *The London Journal*, 41 (2016), pp. 299-312.
156 CWGC, CWGC/2/1/ADD.6.2.2 (ADD 6/2/2), Annual Report of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 1920-1921, 1921, p.6.

formalisation of war graves sites were possible, the graves in the United Kingdom were often scattered within small churchyards. This was often due to the memorialisation of the war dead being taken over by their next of kin when they died, with their corporeal remains being transported by the War Office back to the families and then being buried in a local churchyard or cemetery at the family's request. This practice mirrored what would likely occur in situations where civilians died far from home; the families would usually opt to have them buried near to where they now lived, so that they could regularly visit the grave and ensure it was cared for according to their beliefs.

This situation was made worse due to the lack of legal backing the Commission experienced. Parliament had not passed any land laws as Britain's allies had done to secure ownership over these graves, and at first many went as far as doubting whether the organisation could prevent private memorials being erected. These private markers further caused concern over whether the enforcement of equality of treatment would prove impossible.[157] Thus, the Commission had to take great consideration over the needs and requests of the families in order to ensure that it could continue to do its work successfully. The complications surrounding liaising with individual families will be further highlighted in Chapter Two through the enquiries files, and these records provide a fascinating insight into the difficult decisions that the Commission had to make in order to ensure it could successfully undertake its task in the United Kingdom.

Furthermore, it was estimated that the graves were contained in 9,000 or 10,000 different cemeteries, and thus negotiations would have to be made with a large number of cemetery authorities.[158] In spite of this overwhelming task to maintain scatter graves, there were some opportunities to emulate battlefield cemeteries in the UK through creating distinct war graves plots with uniform headstones and a clear horticultural planting scheme. The most notable example of this type of site that can be found in the UK is Brookwood Military Cemetery in Surrey, although slightly smaller war grave plots were also created. Key features of Commission sites were also placed in certain cemeteries that fulfilled the general guidelines enforced by the Commission and highlighted in the introduction where appropriate, such as the Stone of Remembrance and Cross of Sacrifice,[159] but these were not always clearly connected to the graves themselves. Indeed, in many situations these abstract monuments were placed at the entrances of the cemeteries near to the chapel, which was likely to not be close to many of the war graves themselves. Moreover, standardised Commission headstones had begun to be erected on isolated graves within churchyards and cemeteries,[160] in order to identify the war dead in

157 Longworth, *The Unending Vigil*, p. 45; Edwin Gibson and G Kingsley Ward, *Courage Remembered* (London: HMSO, 1995), p. 65.
158 CWGC, CWGC/2/1/ADD.6.2.2 (ADD 6/2/2), Annual Report of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 1920-1921, 1921, p. 9.
159 Ibid.
160 Ibid.

the way seen most suitable by the Commissioners. These were usually placed on graves not previously marked by their next of kin, but in some cases markers were placed within family plots after the permission of the grave owners was received.

Year	Number of Known United Kingdom Graves (Fully registered and accepted as authentic)	Number of Known War Dead Globally	Percentage of Overall Work of the Commission
1919-20	27,552	538,748	0.05
1920-21	36,000	619,000	0.06
1921-22	Not recorded		
1922-23	65,806	694,891	0.1
1923-24	68,311	704,601	0.1
1925-26	78,356	734,738	0.11
1926-27	80,855	740,147	0.11

Fig. 1: Table to highlight registered graves and percentage of its workload, plus budget allocated. Source: Annual Reports.[161]

Based on the information found in Fig. 1, perhaps it is not entirely surprising that the Commission's focus was not exclusively on the United Kingdom given the fact it never exceeded 0.1% of its overall work. However, when looked at from a qualitative, not quantitative perspective, it raises questions. Although prioritising the sites of memory along the former battlefields was designed to gain public support of non-repatriation,[162] utilising the graves closer to home to showcase the work of the Commission would have arguably been more beneficial in the short term. This is due to the fact that the graves did not require significant travel, and could have easily been seen and admired by the public. Perhaps the Commission opted not to do this out of respect to the families, who may have wished to enact their own private acts of grief prior to bringing their loved ones into the broader scope of state-sponsored mourning.

A note should also be made regarding the differences between burials typically found on the island of Ireland. While the commemoration on the island of Ireland is outside the scope of this thesis, burials across the modern-day Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland are regularly included in the figures for United Kingdom-based war dead in Commission literature.[163] Indeed, when the Irish Free State was established, an Irish Commissioner was not appointed but was instead represented by the British Commissioner. Sites across the island of Ireland can be seen more in keeping with garrison burials

161 It should be noted that the definition of "Great Britain" changes over this period, with the creation of the Irish Free State and establishment of Northern Ireland. In some reports, Northern Ireland is separated from the numbers in Great Britain. For the purposes of consistency, the war graves on the island of Ireland have been included in the numbers.

162 Exact statistics for how much was spent on each country are not available; financial documents grouped expenditure by topic as opposed to country.

163 For further reading, see Niamh Gallagher, *Ireland and the Great War: A Social and Political History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), Richard S. Grayson, *Dublin's Great Wars: The First World War, the Easter Rising and the Irish Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018) and Keith Jeffery, *Ireland and the Great War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

found across former British colonies rather than similar to the scattered graves in the United Kingdom, which adds further nuance to discuss in future research.

Another administrative element to consider in order to further understand the Commission's work are the various correspondences between the Commission and the next of kin. While this will be discussed in more detail in a later chapter, it is important to note the administrative burden of this work on the Commission and its attempts to contact families. In the year 1920-1921 alone, more than 420,000 index cards were created to correct and include new information about casualties, with 70,000 notifications of registration being sent to the next of kin and over 134,000 letters to answer queries individuals had about their loved ones' final resting places.[164] While this covers the global response to the Commission's work, as opposed to only the casualties buried in the UK, the sheer bureaucratic output by the Commission from the outset should not be underestimated or ignored.

By the 155th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission in October 1932, there were estimated to be around 88,000 war graves across 10,000 different cemeteries in the United Kingdom, with the question of how to care for them remaining a prevalent concern. Some headway had been made over the previous decades in relation to caring for the Dominion graves, as by this meeting these graves were reported to have all been registered and marked.[165] However, the work in the United Kingdom was still incomplete nearly two decades later as the process of registering and marking the graves of all casualties buried in the United Kingdom being finished.

At the meeting, the graves were described by the Commissioners as falling roughly into two categories, which were largely based upon the policies in place during the First World War: those who died in hospitals and were buried by the War Office at their expense, and those who died in hospitals or at home and were buried by their relatives, with the War Office contributing to the expense of the funeral. There was, however, a third category that the Commission acknowledged it had to consider: the currently unknown number of graves of those who had died after being discharged from the Armed Services that still fell within its remit.[166] According to its policies, the Commission were responsible for caring for all those who died while serving in the British Empire Forces, or recognised auxiliary organisation, during its dates of responsibility or due to the effects of war service throughout the same time period. Those who had died before they had been discharged had been largely dealt with; only 433 cases remained, although fresh notifications (around twenty per month) meant that this part of the Commission's commitment in the United Kingdom was far from complete.[167]

164 Ibid., p. 13.
165 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/155 (WG1831/97), 155th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 12th October 1932, p. 7.
166 Ibid.
167 Ibid.

As can be seen throughout this section, the work of the Commission was vast and complicated, and its work in the United Kingdom is no exception. Its work in the United Kingdom was largely driven initially by the Dominion governments, who were focused on ensuring that their war dead were not forgotten in any part of the world, and their graves often provided a blueprint for how the Commission wished to deal with the graves of those buried in the United Kingdom. However, the graves found at home were often not a priority for the Commission as it had to also consider the vast numbers of graves overseas; this was particularly important, as many families would be unlikely to see these sites of memory. Thus, the work in the United Kingdom was often more long-term and slower when compared to the battlefield cemeteries. Furthermore, the acquisition of land in Britain was, in many cases, more complex than the agreements being made overseas; in the next session, the granting of land and problems faced by the Commission in relation to this issue will be discussed.

Granting of Land and Initial Concerns

Another initial administrative concern that the Commission had to resolve related to the use of space and ownership of land. In order to achieve its monumental task, the Commission needed to ensure that it had the rights to significant areas of land that was within cemeteries and churchyards across the country; this included pre-existing 'plots' created next to wartime hospitals by the local military or civic authorities. This work was vital to ensuring that the Commission's task could be completed successfully, and this is reflected within the Commission archival documents; one of the largest sections in its Maidenhead archive relates to the legalities surrounding the work and ongoing problems concerning rights of land faced by the organisation. In many cases, the Commission were also having to consider decisions made by other individuals and organisations during the war about how to commemorate the dead and incorporate it into its own estate as easily as possible. For example, the Commission were having to work with both Cemetery Authorities and religious organisations tasked with creating and maintaining local cemeteries; Cemetery Authorities were usually private companies established a century prior in order to formally manage the memorialisation of the dead within a local community and manage the grave rights. This would include creating contracts with the bereaved regarding how long they would own a certain plot of land before another burial could be made in the same location, as well as managing the types of markers that could be put over the different grave types at that site.

The majority of Cemetery Authorities had not considered precisely how the war dead would be cared for in the conflict's aftermath, so had either not allocated land specifically for the military dead or had created small, but disjointed, plots near to the hospitals caring for the wounded. Furthermore, due to constraints relating to space, many Cemetery Authorities utilised multiple occupancy graves to bury

the war dead; consequently, many of the First World War plots in the United Kingdom contain examples of this type of commemoration, where the dead have been buried alongside other casualties in a single plot. This, and the fact that many graves were scattered across sites in family plots, created a great deal of concern for the Commission and required it to create solutions to these problems. In this section, some of these difficulties and the resolutions will be discussed in order to illustrate the adaptability of the Commission when dealing with these often-complex cases.

The administrative tasks and agreements between the Commission and Cemetery Authorities varied greatly, and largely depended on the degrees of support provided by the Cemetery Authorities. In some cases, the bureaucratic elements needed to provide the Commission with legitimacy in sites across the United Kingdom were relatively simple. For example, at Sutton Cemetery in Surrey, the local Urban District Council gave a free grant to the Commission in order to enable a Cross of Sacrifice to be installed in the site and the rights of burial to 23 of the graves there in perpetuity.[168] Other similar cases can be found in Gilroes Cemetery in Leicestershire, where in 1931 the Commission were granted the rights to four graves by the Leicester Corporation and the exclusive rights of burial to a war grave situated in High Wycombe Cemetery gifted by the High Wycombe Corporation to the Commission.[169] This would arguably be the ideal situation in the Commission's mind, as it enabled it to do its duties as outlined in its Charter without forcing the organisation to consider additional costs.

However, some Cemetery Authorities asked for an annual fee in order to cover the costs of tending to the graves themselves. It appears these were usually expected by private cemetery companies as opposed to civic companies, possibly due to the fact that these private companies were set up as businesses for profit as opposed to being part of broader civic organisations tasked with caring for all aspects of that community's lives. For example, Torquay Extramural Cemetery Company agreed to maintain the war graves in the cemetery there at the inclusive fee of £25.[170] While this was purely a formal matter, with the agreement needing to be authorised,[171] it was a common administrative activity for the Commission that legitimised its authority over the graves of the fallen. This would further create security in the legalities surrounding its role and enabled consideration of the financial

168 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/129 (WG1831/71), 129th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 9th April 1930, pp. 8-9.
169 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/146 (WG1831/88), 146th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 9th December 1931, p. 21; CWGC/2/2/1/156 (WG1831/98), 156th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 9th November 1932, p. 8.
170 According to The National Archives' Currency Converter, £25 in 1930 would equate to approximately £1,144.63 in 2017. The National Archives, 'Currency Converter,' *TNA*, 2023. Available at: https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/#currency-result [Accessed 6th April 2023].
171 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/144 (WG1831/86), 144th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 7th October 1931, p. 30.

requirements on the Commission's funding to maintain the graves in the United Kingdom. Indeed, some churchyards continue to receive the sum agreed more than a century ago, adjusted for inflation, on an annual basis by the Commission.

Occasionally, the price required by the Cemetery Authorities would alter; many would increase, in line with inflation, but in some cases the price would decrease as a charitable gesture. For example, in 1937 the Abney Park Cemetery Company Limited reduced the rate of payment per grave per annum at Abney Park Cemetery from 15/- to 7/6d.[172] The decrease in the rate paid to Abney Park Cemetery Company Limited would have likely been gratefully received by the Commission, whose material and economic resources in the United Kingdom were already limited when compared to Commission-owned sites elsewhere in the world.

In general, although progress had been slow initially by the time that the 1920-21 Annual Report was distributed six sites had been constructed by the Commission in the United Kingdom. This process included, but was not limited to: acquiring land grants for spaces to create war graves plots; receiving permission from the families or grave owners to move remains, if appropriate; creating a horticultural and architectural plan and possibly receiving the perpetual grave rights to the war graves at the site. This would have taken significant negotiations with various parties invested in this work, and it is clear that the Commission looked tactically at which sites to focus on when conducting this work; indeed, the report notes that the completed sites were generally those at which the war graves were already placed closely together. This would therefore make the task of the Commission easier, as it would not need to factor in significant unique features such as large numbers of scatter graves, upon which planting schemes and uniformity would be near-impossible. It is, however, also acknowledged in the report that the sites in the United Kingdom had additional factors that did not necessarily affect the Commission's work overseas. In particular, many of the cemeteries at which the Commission were trying to construct sites of memory had war graves buried both within a designated "war plot" and outside of the constructed area. Generally, those outside of the war plot were in family-owned graves, and thus could not be moved and 'concentrated' into the war plots, as was common practice overseas. The fact that the Commission had to work with, as opposed to reconstructing sites to suit its needs, the pre-existing spatial landscape emphasises the challenges that the Commission faced in the United Kingdom; it could not simply move graves and build cemeteries to its preferred design, but rather had to cater to the decisions made by families and local organisations and make these choices work for its own necessities.

172 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/209 (WG1831/151), 209th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 15th November 1937, p. 10. According to The National Archives' Currency Converter, 15 shillings in 1935 would equate to approximately £38 in 2017, while 7 shillings and 6 pence would equate to around £19. The National Archives, 'Currency Converter,' *TNA*, 2023. Available at: https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/#currency-result [Accessed 6th April 2023].

In addition to the complications surrounding locations of scattered graves, there were further issues concerning the constructed plots that the Commission had to resolve. In the 1920-1921 Annual Report, it is highlighted that, whilst in most cases the Commission's 'usual type of headstone' was erected on the graves, in some sites the Commission found that the space available and 'method of burial' by the local authorities or families meant that a standard Commission headstone could not be installed; consequently, 'special treatment' was necessary.[173] Some examples of this 'special treatment' that are listed in the report include the use of flat headstones at Southport, and the engraving of names on screen walls or curbs near to where the casualties were buried at locations in the south of England.[174] This further highlights the individual situations the Commission needed to consider, as well as the compromises and adaptations that had to be undertaken in order to ensure that the equality of treatment the Commission championed was upheld as far as possible. However, through adjusting its plans to suit the needs of these exceptional circumstances, the Commission sacrificed its founding principles and enabled inequalities to be sanctioned. While examples of this can be found in cemeteries overseas, including at locations along the Western Front, the number of instances where this occurred in the UK significantly outnumber the examples of these exceptions abroad.

In spite of the complications outlined in early reports, work throughout the United Kingdom continued to progress during the first half of the 1920s. By 31st March 1923 records of exactly where these graves could be found had largely been compiled; in the Annual Report for that year, the Commission highlighted that there were 59,505 identified and 3,003 unidentified casualties found to be commemorated in the United Kingdom known to the organisation at this time.[175] It is important to understand what was meant by "United Kingdom" during this period; the term was used to describe the countries of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Indeed, it is worth noting that these statistics did not include the casualties found in the newly-founded Irish Free State, where more than 2,600 individuals are now commemorated by the Commission.[176] In spite of the changing landscape of the United Kingdom at the time, the Commission were able to utilise its negotiation skills and ensure that war dead were cared for across the British Isles, regardless of which territory they were buried in. Furthermore, the example shown in the report emphasises the rigorous processes involved

173 CWGC, CWGC/2/1/ADD.6.2.3 (ADD 6/2/3), Annual Report of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 1921-1922, 1922, p. 9.
174 A curb was used at Plaistow and Hampstead, while a screen wall was used in Gravesend. Ibid, p. 9.
175 "Unidentified" graves in this report were not unknown soldiers requiring a "Special Memorial" or "Kipling Memorial;" it was a term used to include the graves whereby the particulars were incomplete, and thus were not fully registered. CWGC, CWGC/2/1/ADD.6.2.4 (ADD 6/2/4), Annual Report of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 1922-1923, 1923, pp. 3-4.
176 Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet containing casualties commemorated in Ireland, information supplied by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, 24th October 2020.

in recording of grave locations, both at home and abroad, and the monumental task the Commission faced in identifying, recording, marking and maintaining the graves across the United Kingdom.

In the 1922-23 Annual Report published by the Imperial War Graves Commission, the Commissioners openly acknowledged the ongoing difficulties relating to its commitment in the United Kingdom more generally. Indeed, it was noted in the report that the organisation had 'long experienced very great difficulties in deciding what were war graves within its Charter of Incorporation' and this had significantly delayed progress in the work being done at home. This was also reflected in the enquiries being sent by the public at the time; queries about the Commission's remit in the United Kingdom regularly arrived from bereaved relatives and interested organisations, and answers to these queries were still being agreed upon. The letters received from the public covered a range of topics, from casualties who had been buried in a variety of different plot styles, to those who had died of their wounds sustained in the conflict years after the event that caused them. As a consequence of this continued confusion, the Commission decided to appoint a committee to look into the matter and consider the various situations being brought forward in order to come up with an appropriate solution.

After a long deliberation, in which the Committee considered the factors that could create a situation by which 'the least injustice would be done,' the Commission decided that no individual who had died after 31st August 1921 would under any circumstances be entitled to a war grave.[177] The date was chosen as it matched the date fixed by Royal Proclamation as the official end of the Great War in Britain,[178] and thus would be the most appropriate date to be used as the benchmark by which to cease the entitlement of a war grave. In spite of the significance of this date, the conclusion made by the Committee did not resolve in a completely a smooth transition by the Commission; in the meeting minutes of the 87th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission in April 1926, it was noted that three branches of the British Legion had forwarded resolutions to the Commission's headquarters in recent months. In these letters, the branches recorded their viewpoint that provisions for ex-servicemen who had died from the effects of the Great War after 31st August 1921 should be made, as they too deserved acknowledgement for the sacrifices they made for their country.[179] It appears that this spike in the number of concerns raised regarding this specific topic may have related to the fact that the next of kin of these individuals could claim a war pension; the disparity between the War Office's policies and the Commission's own regulations thus created some confusion among the public. The Commission had responded to these resolutions by reiterating the complex position of

177 CWGC, CWGC/2/1/ADD.6.2.4 (ADD 6/2/4), Annual Report of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 1922-1923, 1923, p. 6.
178 Ibid.
179 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/87 (WG1831/29), 87th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 14th April 1926, p. 2.

these cases; in particular, that it was unable to do such work on the behalf of any member governments, as it had not received any request from the British government to take action on such graves.[180] The focus by the Commission in this particular instance to await instructions from the British government specifically on this matter connects to the policies within the Civil Service across the British Empire at this time; as mentioned previously, Whitehall would make a decision that impacted upon the Empire that would outrank any local policies of individual nations. Although there were multiple governments from across the British Empire represented among the Commissioners and some policies brought to the organisation by Dominion representatives were implemented, the Commission primarily reported to the British government and thus could not necessarily have different regulations to suit the needs and wants of the different member governments.

The creation of a committee by the Commission to investigate how best to undertake its task in the United Kingdom also connects to the broader hierarchy within the British government and its Civil Service, as it mirrors the Select Committees generated within the British Civil Service for public inquiries. Indeed, Select Committees are utilised in Britain a means of calling a department to account publicly and to suggest resolutions to the various issues raised;[181] in this case, the main role of the committee created by the Commission was to hold the organisation accountable for its commitment in the United Kingdom, and to assess the suitability and sustainability of its decisions about this task. It could be argued that, without committees like this being created, problems would fester which would further delay the Commission's work in the United Kingdom or create inequalities and regional differences. Thus, by holding the Commission accountable through a committee the organisation could resolve these issues quickly and avoid the organisation as a whole being brought into disrepute through its inaction. The financial year 1922-23 was a key turning point in the Commission's work in the United Kingdom more generally, as it appears that the Committee enabled many decisions relating to the remit of the Commission to be finalised and enforced. A number of the principal cemeteries in which military plots were included had been completed by this time, while many other sites were in various stages of construction. However the state in which a cemetery could be found during this year varied dramatically; for example, at some sites the constructional element of the work had been completed but headstone installations were outstanding.[182] Moreover, significant progress in the administrative side of the Commission's work had been completed; by March 1923 2,242 agreements for maintenance, which represented some 20,868 graves, had been signed by the Commission and the relevant Cemetery Authorities.[183] These contracts provided the Commission with the legitimacy it

180 Ibid.
181 Claire Foster-Gilbert (ed.), *The Power of Civil Servants* (London: Haus, 2018), p. 11.
182 These included Cannock Chase, Shorncliffe Cemetery and Aldershot Cemetery. See CWGC, CWGC/2/1/ADD.6.2.4 (ADD 6/2/4), Annual Report of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 1922-1923, 1923, p. 12.
183 Ibid.

required in order to appropriately function as the keepers of the First World War graves present in the United Kingdom, and enabled it to work in a way that was similar to its processes oversees. Furthermore, the numbers listed in this Annual Report are significant, especially when considering the fact that records of graves in the United Kingdom were acknowledged in the report to still be considered imperfect. Indeed, the Commission highlighted that the collection and coordination of information available was still proving difficult, thus stalling its progress in completing the preliminary work required in the UK. The process of organising the formal recognition, legal handover and construction of these graves was an ongoing process similar to its work abroad, with records being added to on an almost daily basis.[184]

The wider issue of access to the graves of the fallen in the United Kingdom was also a growing problem. One of the key aspects of the Commission's ongoing work is to ensure that its sites are fully accessible to pilgrims; unlike its owned sites abroad, the Commission cannot guarantee that cemeteries and churchyards in the United Kingdom will be available to visit at all times. Moreover, during the cemetery opening hours, theoretically all of the war graves should be visitable; however, in many cases across the British Isles, this is not possible for a variety of reasons. This can include due to religious denominations not wanting unknown visitors, such as caretakers of Jewish cemeteries with war casualties, to certain cemeteries being used both historically and in a modern context for illicit activities. In many cases, the Commission does not explicitly state not to visit these sites without prior warning or additional precautions, but local knowledge enables visitors to be mindful of their trip.[185]

In spite of the clear regulations being formalised during this period of the Commission's history, exceptions to its rules continued to remain prevalent and add complications to its work. The circumstances that caused these exceptions were often created in response to rules implemented either by other organisations prior to the Commission's existence, or by individuals and groups with influence over how those in a particular site should be remembered. For example, in Almorah Cemetery on Jersey in the Channel Islands, the three graves in the care of the Commission after the First World War were buried in part of the site where upright headstones were not permitted. As a compromise, the local authorities had suggested that recumbent stones could be used here as a

184 Ibid.
185 Although not UK-specific, occasionally information about sites with difficult access are highlighted on the visitor information of the CWGC website. An example of this is on the Rome War Cemetery page, which includes opening times. Local knowledge of the area surrounding a site may also enable visitors to consider their safety prior to travel. Commonwealth War Graves Commission, 'Rome War Cemetery,' *CWGC*. Available at: https://www.cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/2019300/rome-war-cemetery/ [Accessed 8th April 2023].

substitution for an upright Commission headstone which the Commission agreed to.[186] Similar circumstances can be found for both the First and Second World War, particularly at sites cared for by religious institutions; in many areas of consecrated ground, headstones may not have been permitted on the common graves that casualties may have been buried in. the Commission thus had to consider the regulations of the site and the wants of the family; if a family valued the individual being buried in consecrated ground more than them having a headstone, for example, it may prove difficult for the Commission to suggest exhuming them and moving them to a site where headstones were permitted.

There were also some concerns relating to the impact of key features that had been placed within the United Kingdom sites. In particular, the Cross of Sacrifice, designed by one of the Commission's Principal Architects Sir Reginald Blomfield, was prevalent in a number of cemeteries across the United Kingdom. However, unlike those found in Commission-owned sites abroad, the reference to the casualty numbers and religious backgrounds that the Cross of Sacrifice was alluding to, as per the Commission's policy and outlined in the introduction to this thesis, was often misunderstood within the context of sites across Britain. Indeed, Rudyard Kipling, in his role as Literary Advisor to the Commission, stated at the 93rd Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission that he was 'impressed' when visiting cemeteries in England that no one had seemed to make the connection between the Crosses of Sacrifices within these localised cemeteries and those found in war cemeteries of the British Empire elsewhere in the world.[187] While this statement may have been accurate, Kipling failed to consider some of the wider issues: whilst it may be assumed not every bereaved person found it difficult to visit the sites abroad, it could be expected that a significant proportion of the public were unaware of the significance of the Cross of Sacrifice. Nevertheless, as a result of the concerns raised by Kipling there was some debate during the meeting about whether it would be apt to inscribe Crosses of Sacrifice in the United Kingdom with a text that highlighted the meaning of this feature. It was hoped that this solution would enable the public to link the Cross to the work of the Commission elsewhere, by referencing its connection to those found on the former battlefields.[188] It appears that this was deemed the most appropriate response to the problem, and examples of these inscriptions can be seen upon some Crosses of Sacrifice across the United Kingdom.

186 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/87 (WG1831/29), 87th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 14th April 1926, p. 5.
187 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/93 (WG1831/35), 93rd Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 10th November 1926, p. 4.
188 Ibid.

Fig. 2: An example of a Cross of Sacrifice with an inscription detailing its significance and connection to the cemeteries found overseas can be found at Newark-Upon-Trent Cemetery in Nottinghamshire. Photograph: Author's Own.

In addition, it must also be remembered that some communities opted to utilise a memorial similar to the Cross of Sacrifice as their local war memorial, potentially causing confusion over the significance of the design. In spite of the fact that the Cross of Sacrifice, or War Cross as it's sometimes known, was heavily plagiarised within local communities, its designer Sir Reginald Blomfield was often called in to design local memorials.[189] Perhaps it was felt that employing the same architects as the Commission to design these places of local remembrance would enable a greater connection to the war dead more generally, as it ensured both a consistency in terms of its symbolism whilst enabling public acts of mourning to take place closer to home.

Although civic memorials will be discussed later, the design of these features is important to consider. According to Sonia Batten's PhD research, these memorials took many forms from plaques and tablets to stained glass windows and utilitarian projects. The symbolism of these memorials were designed to emphasise patriotism, victory and peace as well as the glory of God and the language associated with these structures were often more idealistic than realistic.[190] It appears that there was a split between the public, state-sponsored acts of mourning and private grief that could be expressed at gravesides; at war memorials, sacrifice and honour was stoically remembered whilst at the cemetery

189 Richard A. Fellows, *Architects in Perspective: Sir Reginald Blomfield: An Edwardian Architect* (London: A. Zwemmer Ltd, 1985), p. 108.
190 Sonia Letitia Batten, 'Memorial Text Narratives in Britain, c. 1890-1930' (PhD Thesis, University of Birmingham, 2011), pp. 45-6.

families could quietly remember their loved ones in a more open and traditional series of mourning rituals.

Moreover, some local Cemetery Authorities were not as forthcoming or supportive of the work of the Commission as it would have been liked. At the 99th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission in May 1927, the sealing of a Grant by the Croydon Corporation of 55 war graves in Mitcham Road Cemetery had been authorised. The Grant reserved, to certain relatives, the ability to purchase the exclusive rights of burial any grave in 'pursuance of an option of purchase granted to them by the Corporation at the time of interment;' this option had already been given to the families and the Commission had sealed an assignment as required.[191] At the time of the 130th Meeting in May 1930, another request had been received and the Commission were required to seal this assignment.[192] It is interesting that this option was readily available to the public and accepted by the Commission, as it would potentially create further complications in its ability to care for the First World War dead buried on British soil. Once again, it raises questions over who has key responsibility to care for the war dead – the state or their families. This is especially important when the next of kin had access to the bodies of the casualties, and potentially contributed to funerary costs and paid to have them interred in the family plot.

Furthermore, certain cemeteries wanted to include features that would be unique to the sites. For example, the question of erecting flagstaffs at Commission cemeteries in Britain was raised in 1944. It was suggested that flagstaffs could be erected at the RAF Regional Cemeteries in the United Kingdom, as well as possibly Dover (St James) Cemetery in Kent and the Royal Naval Cemetery at Lyness in Orkney.[193] In contrast to French war cemeteries, for example, the Commission had historically opposed the presence of flags at other sites, and previously permitted the erection of flagstaffs only at three sites: the Thiepval Memorial, on which the Tricolour of France and Union Flag flew side by side, and at Étaples and Versailles cemeteries. Furthermore, the Commission had previously rejected a proposal in 1924 to erect a flagstaff at Leeds (Lawnswood) Cemetery in Yorkshire; this was due to Sir George Macdonogh disagreeing with the proposal and Sir Frederic Kenyon expressing that he felt it would be 'aesthetically undesirable.'[194] Whilst it appears that no particularly concrete reasons were provided by the Commissioners to rationalise this decision, a longstanding worry of the Commission relates again to the experience of nationhood; for example, does the organisation permit the flags of all countries who have war dead remembered there be flown,

191 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/130 (WG1831/72), 130th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 14th May 1930, p. 8.
192 Ibid.
193 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/261 (WG1831/203), 261st Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 16th August 1944, pp. 8-9.
194 Ibid., p. 9.

and if so are these the historic flags, or the modern day equivalent. It was therefore perceived to breach the policies the Commission had already inputted, and backlash would potentially be felt. Nevertheless, it appears that for the most part flagstaffs have been largely omitted from cemetery designs by the Commission; in cases where they are found, they are often erected by the local council and are outside of a Commission plot, in order to adhere to Commission policy.

From the beginning of the Commission's involvement at sites in Britain there was great concern over the standards found at sites in the United Kingdom when compared to the cemeteries abroad. At the 108th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission in March 1928 Mr Knowles, representing the High Commissioner of New Zealand, had enquired on the horticultural and maintenance policies relating to graves in the United Kingdom. As part of this enquiry, Mr Knowles noted that the conditions found at sites within the United Kingdom often compared unfavourably with those in the military cemeteries abroad, particularly as in many places there appeared to be no specific horticultural treatment for the war graves.[195] This was seen as a matter of principle by Mr Knowles, as he hypothesised that if a mother was visiting the graves of two sons she had lost in the Great War, one of which was buried in a military cemetery in France and another in a cemetery in the United Kingdom, she would likely find the grave in France to be 'everything that could be desired' for a monument dedicated to her lost son while the grave in the United Kingdom would be perceived to be 'indifferently maintained.'[196] This viewpoint was concurred with by Sir Fabian Ware and other members of the Commission staff during the meeting, who had made a point of visiting and inspecting large numbers of cemeteries in the United Kingdom, in order to gain an insight into their current state, and had found similar results to those expressed by Mr Knowles.[197]

Due to Mr Knowles' concerns, during the meeting a discussion ensued relating to how best to rectify the situation. At the time of the meeting, it was estimated that there were around 80,000 graves in the United Kingdom at nearly 10,000 sites; these ranged from single graves to large plots of 750 casualties or more, and thus no consistency could be found. Moreover, over 38,000 of these graves were maintained at the cost of the Commission, with the remainder cared for in other ways free of charge to the Commission, such as in the care of the family or a private company. In spite of these significant numbers, only the military cemetery at Brookwood was maintained by gardeners in the direct employment of the Commission. Although sites existed across Britain, some that were similar in scope to Brookwood, many of the war dead were interred at sites that were in the charge of the Cemetery Authorities, with whom the Commission had entered into a contract.[198] The regulations or

195 CWGC CWGC/2/2/1/108 (WG1831/50), 108th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 14th March 1928, pp. 6-7.
196 Ibid., p. 7.
197 Ibid.
198 Ibid.

control that the Commission could enforce on these groups was limited: the authorities were only required, as per the agreement, to ensure that the graves were clear of weeds, stones and rubbish and that the grass was kept short and returfed when required. Generally, the payment received by Cemetery Authorities by the Commission for this work was five shillings and five pence per grave, which matched the average cost of graves in France and Belgium. However, whilst in battlefield sites like those found in France and Belgium it was possible to provide flowers and satisfactory treatment at this price, it was deemed impossible at cemeteries and churchyards in the United Kingdom. This was due to inconsistencies in both the numbers of graves and spatial differences between the war graves found at many locations, which made upkeeping the expected horticultural display almost impossible.[199]

Furthermore, there were extra local charges to be considered by the Commission, which were included as part of the agreements. The costs paid in addition to the standard rate varied between sites from one shilling to one guinea per grave per annum.[200] In spite of ten Area Inspectors being employed by the Commission to examine the sites found across the length and breadth of the United Kingdom, the actual inspection by the Commission of the maintenance work in Britain was nil, except in cases where such work was done by senior members of staff at their leisure. This was not due to laziness on the Commission's part, however; the Area Inspectors were initially employed to find and mark war graves, and had thus been preoccupied with compiling records, erecting headstones and making arrangements for maintenance with contractors and other organisations.[201] The coordination of this extensive administrative work was an ongoing task that meant Area Inspectors could not actively investigate the varying levels of maintenance found; as alluded to previously, the number of war graves reported to the Commission was constantly increasing, thus making the task a never-ending concern. While the Commission did photograph some of the construction of its cemeteries, these records seem to have primarily focused on highlight its work overseas rather than the efforts being made at home. Presumably, this is due to the fact that the designs of its sites abroad would not have been as readily seen by the public, and was arguably its scale was more impressive when compared to the work it was doing in the UK.

When considering the potential price of providing horticultural treatment in the United Kingdom, it was estimated by Lieutenant Colonel Oswald that this would cost on average a guinea per grave per annum to properly maintain the graves in the United Kingdom with flowers. This estimate was incredibly modest, as Sir Fabian Ware noted that any improvement to the graves would create great

199 Ibid., p. 8.
200 Ibid.
201 Ibid.

expense as a consequence, which might mean an increase of at least £50,000 per year.[202] Thus, the financial constraints that this task would burden the fledgling Commission with was deemed not to be suitable, as it would need to ensure that this expenditure could be maintained. Another factor that needed to be considered was the different requirements and roles of the sites themselves, particularly in relation to local needs; for example, in many churchyards the grass was grown for hay. As the hay was the property of the Sexton,[203] and thus overgrown grass was a common feature of British churchyards during this period the Commission had to adapt its policies to not leave corporations it was working with at a financial loss. To alter this, at the cost of both the church and the Commission, would not be an easy task.

It appears that the Commission were also modern in its attitudes towards different solutions to the maintenance issues in the United Kingdom, as there was some consideration in the 1920s of utilising volunteers to improve the conditions of sites found here. Initially, veterans groups such as the British Legion were believed to be the best caretakers of the war dead, which may have been due to the fact that caring for their fallen comrades may have provided a sense of pride among the veterans, in addition providing for them a place in remembrance rituals.[204]

Although this was a highly favoured option among the Commissioners, it was ultimately decided this would not resolve the core problems faced in the United Kingdom and would not be enforced at this early stage in the Commission's existence. In particular, it was felt that veterans groups and other volunteers would not be capable of dealing with the levels of necessary maintenance required throughout the year, such as significant weeding in the summer months. However, this did not mean that the matter was to be disregarded completely; once again, the question was to be investigated by a committee, which would enquire into the question of maintaining war graves in the United Kingdom and create an appropriate solution.[205] The concerns surrounding the maintenance was becoming increasingly important, especially as individuals were making pilgrimages to the United Kingdom from far flung areas of the Empire, particularly New Zealand, in greater numbers. It was presumed by the Commission that many of the visitors from overseas would have included a stop at the former battlefields as part of their pilgrimage to Europe, in order to view the cemeteries and memorials that were the pride of the Commission's work. It was therefore possible to make the assumption that these

202 Ibid., pp. 8-9. According to The National Archives' Currency Converter, £50,000 in 1925 would equate to approximately £2,052,945 in 2017. The National Archives, 'Currency Converter,' *TNA*, 2023. Available at: https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/#currency-result [Accessed 6th April 2023].
203 Ibid., p. 9. This continues to this day; many closed churchyards are now transformed into wild meadows, or the grass used to create hay.
204 For more information on this topic, see Natasha Silk's 2021 University of Kent PhD thesis (embargoed at the time of writing this thesis).
205 CWGC CWGC/2/2/1/108 (WG1831/50), 108th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 14th March 1928, pp. 6-7.

pilgrims would have found the state of sites in the United Kingdom shocking in comparison to those abroad, especially at cemeteries not directly in the Commission's care. It was also clear, based on the letters being received by the Commission at this time and as shown in the notes from the 129th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission in April 1930, that if the families were displeased with the state in which they found their loved one's grave, they would complain about the standards to their governments and thus the Commission.[206]

It appears that, while the committee was considering voluntary maintenance of the war graves by local groups, further agreements with the Cemetery Authorities were being explored. However, it appears the Cemetery Authorities were often unable to provide additional maintenance of the war graves at a price that the Commission felt was appropriate. Indeed, by the 110th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission in May 1928, it was confirmed that it had been found to be 'impossible' to make arrangements with the relevant Cemetery Authorities for planting flowers and maintaining the war graves in the same way as they were in France at an economical rate. Once again, the New Zealand government appears to have been the most prevalent force in pushing this matter to be resolved, as it was noted in the meeting minutes that the issue had been brought to a head at the request of the High Commissioner for New Zealand, who wished to carry out alterations at a cemetery in Brockenhurst, Hampshire for an estimated £300.[207] Through the exploration of this work at Brockenhurst, it was thus stated by the Commission that such a fee was not economical for all the sites in the United Kingdom; the Commission had therefore been 'forced to accept the standard applied' throughout the cemetery to the civilian graves. Although exact standards expected at sites could vary dramatically, at Brockenhurst the Cemetery Authorities expected that its work included keeping the graves clear of weeds, loose stones and rubbish and occasionally mowing the grass.[208] There was a general agreement that this was not a satisfactory outcome, but the Commission had no choice but to accept this. However, the matter was still not considered to be resolved at Brockenhurst; although the proposed price of maintenance was considered too high, a reasonable solution was still required. Therefore, Sir Fabian Ware stated that he would again see if anything could be done on a voluntary basis to arrange for the planting of flowers on graves across the United Kingdom.[209]

Interestingly, this parallels the Commission's work today; it has only been since the start of the centenary of the First World War that volunteers have been officially recruited by the organisation,

206 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/110 (WG 1831/52), 110th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 9th May 1928, p. 13. According to The National Archives' Currency Converter, £300 in 1925 would equate to approximately £12,317.67 in 2017. The National Archives, 'Currency Converter,' *TNA*, 2023. Available at: https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/#currency-result [Accessed 6th April 2023].
207 Ibid.
208 Ibid.
209 Ibid., p. 14.

with an online portal to legitimise the voluntary roles available being released in October 2020. Indeed, one of the roles that the Commission has actively recruited for was that of maintenance as part of the "Eyes On, Hands On" project; although the volunteers are not expected to do much more than photograph and lightly clean Commission headstones, it nevertheless provides some upkeep of the graves in between formal visits by Commission staff.

It appears that other priorities had taken precedence over this issue, as the situation still had not been resolved two years later. Indeed, at the 129th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission in April 1930, the matter was once again raised. In the meeting, it was reiterated again that an estimated £50,000 per year would be required to enable the Commission to treat the graves across the United Kingdom to the same standards as those on the former Western Front.[210] Furthermore, it was noted that Sir Fabian Ware had been trying for some time to obtain voluntary assistance from various organisations in order to lower the cost of this task. Initially, and with the help of Sir Frederic Kenyon, Ware had approached the Victoria League to gain their help; however, the Victoria League were not able to 'deal with the matter with their existing organisation,'[211] so it approached the Women's Institute (WI). The WI were sympathetic to the matter, although no formal agreement had been made at the time of the meeting; nevertheless, it was suggested that in the first instance any help the WI could provide would be confined to Dominion graves, with the hope of extending this to all war graves found on British soil. This plan was decided based on a number of factors, including the presumption that the majority of Dominion graves were not cared for by their family. Moreover, the graves that it was hoped the WI would look after were also limited in the first instance to isolated graves and those in smaller cemeteries, as they would theoretically be less likely to meet the standards expected.[212] Indeed, the standards found at smaller sites was often subpar due to the fact that many of the graves would be scattered. In addition, because of the size of these sites, there would theoretically be fewer visits by Commission employees and contractors to these cemeteries and churchyards for maintenance work. Although there is no clear evidence that a formal agreement between the WI and the Commission was reached, speaking anecdotally to some local branches it is clear that the WI have had some involvement in maintaining their local war graves. Indeed, one branch in Northamptonshire declared proudly that they made sure their local war dead were looked after during a talk to them, which suggests that similar instances can be found across the country.

210 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/129 (WG 1831/71), 129th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 9th April 1930, p. 10. According to The National Archives' Currency Converter, £50,000 in 1930 would equate to approximately £2,289,2700 in 2017. The National Archives, 'Currency Converter,' *TNA*, 2023. Available at: https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/#currency-result [Accessed 6th April 2023].
211 Ibid.
212 Ibid.

The difficulty of maintaining graves in Britain and the general state they could be found in was an ongoing topic of discussion into the 1930s. Some improvements had been implemented by the 145th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission on Armistice Day in 1931, however, and it was clear that progress was finally being made in resolving the matter. During the meeting, it was admitted that the maintenance of all war graves in the United Kingdom had been uniformly unsatisfactory in the past. However thanks, at least in part, to visits made by the High Commissioners for Australia and New Zealand to sites across Britain as part of a Committee, the conditions found in the cemeteries and memorials across the British Isles were continuing to improve, with hopes for further enhancements over the coming years.[213] Considering that this discussion was happening more than ten years after the Commission's Royal Charter established its work officially, and almost 20 years since the first casualties of the First World War had been killed, this seems to have been a particularly laborious process for the Commission that required significant support from the member governments; alternatively, the matter may have taken so long to resolve due to the fact that it was not necessarily seen to hold the same level of importance as caring for the dead overseas.

As highlighted by David Lloyd's research, pilgrimages to places associated with the war often saw the role of death as the focus for its journey.[214] Pilgrims would often take photograph of the headstones found overseas and potentially kiss the name of the loved one on a memorial or their headstone; alternatively, they may trace the name on paper so that they could bring a small part of their final resting place home with them. Along these trips, diaries or letters written by the fallen were often carried and utilised by the bereaved to attempt to understand and recreate parts of the deceased's experiences, so that they could address their grief and potentially feel closer to the dead.[215] These pilgrimages often served in a similar function to the gravesides at home; they enabled relatives to confront their grief.[216] Again, this is perhaps where the historiography has omitted part of the experiences of bereavement in this period; unlike those buried overseas, whose graves could be considered a true pilgrimage, the dead buried at home could theoretically be visited with increased frequency in comparison. Perhaps it was this difference that continued to make the United Kingdom-based burials both more complicated and less of a priority for the Commission, and thus enabled this work to be largely excluded from previous studies of the Commission's work.

Whilst a range of unique issues, such as prolonged discussions over grave ownership and appropriate commemoration, caused many of these delays it did not stop both the public and the Commissioners themselves feeling exasperated at the slow pace of creating sites of memory on British soil. Examples

213 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/145 (WG1831/87), 145th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 11th November 1931, p. 17.
214 Lloyd, *Battlefield Tourism*, p. 134.
215 Ibid., p. 135.
216 Ibid., p. 137.

of these frustrations being expressed in correspondence will be explored in a later chapter, highlighting its ongoing significance on an individual level and emphasising that there were a significant number of individuals involved in providing a resolution to this issue.

Ongoing Issues after the Second World War

In spite of the progress made in the 1930s, it did not completely alter the states of the sites in Britain and it appears that the later additional task of caring for the Second World War dead only exacerbated the difficulties. This is highlighted almost 20 years after the end of the Second World War by the Vice Chairman at the 441st Meeting of the newly-renamed Commonwealth War Graves Commission in October 1960. During this meeting Vice Chairman Sir John Crocker noted that, on a recent visit to the Midlands and the North of England, at most of the cemeteries visited in or near to the great industrial areas of the UK air pollution was making it difficult to maintain the headstones and other stone structures to an acceptable standard.[217] It appears that the expectation by the Vice Chairman was a common misconception, and this view of the Commission's work being associated exclusively with the cream-white hue of Portland stone was firmly in place just a few decades after the organisation had been established. This is a fallacy that continues to this day regarding the Commission's work; many of its enquiries relate to headstones looking "dirty," when in reality they are just not made from Portland or white-coloured stone. There were more than 30 different types of stone used by the Commission globally, many of which are not white in colour. Perhaps this misunderstanding at the higher levels of the Commission caused further delays in maintenance regulations, as it meant unnecessary amounts of time were being spent querying the state of stone types that would never appear to resemble the Portland stone for which the Commission is famous.

In addition, although the state of the graves in the United Kingdom did not seem to match with the expectations of the Commission after the Second World War, the reaction by Portland stone to its environment was known at the time of its construction. Indeed, many of the leading architects working with the Commission to design the grave markers knew that some of the stone the organisation was using, such as Portland, adapted to the landscape it was placed within. If it was placed under a tree, for example, the stone would begin to have a greenish hue, while if it was placed within a smoggy and highly-polluted area the stone would darken over time. Moreover, in some cases alternative stones, such as slate or granite, were used as they fared better in harsher environments; in many situations, these were also stones quarried within the local area. The decision to utilise local stone often enabled the Commission to make contact with local communities and engage with them,

217 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/441 (CM3/1/109), 441st Meeting of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, 20th October 1960, p. 4.

and connections to the region were often chosen as part of the architectural design of cemeteries in the United Kingdom. In a modern context, the choice by the Commission to utilise stone that is quarried in that particular area of the United Kingdom adds to the challenges surrounding altering the public's perceptions of its work, particularly when explaining stone that looks like Portland that has not been cleaned, such as the Stancliffe stone typically used in the Midlands. The comment by the Vice Chairman from 1960 during this meeting clearly illustrates this ignorance towards the war graves in the United kingdom; it is clear that there was an obvious distinction between the expectations of the Commissioners and the public and the ideas of the architects.

However, some of the concerns raised by the Vice Chairman when reflecting on his trip to the Midlands and the North of England hold merit, and emphasised that policy of the time was not effective. For example, the Vice Chairman highlighted that he had found four graves from the First World War that were completely neglected within an abandoned burial ground at Houghton-Le-Spring, County Durham. This was quite a commonplace issue at the time, particularly as secularism rose in popularity and cremation became more widespread. Nevertheless, these findings raised a new issue regarding the longevity of the Commission's work in Britain and questioned its ability to commemorate all war dead in perpetuity. In the case of Houghton-Le-Spring, as three out of the four graves at the site were marked by Commission headstones, it was proposed that the markers be removed from this site so that people did not feel that the Commission were abandoning its duties. The casualties who were interred there would not be exhumed and moved, but rather would be memorialised elsewhere. The four new "headstones" to commemorate the war dead at Houghton-Le-Spring were planned to be based on the design of the so-called "special" or "Kipling" memorials used by the Commission at sites abroad where the casualty once had a known grave nearby, but the grave is now lost. The name of this memorial type was given in honour of Rudyard Kipling, whose personal loss of his only son meant he had a significant interest in ensuring those without a clearly marked physical grave were also remembered; his work on this particular task included devising the superscript and inscription on the headstone to highlight that it was not an actual grave, but that the individual's sacrifice should not be forgotten. Following this regulation, the graves in Durham would instead be commemorated with these special memorials at the nearby Houghton-Le-Spring (Durham Road) Cemetery.

There was a further complication regarding the remaining grave, which was marked by a private memorial. As the private memorial was not maintained by the Commission, this could not be touched during the dismantling of the other graves. It is unclear whether the Commission opted to alternatively commemorate all four war dead at Durham Road Cemetery, given that there are war graves at both Houghton-Le-Spring (St Michael) Church Burial Ground and Houghton-Le-Spring (St Michael's) Roman Catholic Cemetery mentioning Durham Road and both sites highlighting that special

memorials had historically been used there.[218] Furthermore, the fact that they are once again listed as being commemorated at St Michael's implies that the site has since become maintainable, and thus the special memorials have been removed.

When placing these possibly-temporary special memorials at Durham Road, the Commission included the appropriate superscription that was used in such cases. These superscriptions detailed the fact these were not typical grave markers with remains beneath them, and where the war dead had been interred. This addition to the headstone was included in order to ensure that they would not be confused with traditional graves. The new location chosen by the Commission as the place at which to commemorate these casualties was under the control of the local Urban District Council; it could thus be assumed that they would ensure that these new memorials would be better maintained in the long-term and would not create the need for another commemorative change in the future.[219]

The example at Houghton-Le-Spring emphasises how important it was for the Commission to ensure that the individuals buried there would not be disturbed in some way. Indeed, it is usually Commission policy that exhumations of war dead are prohibited, so that they can be at rest in perpetuity. Therefore, in addition to the solution outlined, the Commission ensured that the permissions and formalities required to guarantee the casualties would continue to remain undisturbed at the abandoned site in Houghton-Le-Spring were completed. Moreover, the Commission were expected to contact the next of kin so that they were kept fully abreast of the situation and provide their support.[220] While these procedures match the protocols created by the Commission during its early years, the decision to contact the next of kin decades later may have proven more complicated given that the Commission's records were more than half a century old. Indeed, it was unlikely that the families could be contacted at these locations. In cases where contact could not be made, the Commission made decisions on the family's behalf as planned. This policy continues to be practised today by the operational teams.

It is clear that a resolution to the various difficulties faced by the Commission relating to the war dead in Britain during the first half of the twentieth century were not as easily resolved as its work overseas. Indeed, many of the issues found in the United Kingdom were unique and thus were not

218 Commonwealth War Graves Commission, 'Houghton-Le-Spring (St Michael) Church Burial Ground,' *CWGC*, 2022. Available at: https://www.cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/5001328/houghton-le-spring-st-michael-church-burial-ground/ [Accessed 2nd May 2022]; Commonwealth War Graves Commission, 'Houghton-Le-Spring (St Michael's) Roman Catholic Cemetery,' *CWGC*, 2022. Available at: https://www.cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/38190/houghton-le-spring-st-michael-s-roman-catholic-cemetery/ [Accessed 2nd May 2022].
219 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/441 (CM3/1/109), 441st Meeting of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, p. 9.
220 Ibid.

solved by quick solutions and pre-existing policies that the Commission could rely upon. While many of the records and concerns highlighted in this section have gaps in the archival evidence that makes finding the decisions made somewhat challenging, the fact that they continued to be raised at Commission meetings suggests that in many cases a policy of trial and error was largely used by the Commission. This further emphasises the pragmatism shown by the Commission when considering its work in the United Kingdom; rather than forcing policy to work here, it had to adapt to the differing legalities and expectations that were found here.

To conclude this chapter, the bureaucratic values of the Commission hold a great deal of its history in the origins of the Civil Service and its pragmatism continues to mirror the governmental departments it interacted with. While clearly separate organisations, there are parallels between the administrative practices of the Commission and the British Civil Service in particular. Problems repeatedly appeared in relation to the question of war graves within the United Kingdom, and there was some reticence to take control of these promptly due to the nuances relating to ownership of the graves and sites and financial constraints. As it has moved towards modernising the organisation and maintaining relevancy, these local rules have evolved into policy; however, exceptions to these regulations have not been omitted as it is seen as part of the Commission's history and a remnant of the organisation's heritage. The processes in the United Kingdom took longer to implement than many of the sites elsewhere, which may explain the lack of interest in these locations among the masses today. Perhaps with time there will be shift in priorities, and as more cemeteries and churchyards change its remit the Commission will be once again required to shift its attitudes and amend its policies to suit the latest cultural norms. These thoughts will be added to in the coming chapters of this thesis, but it is clear that the Commission's reach through its extensive administrative activities was significant.

Chapter Two: Bereavement and Personal Reactions to the War Graves Commission's Work in England

The work undertaken by the Commission has always firstly been a commemorative one and, as such, its work is emotive in nature. However, in comparison to the sites found overseas, the cemeteries that individuals can visit in the United Kingdom differ somewhat in commemorative style. Indeed, there were arguably more factors to consider when undertaking the task of memorialising the places at which war dead would be remembered. This included considering the wishes of the families, the legal responsibility for individual graves and the longevity of this task. Consequently, there are significant adaptations to the Commission's original regulations that it upheld elsewhere; while the work in the UK was also theoretically expected to follow the general procedures, it was clear that adaptations needed to be made. The Commission attempted to modify its policies in order to keep abreast of these changes, but the next of kin continued to find ways in which to test the regulations upheld by the organisation.

As has been highlighted by its administrative practices, much of the rationale behind these adaptations were not the choice of the Commission; unlike at the sites overseas, the Commission did not experience the same legal backing towards its work. Indeed, as many of the families in Britain had had some role in the maintenance or ownership of their loved one's graves, they were arguably in a better position to query the commemorative practices utilised by the Commission. Thus, the Commission had to be more mindful of how it utilised its Charter and where these policies could be adapted to suit the needs of individual families; as will be shown in this chapter, the Commission often utilised different working practices when dealing with enquiries from the bereaved in Britain.

The Commission's first interaction with many families was often through correspondences initiated by families, and it was usually these letters that enabled the bereaved to fully understand the Commission's remit. While there has been significant study into the interactions between those with loved ones buried far from home and the Commission, current research largely ignores how and why the bereaved in Britain liaised with the Commission. In this chapter, an explanation of how the Commission attempted to manage the needs of the families alongside its own operational requirements will be explored.

One of the key sources used to demonstrate examples of these are the enquiries, or "e," files held in the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's archives in Maidenhead. These records give a fascinating insight into the priorities of the bereaved, and are also a useful example of how attitudes towards death and bereavement both altered and remained during this period. Unlike the situations found at Commission sites overseas, families could have more ownership over how their loved ones

were remembered in both the literal and metaphorical sense. Furthermore, where funerary rites and rituals had occurred prior to the involvement of the Commission in maintaining the graves of war dead in the United Kingdom, there are examples of traditional, civilian funerary acts taking place.

Prior to moving into the specific examples being utilised as examples of interactions between the bereaved and the Commission, it is important to understand the dataset. As highlighted previously, the letters are from the initial release of some of the enquiries files by the Commission. Around 2,000 of these items were released in spring 2020 and these records covered a variety of different topics. However, whilst it cannot be ignored that 2,000 "e"-files being released is a fantastic achievement, the majority of these records were outside of the remit of this thesis; many of these records tended to focus on more "famous" stories, as well as the battlefield-based casualties. This is understandable within the context of the time that these records were written, as it appears that there were proportionately more correspondences between the Commission and the bereaved with loved ones buried overseas. There are a number of reasons why this is the case; most obviously, given that these families would be less likely to be able to visit their loved ones, it may be that they wanted to be reassured that the individual buried overseas would be appropriately cared for and commemorated. It must not be forgotten that, at this time, it was much more difficult and expensive to go overseas compared to the commercial travel experienced today; as will be highlighted in one story, sometimes even travelling within a county could be a lengthy task.

From the initial enquiries file release, 54 items that specifically discussed war graves situated in England were identified; there were a couple more for Scotland and Wales, but due to the remit of this thesis the discussions for burials outside of England will not be included. The majority of these records related to Dominion casualties, particularly Australians, and those who served with the Royal Artillery, and particularly the Royal Garrison Artillery. Although the reason why these records were released first appears to have largely come down to them being among the first in the already-categorised records, there may be a connection to the traditional order of precedence upheld by the British Army. The order of precedence is part of longstanding military traditions in Britain and was often incorporated into the designs of memorials to the missing erected by the Commission.

The area of history discussed in this chapter falls largely within the broader topic of the history of emotions, a relatively new field being explored by historians as part of interdisciplinary work with other scholars such as psychologists.[221] Through individuals such as Jan Plamper creating such histories, rationales behind decisions made many years prior can be fully appreciated within a modern

221 For further reading, see Jan Plamper, *The History of Emotions: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

context and a sense of kinship or commonality between our ancestors and the public living today can be experienced. Death, grief and bereavement are a universal feature of the human experience; therefore, by viewing these experiences within a historical context the war dead and their commemoration can be understood more clearly.

Typical Correspondence between the Commission and the Bereaved

Contrary to popular perception, early interactions that the Commission had with the public did not solely consist of unveiling ceremonies, or at memorial services near to the battlefields and on Armistice Day. While this may have been the locations at which the public could see its work in action, more often than not their initial communications with the Commission's work consisted of personal conversations relating to individuals, as opposed to specific cemeteries or memorials. Indeed, the Commission's exchanges with the bereaved through its Enquiries Unit primarily consisted of providing information and advice about their loved one's final resting place. Although the majority of these types of enquiries that survive are in relation to overseas burials, it is clear that individuals with loved ones commemorated closer to home also interacted with the Commission's work. It is through these records that patterns can be seen in precisely what the families in Britain wanted to know about the Commission's work, and how these queries differed in nature from those found for overseas burials.

As highlighted by the administrative burden faced by the Commission, letters were pouring into its Headquarters from grieving relatives from around the world, as well as those closer to home. In terms of the requests being received by families with loved ones buried in the United Kingdom, three clear categories emerge as general subject matters: maintenance requests, wishes to change the commemoration type of the casualty and general enquiries into the Commission's broader work. Some of these appeals were easier to respond to than others, but nonetheless the families often dominated the conversations relating to how their loved ones would be remembered in perpetuity. It appears that the autonomy felt by the families with relatives buried closer to home emboldened them to request adaptations to the Commission's rigorous policies, and enabled many of the exceptional circumstances in Britain to be enacted.

From the enquiries files, it is clear that the public were incredibly invested in the work of the Commission, regardless of the proximity of their loved one's graves. However, unlike the graves found overseas, the next of kin could request changes within a much quicker time frame and influence how the Commission operated in the United Kingdom more fully. Indeed, the proximity of the bereaved to the cemeteries and the churchyards within which their loved ones were buried meant that these individuals were able to visit the graveside with increased frequency, and thus regularly see

first-hand how maintenance was being undertaken by the Commission. Consequently, these individuals could effect change by raising concerns or requesting to have their relative commemorated in a way that befitted their personal beliefs towards funerary monuments. The further complications of ownership of particular graves meant that the Commission often had to handle these situations with increased delicacy when compared to its work overseas, and thus more pragmatic responses are found within these records.

It is also clear that the types of requests being received by the Commission altered over time, and as the war dead moved out of living memory the tone of the letters that the Commission received from grieving families altered slightly. Indeed, the enquiries from families over the decades that are held in the CWGC's Archive at its Head Office in Maidenhead, Berkshire, hold a wealth of information about the changing needs of grieving families and how they chose to include the Commission in this grief. While many of the letters relate to practical or administrative matters, the correspondence found in the enquiries files vary greatly and provide excellent examples of individualised grief and memorialisation. Although some of the records are only partial, and final resolutions are often omitted from the record, these are an invaluable resource for anyone interested in First World War casualties commemorated in the United Kingdom. Moreover, the fact that many of the records relating to United Kingdom-based war dead are concerning practical matters suggest that the bereaved still acknowledged the Commission's role of honouring the British Empire's war dead even when it was not legal owners of the grave rights for a particular grave.

One of the primary concerns the families voiced over the decades repeatedly related to the finding of a particular grave. As per the traditional Western attitudes to death and bereavement formulated during the 19th century, it was especially important for a grieving family to be able to visit their loved ones, even if a significant period of time had passed since their last visit. Thus, when a family could not find a particular grave, or the location of the casualty's final resting place was no longer found, the families would write to the Commission to express their concerns. This system was also utilised by the next of kin in order to express concerns regarding the state of a particular grave; the fears of the Commission during its early years relating to scattered graves were often realised decades after the dead had been laid to rest.

Although it is often presumed that the dead buried in the United Kingdom would have been more easily accessible to the public, it cannot be presumed that this was always the case. Families may have chosen to bury a loved one close to where they were living, but may have moved away from that area due to work or other life changes. Therefore, a particular grave could be visited less often than those found at war cemeteries overseas, and could fall into disrepair over time. One example of such a situation is found in the correspondence between the Commission and the widow of Saddler Edgar

Atherton of the Royal Field Artillery. In 1956, she wrote to the Commission, describing a recent visit to her late husband's grave. Whilst on a trip from Great Yarmouth to Fakenham, both in Norfolk, she stopped to pay her respects at his final resting place. Sadly, she could not locate her late husband's grave. Saddler Atherton's widow noted that, when she went back with a local man, she was able to successfully locate the grave but her helper had stated that the wooden cross which had been put on Saddler Atherton's grave had rotted and been taken away. Therefore, Saddler Atherton's grave was unmarked and there was no commemoration for him by name; this consequently went against the Commission's policies of commemoration.

It is unclear whether the 'wooden cross' described by the widow was a temporary marker installed by the Commission, or whether it was a permanent marker for the grave that had been chosen and funded by the family at the time of the funeral. However, it is clear that the family had also opted to place a kerb around the grave as the widow noted that this feature was covered with long grass and stubble, and the vase placed there by the family had been taken off. It is clear that the removal or neglect of these features had caused significant distress for the family, particularly as now people were walking on top of the grave without acknowledging Saddler Atherton's remains.

The latter part of this letter, and her concern at her late spouse's grave being disrespected by being walked on, emphasises the Victorian attitudes towards death that still permeated society at this time. As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, the erection of a kerb around the grave or the raising of the ground on top of a burial, so that it became more of a mound than a flat surface, was a common practice to alleviate the concern of a grave being trampled on. However, due to the movement of soil over time and the fact that the mound had not been maintained by the family this feature was not often found to remain over a significant period of time. Indeed, Saddler Atherton's grave provides a clear example of how this feature may have evolved over time and failed in the family's goal to keep the grave as a sacred space. Nevertheless, it is obvious that the experience of visiting her late husband's grave had caused more distress than expected for the widow of Saddler Atherton due to the neglect found, and she recognised it as the Commission's duty to rectify this.

To investigate the matter fully, and to provide the appropriate response to the former Mrs Atherton, the Commission sent its Area Superintendent to the site to appraise the state of the grave. In his report, the Area Superintendent found the grave to be privately marked with a kerb as opposed to a standard Commission headstone, but the grave itself was neglected. It was also found that the grave was not in the Commission's care as per the maintenance agreement for the site, and therefore it was not currently the organisation's responsibility to care for it. This element of the issue was rectified quickly, with the Area Superintendent arranging for Saddler Atherton's grave to be included in a

revised agreement with the cemetery owners so that it could be tidied in the immediate future.[222] Therefore, the formalisation of maintenance agreements and other policies at the site enabled the Commission to undertake its work by providing legitimacy to its role through ownership or legal responsibility over Saddler Atherton's corporeal remains.

After this site visit and the revised maintenance agreement had been finalised, the Commission responded to the widow to update her on its findings and actions. In a reply to the family, the Commission included information about the expectations of a Commission-maintained plot, stating that the Commission's treatment of graves included the utilisation of a flat lawn surface as opposed to a mound or a kerb. Furthermore, it highlighted to Mrs Atherton that the grave itself did not appear to be appropriately marked; more specifically, it did not include any service details of Saddler Atherton. Finally, the Commission advised Mrs Atherton that the Commission were not responsible for the future maintenance of the kerb, nor was it able to arrange for small pieces of flint to cover the grave, as the widow had requested in her letter. As an alternative to these requests, the Commission offered to erect one of its traditional headstones at the head of the grave and offered the family the opportunity to put a personal inscription on the headstone. Saddler Atherton's widow accepted the terms outlined by the Commission, and asked that the grave be engraved with the inscription "QUIETLY REMEMBERED, WITH THOUGHTS SINCERE."[223] It is unclear whether the family chose to formally sign the grave rights over to the Commission, or if indeed the widow continued to hold the rights to the grave of her late husband; nevertheless, by gaining consent from the next of kin the Commission could legitimise the work it undertook to bring the grave into its care.

In addition to general neglect or inconsistencies with maintenance, one of the core features of the Commission's ongoing work both at home and overseas is rectifying the various mistakes found on an individual headstone. Often, the cause of these errors is simply a misspelling by the author of the original records or general misinformation found within these files; alternatively, it could simply have been an error on the part of the stonemason or machine tasked with engraving the headstone. In the enquiries files utilised as case studies for the work being undertaken in England, there are examples of such inaccuracies being noted by the bereaved upon their return from visiting such graves. While this was not a situation unique to England, it is clear that this could be potentially brought to the Commission's attention quicker than those overseas due to the bereaved theoretically being able to visit the graveside quicker. The examples shown by these sources provide an understanding of the processes required for headstone amendments, and enable historians and the public to fully appreciate the intricacies of the Commission's work when maintaining the names, and therefore the symbolic

222 CWGC, CWGC/8/1/4/1/1/109 (AA40777), Correspondence relating to Saddler F. Atherton of the Royal Field Artillery, 9th September 1956-12th November 1956.
223 Ibid.

legacies, of the British Empire's war dead. In spite of how quickly the Commission may have received such correspondences, these amendments can take some time to be completed and are once again dependant on accurate information from an enquirer to support their claims. Although it is unclear whether at the time bureaucratic evidence was required to aid the enquirer with the changes requested, today the Commission upholds stringent policies that include documentary evidence that can be corroborated prior to any changes to a record being made.

One example of a request for a headstone amendment in the United Kingdom found within the enquiries files related to Mechanician Arthur G. Buurma of the Royal Navy, who was buried in East Ham (St Mary Magdalene) Churchyard which was at the time within the county of Essex. The state of his grave was initially brought to the attention of the Commission by the local Royal British Legion (RBL) Branch in October 1958, who sent a letter of complaint to the organisation about the state of their local cemetery generally. Upon investigation of this grievance by the Regional Director, the general condition of the site was found to be 'lamentable.' During his visit, the Regional Director had spoken to the Sexton about the state of the graves and had begun discussions relating to how to appropriately commemorate the casualties buried there. It was also noted in this report that the cemetery had been previously listed as an unmaintainable site due to the fact that it was 'a very wet site and is below the general level of the road.' Because of its previous unmaintainable status by the Commission, the commemoration of the casualties buried there at an alternative site was being considered as it was clear this issue was not a new one.[224]

However, during the discussion about alternatively commemorating the war dead at East Ham (St Mary Magdalene) Churchyard, concern was raised by the Vicar of the church about one possible solution. The Vicar opposed the erection of a Screen Wall near the main entrance of the churchyard, as the cemetery was still open for burials and thus would require as much space as possible to ensure future interments could take place here. Instead, the Vicar wished to negotiate a new agreement with the Commission, whereby he would be responsible for returning the graves to a satisfactory standard over the following twelve months. This was agreed to by the Commission, who regularly checked on the progress being made at the site. It appears that this was initially successful, as a site inspection report from March 1960 highlighted that there was 'a definite improvement in the condition of the graves,' although access to the graves and the wider churchyard was still 'somewhat neglected.'[225]

While this part of the correspondence may suggest that the matter was resolved, the Buurma family repeatedly wrote to the Commission separately to share their discontent over their father's treatment.

224 CWGC, CWGC/8/1/4/1/2/530 (CCM101740), Correspondence relating to Mechanician A.G. Buurma of the Royal Navy, 6th November 1958-13th June 1969.
225 Ibid.

One year after the Royal British Legion had highlighted their concerns, the son of Mechanician Buurma wrote on behalf of his mother to highlight that his late father's grave was in a poor condition, and his name was incorrectly engraved as 'Bourma.'[226] On another site visit to corroborate these claims, the Regional Director found nothing wrong with the grave site of Mechanician Buurma in particular, but suggested that this dissatisfaction may be due to the surrounding civilian graves being in a dilapidated state. This viewpoint was not corroborated by the Buurma family, and in 1965 the now-elderly widow of Mechanician Buurma wrote to the Commission to complain that the site was overgrown with grass; she stated that, while she has cleared this during visits in the past, at 82 years old this job was now too difficult for her to undertake by herself.[227] The further complaint by Mrs Buurma led to the Commission to again consider alternative commemoration for the casualties there. This decision was further supported by the fact it was now a neglected site and thus once again considered to be a location that was unmaintainable by the Commission.

However, the decision to alternatively commemorate the war dead at this site also caused distress for the family. In 1969 the son once again wrote to the Commission regarding his late father's grave. In this letter he recalled how, on a recent visit to the site, his mother had 'suffered an extreme shock' when she found the area around her late husband's grave had been cleared and the headstone marking the location of his grave removed. The son was outraged by this turn of events, stating that he considered the absence of forewarning by the Commission to be 'entirely lacking in consideration' to the families.[228] After a site visit to inspect the churchyard, the Commission replied to the family in order to assure them that Mechanician Buurma's remains continued to be located at the site and the location of his grave was still marked with a headstone. The Commission suggested that it was highly likely that Mrs Buurma could not find the grave due to the grass in the cemetery being 'from four to five feet high' in some places. Based on the digitised records on this particular casualty's grave, this appears to be the last correspondence between the IWGC and Mechanician Buurma's family. However, in 1997, the names of the casualties buried in the site were alternatively commemorated on a memorial, as the site had been transformed into a nature reserve.[229] This change is a common feature found in English churchyards today, and is an ongoing factor that the Commission must consider within its ongoing work.

226 Ibid. It is not clear whether the headstone with the misspelled name was ever replaced, but the casualty record on the CWGC website now lists Mechanician Buurma with his name spelled correctly.
227 Ibid.
228 Ibid.
229 Commonwealth War Graves Commission, 'East Ham (St Mary Magdalene) Churchyard,' *CWGC*, 2020. Available at: https://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/38302/east-ham-(st.-mary-magdalene)-churchyard/ [Accessed 24th June 2020].

In addition to the concerns regarding the standards of maintenance being undertaken, the bereaved regularly challenged the Commission's policies within their family plots, particularly in cases where other family members were later interred in the same grave. One such example of this can be found in the enquiries records relating to Gunner George Feast of the Royal Field Artillery. In 1936, the family of Gunner Feast wrote to the Commission to enquire whether it would be acceptable for the family to erect a kerb around the original Commission grave marker in order to commemorate his recently-deceased widow. The repercussions of such a request were clearly considered by the Commission as a handwritten addition, presumably written by a member of the organisation's Enquiries Team at the time, states that the site is within an Anglican churchyard and the Commission have 'no right of ownership on the grave.' This additional information suggests that it would be almost impossible for the Commission to refuse the family's wishes, even if it wanted to.[230]

In response to the request, the Commission gave the following advice to the family:

'The Commission consider that the kerb should wholly enclose the headstone and that it should be constructed of stone similar to the headstone itself. The Commission must hold Gunner Feast's daughter responsible for any damage done to their stone while this work is in progress, and they must request that when the kerb is finished the headstone may be re-set at the correct height of 2ft 8ins above the ground. Finally, the Commission cannot contribute in any way to the cost of this work.'[231]

It appears that this reply was satisfactory to the family, who did not respond directly to the Commission but seem to have erected a kerb around the grave in memory of the late Mrs Feast.

Although there does not look to have been a dispute by the casualty's next of kin regarding the Commission's advice, in 1963 the daughter of Gunner Feast wrote to the Commission to discuss the deterioration of the kerb. As per the regulations formalised in the 1920s, the Commission responded that it could not do anything about the kerb as the grave was not maintained by the organisation; however, it emphasised that it could be incorporated into the organisation's remit if the kerb was removed by the family and the grave was level turfed. Moreover, in a response outside of the usual corporate lines, the Commission offered a solution to commemorating the late Mrs Feast. The Commission stated that the family could remove or alter the current Personal Inscription at the base of Gunner Feast's headstone so that it included a dedication to his widow.[232] The daughter consented to this and paid the outstanding cost of £6 for the removal of the kerb, re-turfing and engraving of the amended personal inscription to the Commission.[233] The new personal inscription was chosen to be "UNTIL THE DAY BREAKS AND THE SHADOWS FLEE AWAY ALSO HIS WIFE EMILY 14TH

230 CWGC, CWGC/8/1/4/1/1/207 (AA60050), Correspondence relating to Gunner G. Feast of the Royal Field Artillery, 28th September 1936-13th December 1972.
231 Ibid.
232 Ibid.
233 According to The National Archives' Currency Converter, £6 in 1970 would equate to approximately £84.50 in 2017. The National Archives, 'Currency Converter,' *TNA*, 2023. Available at: https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/#currency-result [Accessed 6th April 2023].

JULY 1936 AGED 51."[234] This shift from policy is a unique one, and undoubtedly shows the Commission adapting long-standing policies in order to suit the needs of the family. While this may be due to the organisation's lack of grave ownership, this flexibility is nevertheless an important example of considering the bereaved's own views when commemorating a casualty in perpetuity.

However, this was not the end of the correspondence between the Commission and Gunner Feast's family. In 1972, Gunner Feast's daughter wrote to ask the Commission to lay a cement base with an opening for a flower vase. This was due to the fact that she felt discontented with the state of the grave and the lack of adornments it possessed. In addition to the dissatisfaction regarding the plainness of the grave felt by the daughter, she also emphasised her displeasure at the grass covering her late parents' grave; in her view, the grass was being allowed to grow 'all over' and the grass itself was mainly weeds. It appears that the Enquiries Department passed this letter onto the regional operations team in order to take their views into consideration prior to replying to Gunner Feast's daughter, and this letter was not met with positivity by the operations team. Indeed, the Regional Director replied to the internal correspondence about this matter, expressing his concerns that to comply with the request would:

'Create an undesirable precedent, especially as there are Contractors and Monumental Masons in this part of Sussex who could more conveniently and economically carry out this work, which would need supervision and inspection by our already hard-pressed staff. […] We always like to help relations if possible, but I feel this would be going too far!'[235]

The Regional Director included in his response his own recommendations of local masonry companies that the family may wish to use, and advised that the cement base should 'on no account be attached to the Commission headstone.' He also stated that, should the grave be covered by a cement base, the grave would be deleted from the maintenance agreement the Commission had with the Cemetery Authorities and thus would no longer be in the care of the Commission.[236] This discussion appears to have satisfied all interested parties, as no further correspondence relating to the casualty is recorded in the enquiries file. Such circumstances may have been rare for the Commission, but it is clear that a situation like the one described had been considered by it and an element of policy had been created.

Another major problem the Commission had to contend with from its inception related to its dates of responsibility. [237] In order to be considered a war casualty entitled to commemoration by the Commission, an individual must have either served in the British Empire Forces, or a recognised

234 Commonwealth War Graves Commission, 'Gunner G. Feast,' *CWGC*, 2020. Available at: https://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/402707/feast,-george/ [Accessed 30th June 2020].
235 Ibid.
236 Ibid.
237 Gibson and Ward, *Courage Remembered*, p. 60.

Auxiliary organisation, or died as a result of having served in such organisations, during what the Commission call its "Dates of Responsibility." For the First World War, the qualifying dates agreed to by the Commission and its member governments are between 4th August 1914 and 31st August 1921.[238] However, sometimes the qualifications required to be in receipt of a Commission headstone could be more complicated than it would first appear to be, particularly when reputational damage was a factor that needed to be considered.

One of the most famous cases of the Commission's dates of responsibility being challenged relates to that of Field Marshal Douglas Haig. Indeed, at the Commission's 108th Meeting in March 1928 there was a debate over whether or not to mark the grave of Field Marshal Haig, who had been a Commander of the British Expeditionary Force during the First World War, with a Commission headstone.[239] Haig had died two months prior to the meeting in London and was buried in Dryburgh Abbey in February 1928 after a state funeral. It was implied by the Commissioners that such an eminent figure could be deemed as a perfectly reasonable exception to the rules clearly created by the organisation, and that perhaps it should amend its rules in this specific situation. Indeed, Haig had been a prominent figure in the military leadership during the war, and it was therefore felt that exaggerating the rules for him somewhat may be met with a positive reaction as opposed to public outcry.

In spite of the seemingly helpful benefits to marking Field Marshal Haig's grave with a standard Commission headstone, this was a case in which the Commission felt that at least some of its rules should be maintained for posterity. Therefore, it was ultimately decided that the marking of Field Marshal Haig's grave would not be appropriate, and therefore outside of the Commission's remit. However, his grave is marked with a headstone in the style of those on the thousands of graves of those who died as a result of the conflict and who were in the care of the Commission;[240] although it is unclear how this occurred, it is likely that the Commission installed this headstone at the cost of the family, and then handed over the maintenance of it to the next of kin. While Field Marshal Haig's grave is not a Commission headstone, nor maintained by the Commission, the similarity of the stone emphasised the direct connection between Field Marshal Haig and the First World War.

Field Marshal Haig's case was not the only example of a Commission headstone being utilised to mark the grave of an individual who, according to the Commission's policies, was not entitled to a

238 *CWGC Interns Handbook* [Unpublished guide to the various pieces of information imparted onto the CWGC Centenary Interns during their training] (2018), p. 8.
239 CWGC, CWGC 2/2/1/108 (WG 1831/50), 108th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 14th March 1928, p. 3.
240 This is one of the cases of a "replica headstone;" it is a family headstone in the style of the standard Commission Headstone. The grave itself is maintained by family representatives and Legion Scotland.

headstone. However, unlike Field Marshal Haig many of these types of cases specifically relate to those who died of wounds or illness caused by their war service. This was the case with the grave of Sergeant C.C.H. Poole of the Royal Field Artillery, who had been medically discharged from the Army in 1919 and had died more than two years later from a heart condition. However, there was some difficulty ascertaining whether or not the death was attributable to or aggravated by his service in the British Armed Forces, and this debate was still unresolved when the father of the deceased wrote to the Commission to request a standard headstone in 1921.[241] When the Commission refused on the grounds of having 'no financial sanction to erect memorials on graves which are not covered by their charter,'[242] Sergeant Poole's widow replied to the organisation to emphasise her dismay at this request. She was particularly upset at this decision as she was in receipt of a full widow's pension by the War Office and had previously been refused permission by the Commission to erect a private memorial over her late husband's grave. She described the situation as 'rather like the "Dog in the manger" kind of treatment' and wished for a solution to be found quickly.[243] Upon re-inspecting the case, it was discovered that the Commission had erroneously acquired the rights to the grave alongside other war graves within the plot as part of a free grant that been made by the Corporation of Gloucester some years earlier.[244] Due to its ownership of the grave, the Commission were therefore required to resolve the issue and ensure that the grave was maintained.

The Commission decided that the best option would be to place a standard Commission headstone on the grave of Sergeant Poole and believed that this would resolve the matter. However, the Commission also suggested to the widow that the installation of the headstone and its ongoing maintenance would be solely her responsibility. Mrs Poole rejected this, stating that she would rather 'be allowed to erect one [a grave marker] according to my own choice' if she was covering the costs of the work, especially as other private memorials were already erected within the plot that her husband was interred within.[245] Both the Commission's Legal Team and Financial Advisor were consulted about this issue, in order to ascertain the best course of action to conclude this enquiry. These teams suggested that, as it appeared that the dispute was 'only one of money,' it may be that the best course of action would be to erect a Commission headstone at the organisation's expense, which Mrs Poole agreed to.[246] Such a decision clearly contradicts the Commission's dates of responsibility, but it is clear that the potential reputational damage caused by a refusal to mark the grave outweighed policy in this exceptional case. While Sergeant Poole does not appear today on the Commission's

241 CWGC, CWGC/8/1/4/1/1/161 (AA49102), Correspondence relating to Sergeant C.C.H. Poole of the Royal Field Artillery, 18th March 1922-3rd November 1923.
242 Ibid.
243 Ibid.
244 Ibid.
245 Ibid.
246 Ibid.

website among the names of the war dead in the organisation's care, it is almost impossible to distinguish his grave from the other Commission headstones in the plot.

Sergeant Poole's case was not the only example of a postwar casualty's commemoration being covered financially by the Commission. When Private Rix of the Australian Imperial Force died from Pulmonary Tuberculosis in 1933, Australia House wrote to the Commission to state that his death had been accepted by them as being attributable to his war service. Furthermore, his widow had already applied to their Embassy in London to enquire whether a headstone could be 'erected to his memory.'[247] The Commission's Legal Team discussed this case and emphasised that the question of marking and maintaining postwar graves had previously been considered at several Commission meetings, with the guidance remaining that this work was outside of its remit.[248]

In addition to outlining the policy surrounding the marking and maintaining of postwar graves, in internal communications the Legal Team also acknowledged the discrepancies found in the Dominions regarding the war dead buried within their own countries. It highlighted that Canada, Australia and New Zealand, in addition to other Dominions, had adopted a policy of accepting the graves of veterans in their own territories as war graves so long as the death could be attributed to war service. This included those who had died after the official date of the termination of the war. However, the Government of the United Kingdom were not prepared to adopt or extend this policy,[249] and their attitudes towards the issue took precedence over the regulations followed by the Dominions. Consequently, this had led to inconsistencies in how war dead were treated; theoretically, in the Dominions all UK personnel could be commemorated similarly to those who died during the conflict, but Dominion postwar casualties buried in Britain were not given the same treatment.[250] In April 1928, following a discussion at a Commission meeting, letters were sent to the Dominions asking whether they supported the marking and maintenance of postwar graves in the United Kingdom by the Commission, with the relevant government bearing the cost of this work. These additional possibilities would be encapsulated in the terms of the Supplemental Charter of December 1923, which required that the Government responsible for, or desirous of, maintaining the postwar grave provided the cost of maintenance.[251] In response to the letter, Australia and New Zealand agreed that the Commission should act as an agent for them in this task while Canada and South Africa declined the offer.[252]

247 CWGC, CWGC/8/1/4/1/1/196 (AA59824), Correspondence relating to Private A.O. Rix of the Australian Imperial Force, 8th June 1933-22nd June 1934.
248 Ibid.
249 Ibid.
250 Ibid.
251 Ibid.
252 Ibid.

In relation to Private Rix's grave, it was decided that the Commission would arrange for the construction and erection of a standard Commission headstone, which would be at the expense of the Australian government. The approximate cost of constructing, engraving and erecting the headstone on Private AO Rix's grave was found to be £8-0s-0d, and the stone was to be made out of granite.[253] This appears to have satisfied all parties consulted, and a Commission headstone was erected on his grave.

In addition to the erection of standard Commission headstones, families occasionally wished to alter the layout of a Commission headstone within the family plot. These situations often presented further challenges for the Commission, as its headstones were not necessarily designed to be placed differently. One such example is from letters relating to Gunner Alfred Collier, who was buried in Bradford (Thornton) Cemetery in Yorkshire. In 1956, a local sculptor wrote to the Commission to inform it that the Collier family plot was now full, and that the family wished to remove the Commission headstone that had previously been placed there. In addition to the letter, a potentially-misleading drawing of how the family wished to lay out the plot was included. The sketch appears to imply that the family wished to lay the Commission headstone recumbent at the centre of the family plot, with the new family headstone and kerb being placed around it.[254]

253 Ibid. According to The National Archives' Currency Converter, £8 in 1930 would equate to approximately £366.28 in 2017. The National Archives, 'Currency Converter,' *TNA*, 2023. Available at: https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/#currency-result [Accessed 6th April 2023].
254 CWGC, CWGC/8/1/4/1/1/133 (AA44101), Correspondence relating to Gunner A. Collier of the Royal Field Artillery, 10th January 1956-4th September 1956.

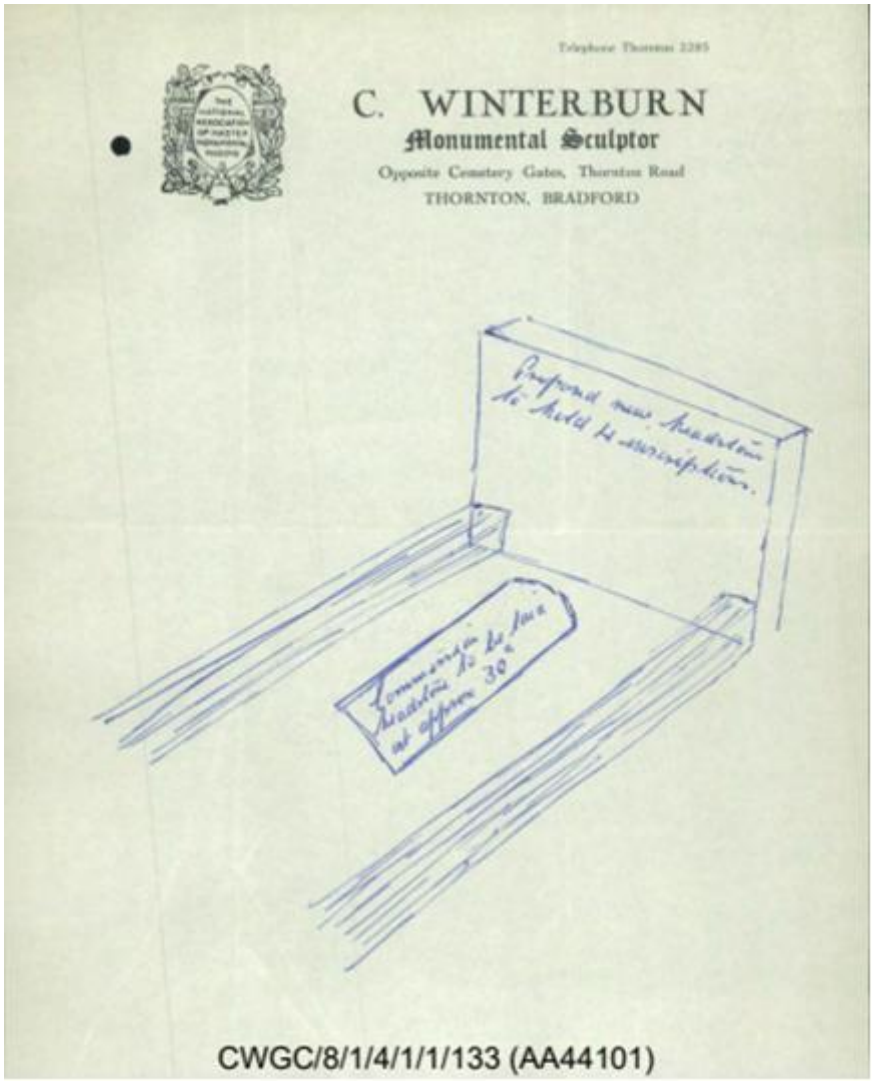

Fig. 3: The proposed layout of Gunner Collier's family plot, showing the Commission headstone lying recumbent at the centre of the plot. Image courtesy of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

It seems that, in this case, the Commission did not bend the rules to cater to the wishes of the Collier family. In its reply to the stonemason, the organisation made it clear that it did not give consent to the Commission headstone being laid flat on the grave, but it also did not object to the stone being removed entirely on the understanding that Gunner Collier had his name included on the marker covering the family grave.[255] Consequently, the file held in the Commission's archive notes that the proposed family commemoration was erected and, as per the instructions of the Commission, the original Commission headstone was destroyed.[256]

255 Ibid.
256 Ibid.

Early Opponents of the Commission's Work

As has been highlighted in current historiographies of the Commission's work, its task was not always received positively by the public. Indeed, there were significant criticisms about its work lobbied to it at all levels of society, with its policies surrounding repatriation and the marking of graves being among the most prominent of concerns raised. However, many of these factors associated with the Commission's work more generally were directly challenged at sites across Britain, creating another discrepancy between how the dead at home were remembered when compared to those overseas. In this section, some of the opponents to the Commission's work will be referenced in order to emphasise the types of additional critiques being felt by the Commission, and how the alternatives to the Commission's policies can be found in Britain.

One of the biggest critics of the Commission's work during its infancy was Lord Hugh Cecil. He was a member of the prominent Cecil family, and they were strong opponents of many of the features that the public associates with the Commission's work today. Indeed, one of the organisation's major disputes related to the headstone shapes chosen by the Commission and the cemetery features chosen to adorn most cemeteries, which the Cecil family perceived to be Pagan in origin and therefore anti-Christian. Lord Hugh Cecil's correspondence, which include letters in which he expresses his views to the Commission, are held in his personal papers collection at Hatfield House in Hertfordshire.

Lord Hugh Cecil initially liaised with Sidney Herbert in order to discuss his concerns. In a reply to one of Lord Hugh Cecil's letters, Sidney Herbert emphasises that the majority of the Commissioners were of Christian faith and, contrary to Lord Hugh's views of them, held deeply religious views. Lord Hugh had also highlighted his distaste for Sir Edwin Lutyens' involvement in the design of the British Empire's war cemeteries, as he felt that Lutyens had particularly anti-Christian views; Herbert reassured Lord Hugh that Lutyens' religious beliefs were not why he was employed in the task, but rather his 'pre-eminence' in the art of architecture was reason enough for him to be a Principal Architect for the Commission. Finally, Herbert surmised to Lord Hugh that, had a representative of 'one definite religious body' be invited to become a Commissioner, a representative from each of the religions followed by the casualties in the Commission's care would also need to be invited; this would have 'swollen to altogether unworkable proportions' and made the Commission's already-difficult task nearly impossible to achieve. Nevertheless, Herbert assured Lord Hugh that the burial of the war dead was drawn up on the traditional lines of Christian burial and memorial practices, and in spite of 'innumerable difficulties' faced by the fledgling organisation this work was being 'reverently carried out' by the Commission's operational staff across the globe.[257] It appears that the letter from

257 Hatfield House Archive (hereafter HHA), QUI 27/19-21, Correspondence between Lord Hugh Cecil and Captain Sidney Herbert, 15th January 1920.

Sidney Herbert to Lord Hugh Cecil was hoped to placate the family's concerns about the leadership of the Commission, and its ongoing commitment to representing those of all faiths, and no faith, with the respect and care they would have expected had they died as a civilian.

However, this was not how the letter was received. Lord Hugh replied to Sidney Herbert within a matter of days of receiving the response in January 1920, reiterating his grievances with the Commission's policies regarding how its cemeteries were designed. He firstly discussed the Cross of Sacrifice and Stone of Remembrance, which he described in turn as 'one ambiguous Cross inappropriately carrying a naked Sword, and an altar-like Stone designed to the worship of no-one knows who.' Lord Hugh felt that the vagueness of the Cross of Sacrifice, and particularly its lack of connection to the crucifixion of Christ, should be rectified by omitting the Crusader's sword and the general design being changed 'so that it should be quite unmistakeably the Cross of Christ.' To further connect the Cross to the Crucifixion, Lord Hugh recommended that a 'distinctively Christian' text chosen from the New Testament be inscribed on the pedestal of the Cross of Sacrifice, possibly in a similar style to that found on the architectural plans for the Stone of Remembrance.[258]

Lord Hugh strongly opposed the use of the Stone of Remembrance, perceiving it as having either 'a pagan meaning – which is an insult to Christianity – or it has no meaning at all and is very bad art.' He suggested that a solution to this matter would be to remove the Stone of Remembrance from all plans, and ask Sir Edwin Lutyens to resign his post so that he could be replaced with an architect who was more 'capable of expressing the traditions of Christian art.' Moreover, he recommended that the building of 'non-Christian places of worship,' which presumably means the cremation memorials designed to commemorate those whose religious beliefs required cremation as part of their funerary rites, be abandoned completely. He used the 'generally unchristian character' of the designs proposed to promote the theory that there was an ulterior motive behind the Commission's opposition to the erection of cross shaped headstones over the graves of the British Empire dead.[259] While it is well-known that the Cecil family also supported the repatriation of war dead, Lord Hugh does not appear to mention this as part of his original grievances with the Commission's work.

It appears that the Sidney Herbert and the Commission opted to pass Lord Hugh Cecil's concerns over to the key person behind the original intended plans for the cemeteries for British Empire war dead: Sir Frederic Kenyon. Sir Frederic replied to Lord Hugh's letters on 3rd February 1920, firstly reminding him that the work he and many of the Commissioners were doing was not 'a mere matter of artistic design,' but also a personal one due to their relations and friends being among the dead it

258 HHA, QUI 27/33-40, Correspondence between Lord Hugh Cecil and Captain Sidney Herbert, 21st January 1920.
259 Ibid.

was commemorating. Sir Frederic questioned Lord Hugh's beliefs that there would be some confusion about the Cross of Sacrifice's connection to Christianity, as he felt that 'any plain man' would not doubt the symbolism. Furthermore, he highlighted that the Crusader's sword represented the soldier's life, with its affixation to the Cross symbolising the 'dedication of that life, who is associated with and sanctified by the sacrifice of Christ.' Sir Frederic informed Lord Hugh that the Commission had liaised with all elements of the Church and their leaders, including the Archbishop of Canterbury and Cardinal Bourne, who all recognised the imagery of the Cross of Sacrifice.[260]

It appears that Sir Frederic found Lord Hugh's accusations of anti-Christian sentiment distasteful and his arguments invalid, as he reminded Lord Hugh that the cruciform headstone was a 'relatively modern' concept, with ancient Christian monuments favouring the 'incised cross.' Through this analysis, it is clear that Sir Frederic felt that Lord Hugh's references to historical representations of Christianity were wholly inaccurate and therefore would not consider them. Sir Frederic also felt it relevant to highlight to Lord Hugh that among the dead, and indeed their relatives, Christian symbolism may mean nothing, or 'less than nothing,' and that the Commission could not ignore the views of individual families; on the contrary, it hoped to prioritise them in order to ensure that it could appropriately care for these graves. Sir Frederic informed Lord Hugh that it was important that personal acts of remembrance and grief could be undertaken in Commission sites, and the Stone of Remembrance provided a prominent location at which to undertake this work. Sir Frederic stated that he felt the Stone of Remembrance provided a place at which each visitor to the cemeteries could attach 'to it a meaning, or no meaning, as he may choose' and the Commission had to facilitate this on both moral grounds. Indeed, Sir Frederic emphasised that his objectives when suggesting how the cemeteries could be designed was always to ensure that 'each visitor may find in the cemetery that appeals to his feelings and to his point of view.'[261] The two disagreeing parties continued to correspond on the matter, but ultimately the Commission stuck to its original designs for the sites and was not influenced by Lord Hugh's objections.

It is unclear whether Lord Hugh ever used the examples of war graves in the United Kingdom in order to further his points of contention. Perhaps he did not realise that the Commission also had authority on this matter, or it is possible that he was among the many who did not necessarily realise that there were war graves in the United Kingdom at all. Nevertheless, Lord Hugh's sentiments provide examples of the key arguments against the Commission's work, and highlight how the situations found in the United Kingdom can almost provide a blueprint for how the British Empire war dead could have been commemorated, had these sites of memory not been created overseas.

260 HHA, QUI 27/46-49, Correspondence between Lord Hugh Cecil and Sir Frederic Kenyon, 3rd February 1920.
261 Ibid.

It is unclear how far the Cecil family represented the voices of the general public, or whether they even characterise the views of their fellow social elites, but nevertheless it is apparent that they were not the only individuals to hold the views regarding the Christianisation of Commission sites. There were a number of reports of similar views being held that will be acknowledged elsewhere in this thesis, and many families felt that the deceased's own wishes were not being adhered to. However, there has been little acknowledgement of the situations found in Britain that contradict the attitude that the families were not consulted; as can be seen in the various private memorials across the country, where the bereaved could place their own memorials, they often chose to do so. This created spaces of remembrance that do not feel entirely connected to the memory of the war dead more generally, but they are closer to civilian burials. Therefore, some confusion is caused among the public today who visit cemeteries where there are war graves; the expectation of finding a clear war graves plot overshadows the reality of the nuances of commemoration found in Britain. Consequently, an example of "alternative history" can be found; instances of how sites of memory may have been felt and interacted with, if they existed at all, can be seen at sites across Britain and experienced by visitors and pilgrims alike.

Prominent families were not the only groups of people who criticised the Commission's policies. It had been asserted both during and in the aftermath of the First World War that there were many families wishing to repatriate their dead, regardless of the repatriation ban imposed on British Empire war dead, and the British War Graves Association (BWGA), established on the eve of the first anniversary of the Armistice in 1919 by a group of bereaved parents, were particularly vocal on this issue. Their leader, Mrs Sara Ann Smith,[262] was a grieving mother and wrote to the Prince of Wales on behalf of more than 200 grieving families. In the letter she implored His Royal Highness to allow these families, and others who also desired this, to transport the bodies of their loved ones 'at our own expense, if necessary' and 'grant that right which has ever been the privilege of the bereaved, may not be denied to us.'[263] While this request was refused, Van Emden records that the BWGA managed one official repatriation: that of a casualty who was born in Leeds. However, this case is further complicated on the grounds of the casualty's nationality; he had become a naturalised American prior to the war, but had served with the West Yorkshire Regiment. Due to his status as an American national, it appears that the differing regulations surrounding American casualties was utilised in order to repatriate him to Britain.[264] Nevertheless, the majority of American nationals who are

262 Van Emden, *Missing*, p. 153.
263 CWGC, CWGC/1/1/5/21 (WG 783 PT. 1), War Graves Association, 8th June 1919, p. 2.
264 Van Emden, *Missing*, p. 156. It should be noted this may be inaccurate information; a search on the Commission's archives and local records does not show an individual of that name being buried in the cemetery mentioned by Van Emden.

commemorated by the Commission are not afforded the same treatment; if they were serving with elements of the British Empire Forces, and not the American Forces, they were considered to be treated as per the policies of their country of service as opposed to birth or naturalisation.

It is therefore clear from the correspondences in this section that the Commission's policies were not exclusively popular from the outset, and all echelons of society expressed their concerns and displeasure to the organisation directly. However, much of the individuals writing such letters were ignoring the experiences of those with loved ones buried closer to home, who had a completely different understanding of bereavement and commemorating the war dead. Through ignoring these communities, a full appreciation of the Commission's work was experienced within these groups; they could not foresee the impact that the Commission's sites overseas would have on future generations, nor that it would enable the memory of their loved ones to live on arguably longer than those buried closer to home. Once again, it is clear that there are discrepancies between the bereaved with war dead overseas versus those with loved ones buried closer to home and their individual approaches to bereavement and memorialisation, which was perhaps further muddied by the instances where individuals were repatriated. Indeed, it is often these cases that the public were aware of and this perhaps fuelled the outrage felt by those mourning the losses of relatives in the conflict.

Repatriation, Exhumation and Adapting Commission Policy

Although there were numerous issues to be considered by the Commission, one of the key problems faced by the organisation was the permanency of the ban on exhumations and repatriations for British Empire Forces casualties. Whilst the history of this policy of non-repatriation is often discussed, it is often seen solely through the lens of those who could not have their loved ones returned to them. In this section, the impact that the ban had on the British public will be explored, in addition to the realities of the enforcement of the policy in the long-term. Furthermore, an introduction to the disparity of commemoration practices for Great War dead in the United Kingdom will be compared to those overseas, in order to understand how the physical closeness of the dead impacted on how the bereaved experienced the grieving process.

Firstly, it is important to provide some context towards the repatriation ban that Britain undertook during the First World War. When the repatriation ban came into force in 1915, many of the British public believed that this was a temporary measure designed solely for use throughout the duration of the conflict. However, after the cessation of hostilities the control over the corporeal remains of the British Empire's war dead was transferred to the Imperial War Graves Commission by the War Office, and the Commission's task was formalised. Thus, a decision over the longevity of this wartime policy became one that was within the Commission's remit.

Ultimately it was decided that this policy would be upheld and the Commission would have responsibility for commemorating the Empire's dead in perpetuity near to where they fell. This ruling was reached based on the principles of the Commission, in addition to logistical reasons. Firstly, it was perceived that if the repatriation of the war dead was sanctioned, only affluent families would be able to fund the costs of this work; furthermore, if it was a state-sponsored task, on their return to their home countries families could erect private memorials of their choice. Both of these conclusions would directly challenge the Commission's policies of equality in death, and further complicate their work in perpetuity. Additionally, the logistics of bringing the dead home potentially years or decades after their deaths needed to be considered; sanitation and hygiene concerns would have also continued to play a role in the decision not to repatriate the British Empire's Great War dead. Thus, the remains were expected to be interred permanently in the country where they perished with the Commission bearing the costs of maintaining these sites in perpetuity.

The decision to make the policy of non-repatriation permanent was met with widespread criticism, which further exacerbated the critiques that the Commission were receiving relating to its design features. The debate surrounding the repatriation ban continued for some time, and was not brought to a close until the policy was unanimously endorsed by the House of Commons during an open debate in 1920. This meeting was held in light of many petitions being sent to the Commission, its President the Prince of Wales and various Members of Parliament by members of the public, most notably Mrs Smith from Leeds and the British War Graves Association.[265] In spite of this final decision by the British government, it did not stop illegal exhumations and a public outcry over this outcome.

There are many cases of exhumations and repatriations that occurred after the decision in the House of Commons was made, and these sometimes featured in contemporary news articles. While much spectacle and interest has been shown towards this topic, the actual scope of this activity has not been fully explored. One of the most infamous repatriations of the First World War was that of Lieutenant William Glynne Charles Gladstone, the grandson of former British Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone, and his repatriation was met with public outcry at the time; arguably, it was this reaction that may have swayed the Commission's decision to make the repatriation ban permanent. However, Lieutenant Gladstone's story was not a unique one. There are an estimated 60 known repatriations during the conflict back to Britain; most were from the officer classes, and therefore presumably from a more affluent background, and the majority were repatriated from France or Belgium. Again, this is

265 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/261 (WG1831/203), 261st Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 16th August 1944, p. 4.

likely because it was potentially easier to bring loved ones home from across the English Channel when compared to the battlefields further afield.

However, not all of these repatriations were illegal; it must not be forgotten that there had been no legal prohibition on the removal of the British Empire dead from the battlefields during the first few months of the war. According to Richard Van Emden, the lack of policy in the early months of the conflict enabled around forty remains to be collected from the battlefields and returned to their families for burial.[266] This presumption by Van Emden does not match the records held internally by the Commission; their spreadsheet suggests only a maximum of 21 repatriations took place prior to the formal ban, with a further two occurring close to the policy being enforced.[267]

Nevertheless, repatriations of British Empire war dead raised significant complications for the Commission, as it set the precedent for future exhumations to occur. Indeed, the decision to uphold this policy was further complicated by the fact that other belligerent nations, such as the United States, had allowed their bereaved to bring their loved ones home at the government's expense if they so wished. These inconsistencies among the former fighting forces meant that the Commission were placed in an increasingly difficult situation; its announcement to uphold the repatriation ban was met with discontent, particularly by those who had the financial means and influence to bring their loved ones home.

While the inequality of commemoration was one of the reasons behind the decision not to allow repatriations, it cannot be ignored that there is a key question to be raised: who has rights over the remains of the dead; the families, the state or another authority? The answer to this quandary was additionally complicated by changing attitudes to remembering war dead that were occurring in this period. Theoretically, due to their military service at the time of their death which was included as a prerequisite by the Commission for war grave entitlement, the dead were under military law, and thus the military authorities had a say in how to commemorate them. However, it was unclear whether this meant that they were automatically required to be placed into 'the ritual of state organised and state-controlled remembrance' being suggested,[268] particularly as this had not been done by the British on this scale before. Pondering these questions enables historians to sympathise with issues that families at the time faced, which can perhaps better place modern audiences into the mindset of the bereaved.

266 Van Emden, *Missing*, p. 143.
267 Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet listing casualties known to be repatriated to the United Kingdom. Information supplied by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, 1st January 2021.
268 Van Emden, *Missing*, p. 144.

As highlighted by Richard Van Emden's research, the repatriation ban did not stop exhumations from occurring after its enforcement, however. The topic of illegal battlefield exhumations was not widely discussed publicly in Britain until the *Sunday Express* wrote an article about it in May 1932. The Commission were always aware that there had been a series of forbidden exhumations immediately after the war, and in many cases knew where the remains of the deceased were now interred. Where the exhumation occurred after the war, bodies were smuggled from the battlefield by entrepreneurial locals, who would send the remains back to the United Kingdom or elsewhere in the British Empire for a significant fee.[269] While this disregard of the law may shock visitors to the battlefields today, who have the benefit of hindsight and the ability to see the finished cemeteries and memorials in the Commission's care, it must be remembered that many individuals who participated in these criminal acts were in the midst of their grief when they made this decision, which could have clouded their judgement.[270] Nevertheless, this disregard for policy was a clear display of inequalities created by wealth and power, which reinforces Commission's rationale of upholding this wartime decision after the cessation of hostilities.

An example of repatriation that can be found in the Commission's enquiries files relates to Second Lieutenant V.J. Austin of the Royal Field Artillery, who is buried in Canterbury (St Martin's) Churchyard in Kent. A letter was written to the Enquiries Team at the Commission's Buckinghamshire headquarters in 1963 by a researcher of Second Lieutenant Austin's father, Herbert Austin, 1st Baron Austin, who was the owner of Austin Motor Company. In the letter, the writer asks for some clarity on the 'controversy' surrounding Second Lieutenant Austin's grave in Kent. Second Lieutenant Austin was killed at La Bassée on 26th January 1915, and there were varying accounts relating to the circumstances surrounding how he came to be repatriated. One source had stated that his remains were legitimately brought over to Folkestone and buried in Canterbury shortly afterwards, whilst another argued that he had been smuggled back to British soil in a crate of spare car parts, in order to override the non-exhumation policy.[271] While no official evidence appears to have been found by the Commission to answer this query, letters from another bereaved family suggest that the latter is the official story. However, Second Lieutenant Austin's exhumation and repatriation potentially supersedes the enforcement of the ban, so could have been one of the final legal repatriations of British Empire personnel from the First World War.

Indeed, how the funeral of Second Lieutenant Austin took place suggests that it was either legal, or the family were not fearful of repercussions. While the letter in the Enquiries File may suggest that

269 Ibid., 159.
270 Ibid., p. 161.
271 CWGC, CWGC/8/1/4/1/1/145 (AA5958), Correspondence relating to Lieutenant VJ Austin of the Royal Field Artillery, 11th March 1963.

the funeral in Canterbury was a private affair, photographs found at both the British Motor Museum Archives in Warwickshire and in King's School, Canterbury's private collection in Kent clearly show that his funeral was designed to include full military honours. This included his coffin, draped in a Union Flag and on a horse-drawn artillery gun carriage, being chaperoned by a military escort performing a funeral march along Canterbury High Street. Furthermore, the number of people participating in the funeral cortege suggests that it was very much a public affair, which would contradict the idea of repatriations generally taking place in a way that did not draw attention to them.

Indeed, if the existence of the images did not show a reality contrary to the perception of repatriations being hidden from the public eye, the fact that Second Lieutenant Austin's burial was reported in newspapers would show this. As part of the private collection of papers at The King's School, Canterbury in Kent, a newspaper cutting details the key events of the day and provides a fascinating insight into how military funerals were conducted at this time. In the article, it is noted that Second Lieutenant Austin had died as a result of his wounds in France, and that his remains were brought from France to Folkestone. From here, the funeral directors took the coffin to Canterbury where it arrived in Canterbury Cathedral at 3pm on the Saturday before his funeral. Contrary to the popular belief that Second Lieutenant Austin himself had requested to be interred at St Martin's Churchyard, the newspaper article reports that he was buried here at the request of his father.[272]

Second Lieutenant Austin's coffin was met by the Headmaster of the King's School, Rev Dr McDowall, and Rev Canon Mason and placed in the Holy Innocents' Chapel. A guard of honour was provided by members of the school's Officers' Training Corps, of which Second Lieutenant Austin had been a part of whilst he was a student at Kings.' As part of this, a short service was held for close personal friends of the family as well as his father; this suggests that the main service on the Monday acted as a more public outpouring of grief for the family, whereas this part of the funerary arrangements enabled private mourning practices to be undertaken. Prior to the removal of his coffin on the Monday afternoon, Canon Danks and the Rev AJ Partridge held another short service in the Chapel. Then, the funeral began with full military honours and the precession being headed by a firing party from the 3rd Cavalry Regiment and the band of the 3rd Reserve Cavalry Regiment, both of which were stationed at Canterbury Barracks at the time. The cortege made its way through the Burgate and Longport to St Martin's Church, with the funeral march being played throughout. The coffin itself was brought to the church on a Royal Horse Artillery gun carriage and draped in a Union Flag; furthermore, Second Lieutenant Austin's officer's sword was placed on top of the coffin.[273]

272 King's School Canterbury Private Collection (Hereafter KSC), Miscellaneous records relating to Second Lieutenant Vernon James Austin, Date Unknown.
273 Ibid.

After parading through Canterbury to St Martin's Church, the mourners were met by a 'large congregation' that had assembled at the churchyard. Among the mourners, there were various military officials as well as individuals representing the Austin Motor Company and the Officer's Training College from the King's School. It is highlighted by the Press that the Dean of Canterbury had been invited to the funeral, but could not attend due to the Convocation being sat at the same time. During the funeral service, the group witnessed the committal rites and overwhelming flower tributes from various dignitaries were laid next to the grave side. The funeral concluded with the 'firing of three volleys over the open grave and the sounding of the "Last Post," thus connecting the military aspects of the service to the expected traditional, more civilian parts of the event. [274]

The fact that this funeral was so well-attended and reported in the media emphasises that repatriations were not necessarily illicit or intentionally hidden from public view. Although this is perhaps a unique situation as opposed to the norm, it can provide historians with the opportunity to challenge both their own perceptions about repatriation policies in Britain, and enable them to understand how the public may have reacted to seeing a funeral cortege like the one described. While they may not have necessarily known that Second Lieutenant Austin had been repatriated unless they read the newspaper article, it must be remembered that individuals may have been familiar with large funerals for the elite of society and expect a different process for their own funerary arrangements. This further supports the nuances around the complicated issues that the Commission faced when dealing with cases of commemoration in the United Kingdom.

Fig. 4: Image of Second Lieutenant Austin's funeral cortege through Canterbury, Kent. Image courtesy of the British Motor Museum Archives/King's School Canterbury Archives.

274 Ibid.

Second Lieutenant Austin's repatriation influenced the perceptions of some of the Austin family's friends and acquaintances. Sir Albert Ball, father of flying ace Captain Albert Ball VC, was one of the directors of the Austin Motor Company until 1914 and a friend of Second Lieutenant Austin's father. Throughout his lifetime, Sir Albert campaigned to have his son's remains repatriated back to Nottingham and cited a number of arguments to the Commission in order to persuade it to authorise this. This included mentioning Second Lieutenant Austin's repatriation as an example of an exception to the rules. In one letter, he states 'I might say that one of my closest friends brought his son home and buried him at Canterbury. Surely if any boy deserves to be brought home my lad does.'[275] When pressed for the name of the casualty by the Commission, Sir Albert states that the casualty in question was 'a 2nd Lieutenant in the Artillery, buried at La Basse *[sic]*, and brought home for burial at Canterbury; I myself attended his funeral.'[276] It can be assumed that, in spite of not naming the casualty, the funeral he is describing Second Lieutenant Austin's. The fact that Sir Albert mentions this as just one example of repatriation that he is aware of shows that he is conscious that many other similar cases could easily be utilised to support his argument. This suggests that this was not an uncommon belief or practice among the elites of society. Many individuals would pay smugglers to exhume the remains of their loved ones and transport them to the docks scattered along the banks of the River Thames.

However, it should be noted that not all cases of remains being moved were illegal, nor was a casualty always buried near to where he died. As highlighted through the administrative records of the Commission's archives, if an individual died on British soil it was possible for them to be transported to their local cemetery or churchyard in accordance with their family's wishes. Nevertheless, the movement of a grave could in itself cause problems, particularly if the Commission had already recorded the grave as being found elsewhere. One example where a casualty had been dually commemorated, which challenges the Commission's policy, was that of Gunner W.L. Buckley of the Royal Garrison Artillery. It appears that there was great confusion in the Commission's Head Office when it was realised that it had Gunner Buckley was recorded as being buried in two places: Halliwell (St Peter's) Churchyard in Lancashire and Shoeburyness (St Andrew's) Churchyard and Extension in Essex.[277]

Using its knowledge of where the next of kin were located, the Commission deduced that the likelihood was that the grave in Bolton was the one where Gunner Buckley's remains could be found. It was presumed that the entry on the report for St Andrew's Churchyard 'referred to a wooden cross

275 CWGC, AGE 6/6/PT. 1, Correspondence between the IWGC and the family of Captain A. Ball VC, 14th June 1919.
276 Ibid.
277 CWGC, CWGC/8/1/4/1/1/134 (AA44435), Correspondence relating to Gunner W.L. Buckley of the Royal Garrison Artillery, 26th January 1918-1st February 1939.

erected as a Memorial Cross by his comrades,'[278] which had since been erroneously replaced with a Commission headstone. However, this case became even more complex when the Commission tried to remove the headstone in Essex. The Sexton of the churchyard objected, stating that he had carried out the burial himself and that he was certain that the remains had not been disturbed.[279] Consequently, the Commission internally summarised the situation with three possible explanations:

- That another soldier was buried under the wrong name in Essex.
- That Gunner Buckley had been buried there originally but then exhumed to Lancashire.
- That Gunner Buckley's remains were still in Essex and that his widow was mistaken.[280]

Unfortunately, there was no easy way to answer this query without disturbing at least one set of remains, which again went against the policies of the Commission. Furthermore, the new Rector of Shoeburyness believed that the grave should be marked given that there was undoubtedly a body there. This was agreed to, with the Commission headstone in Essex being replaced with the headstone with that of an Unknown Soldier of the Great War.[281] While this is not the only example of an unknown casualty being commemorated at a site in the United Kingdom, it is an interesting story that emphasises the individuality of each case highlighted by the families to the Commission.

The policy of non-repatriation was upheld during the Second World War, and was not formally revoked until the mid-twentieth century. Indeed, during discussions about whether to continue to follow this protocol, the War Office stated that the 'facilities did not exist during the continuance of hostilities for bringing back remains from overseas for the reburial.'[282] Due to the widespread opinion that casualties were only laid to rest in sites near to where they fell, there is a commonly held belief that casualties of both World Wars are solely laid to rest in cemeteries along the former battlefields. This can explain the lack of public understanding regarding the Commission's commitment in the United Kingdom and why the Commission have had to make concerted efforts to publicise the work it did on home soil.

The Second World War brought about another discussion relating to policies of exhumation and repatriation and, as the Commission had taken on the responsibility of this new conflict's dead, it was required to make another decision on this regulation. The question was raised initially at the 261st meeting in August 1944, although the subject specifically concerned those who had died during the Second World War as opposed to retrospectively bringing home the First World War dead. This discussion was in response to the approximately 250 requests so far received by the Commission for

278 Ibid.
279 Ibid.
280 Ibid.
281 Ibid.
282 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/261 (WG1831/203), 261st Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 16th August 1944, p. 4.

this to take place; with many more expected, the Commission had written to the War Office for their views. The War Office responded to this query by stating that:

'Facilities did not exist during the continuance of hostilities for bringing back remains from overseas for reburial and that it was impossible at present to say what might or might not be practicable in this connection after the war'[283]

This hesitancy to permit or restrict repatriations was largely due to the fact that in December 1918 the Commission had held a meeting, attended by representatives by all governments, where repatriation was decided against. A report was circulated in the Press at the time detailing this outcome. As the Commission had faced serious opposition to this choice, it was worried that a similar situation would occur should this decision be overturned.[284] It appears that once again, families were not going to be permitted to repatriate their loved ones who had died fighting overseas; only those who were in the United Kingdom at the time of their death would be buried here.

It is clear that the stories of repatriation are full of nuance that is often not acknowledged in the broader literature on the topic of the First World War. While the exhumation and return of remains to the bereaved was often a task reserved for the elites of society, it is clear that it was not limited to them nor was it always done with an element of privacy. Indeed, contrary to the illicit nature of the work, funerals for the repatriated were often public events that were highlighted in local newspapers. Furthermore, it cannot be ignored that general exhumation policies imposed by the Commission were not necessarily enforced in Britain. Once again, this can be attributed to the proximity of the families and thus their influence over how their loved ones were commemorated and can provide fascinating examples of the exceptional circumstances that the Commission had to consider in the United Kingdom.

To conclude, it is clear that correspondence between the Commission and the bereaved varied greatly. It is apparent that the situations found in the United Kingdom clearly challenge the public and academic world's understanding of First World War commemoration, as an entirely unique series of scenarios can be found here. Indeed, the number of successful repatriations, in addition to the lack of secrecy around such cases, directly challenges the belief that repatriation was impossible or not made part of public mourning practices. On the contrary, it appears that such cases were often well-known at the time and often seen favourably by both the public and the media. Furthermore, the exceptional situations found in the United Kingdom often provided the opportunity to directly overrule Commission policy, and ensure that it upheld a degree of flexibility within its work.

283 Ibid., p. 4.
284 Ibid.

While much of the general themes found in the Commission's enquiries files can also be found in the initial records for the casualties buried overseas, the fact that families were still writing to the Commission and disputing its original policies decades later highlights how the broader concepts of bereavement, grief and mourning were felt somewhat differently by those with loved ones buried closer to home. Indeed, many of these families had had some direct involvement in the funeral and burial of the war dead, and thus could influence how the Commission would care for and maintain these graves in perpetuity. Thus, the Commission had to consider the consequences of its decisions more fully and be more pragmatic and flexible in its enforcement of policies in the United Kingdom compared to its work overseas. Both legal and moral restrictions heavily influenced the Commission's responses to the families, and it often prioritised its public image over policy when it came to United Kingdom-based enquiries. From these records, it is evident that the bereaved with loved ones buried in Britain often had the upper hand in debates surrounding the commemoration of their loved one.

The enquiries files more generally provide a unique opportunity to explore the individual ways people grieved and cared for the memory of their loved ones, and really help to emphasise how this impacts on both the work of the Commission and our own understanding of the commemoration associated with the First World War here in Britain. It cannot be ignored, however, that this data set is quite a limited one and therefore may not be fully representative of all correspondence between the bereaved and the Commission; as new records are released, we can perhaps look to reframe this. As it stands, however, the records currently in the public domain and easily accessible provide some really remarkable cases that researchers can utilise in their own studies of the work of the Commission. Indeed, further research into regional differences or comparative studies of how the enquiries between those with relatives buried close to home versus overseas could provide a fascinating insight into the bereavement practices of the period. While this is largely outside of the scope of this thesis, perhaps additional discussions of this particular topic will begin to appear in the historiography and public rhetoric around remembrance.

It is not known when the Commission will release the next batch of "e"-files, but it is clear it will not be for a little while. Therefore, visits to the Archives in person and noting down these records for when they are released may be an option. In spite of this uncertainty, the enquiries files released so far give a fascinating insight into how families interacted with their loved ones buried locally, and how pilgrimages to such locations differ quite significantly from those overseas. Indeed, many of the bereaved here experienced an opportunity to express more personal acts of mourning than those who congregated around local war memorials or homemade shrines in order to commemorate their loved ones. This creates a real divide in how these two groups intermingle when considering commemorative practices more generally.

Moreover, the increased role of the families from a legal, financial and moral standpoint when considering the war graves here meant that they arguably had far more autonomy over how to remember their war dead. While from a modern perspective it may be frustrating to not be able to easily find a family grave or private memorial, these examples provide an incredible opportunity to consider what it would be like to visit war graves had this become Commission policy globally and to see what the priorities were for the family: did they more highly regard being buried in consecrated ground than having a grave marker, for example. These insights challenge our popular understanding of the commemoration and care of First World War dead in Britain, and the historiography more generally, which makes it fundamental that this research is explored further and amplified within the current literature surrounding the topic. While we have seen a rise in interest within local communities over the last couple of years regarding their local war dead, there is still significant outreach work that could be done to further the public's understanding and it is hoped that this thesis will encourage more individuals to research this topic and create their own conclusions.

Chapter Three: Domestic Commemorative Spaces and Challenges to British War Graves in the United Kingdom

In order to fully appreciate the difficulties surrounding the work that was undertaken by the Commission in sites across the United Kingdom, it is important to place this within the broader context of the commemorative spaces being produced simultaneously. Extensive research into the histories of the war memorials movement and broader remembrance rites and rituals that were created to honour the memory of the First World War dead has been undertaken in recent years, most notably by Alex King in the setting of British memorialisation, and these studies have largely perpetuated the standard viewpoints expressed around the movements. It is clear that these alternative, state-sponsored or civic, abstract memorials were created and utilised by the public as a focal point for remembrance and expressing shared grief especially for those whose loved ones were not buried close by.

However, the same degree of interest has not been shared with the experiences of those whose relatives had died in the United Kingdom. There has not been significant research into how these individuals utilised war memorials in their acts of mourning, nor a comparison into how the two communities interacted with each other; while this is largely outside of the scope of this thesis, it is hoped that this study can begin a conversation into this topic. Indeed, commonly-held beliefs about this subject have tended to focus on the "Blackadder"-esque attitudes of dying a hero's death by making the ultimate sacrifice in a battlefield overseas; perhaps it can be seen that those who were buried closer to home had died a "second-class hero's death."

In this chapter, various aspects of the commemorative rituals of British remembrance practices will be considered, in order to explain the ways in which the war dead were remembered. This will be connected to the work that the Commission were doing at the time, in order to highlight how these two areas interacted with each other and the overlaps between the Commission's memorialisation of First World War dead and broader rituals created by the bereaved. It is hoped that, by connecting the two areas, commonalities will be seen and the impact that the Commission's work had on war memorial designs will be emphasised.

Temporary Commemorations by the Commission and its Impact

The work of the Commission has always been linked to the wider British memorialisation movement that gained momentum during the early years of the twentieth century. This included the creation of war memorials in towns and villages across the country to focus communal grief onto, and the inclusion of names of the dead on such monuments for the first time. Although much discussion relating to this has primarily focused on its sites overseas, it is important that the Commission's work in Britain is also acknowledged. One of the first types of commemoration that the Commission embarked upon globally was the erection of temporary markers over the graves of the dead. These markers have largely since been replaced by permanent stone headstones synonymous with these sites of memory, but examples of them may have been kept by relatives and local communities and displayed in prominent locations such as places of worship.[285]

From the outset, there was some debate over the long-lasting significance of the temporary grave markers used by the Commission. Indeed, this discussion focused on the historic value of these grave markers, in addition to its role as an important motif for the bereaved to focus their mourning upon. The Commission acknowledged the value of these markers from the beginning, and thus began to make plans to return the wooden crosses to the next of kin. This task was to be undertaken as part of a wider project to raise public awareness of the organisation's existence, a valuable task within the context of the broader debates surrounding the Commission at this time. The consensus of the Commission changed, however, when the reality of transporting these markers became more complex than expected as these plans began to be enacted in 1920. It was noted at the 28th Meeting in December 1920 that the condition that many of the crosses were found in was such that they would need replacement prior to permanent markers being completed. This caused a dilemma for the Commissioners, as it was unclear whether the original or newer crosses would hold more meaning to the bereaved, or whether both should be returned to the families.[286] Within this meeting, there was a dialogue about potentially deceiving the families about the state of the temporary markers; it was suggested that the bereaved could be misled that the condition of all the original crosses were so poor that it rendered them impossible to return. It appears that this proposal was not considered as an adequate solution to the problem, as it was quickly asserted that some families would be able to make pilgrimages to these locations prior to the placement of the permanent markers and expose the truth, thus causing negative publicity.[287]

285A recent project has recorded the known locations of temporary grave markers in the United Kingdom. 'About,' *Returned From the Front*, 2016. Available at: http://thereturned.co.uk/the-grave-markers/ [Accessed 12th September 2019].
286 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/28 (WG1542), 28th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 20th December 1920, pp. 9-10.
287 Ibid., p. 10.

Moreover, the Commission had to consider the inconsistencies in policies enforced by the different member governments. Indeed, Australia had not given a formal offer to return the crosses to their inhabitants, but Canada and the United Kingdom had informed relatives by a public notice that they could receive the original grave markers of their loved ones if they applied for them by a certain date.[288] In spite of the concerns outlined, it appears that a decision was reached; the solution was that the grave markers would be returned to the family if they wished, but by a set date. The families responsible for organising the logistics of this task, from providing transport for the marker to its new location and placing it in a place of their choosing.[289] While there has not been a clear set of guidelines saved within the Commission's records, it is presumed this was set as a time before the permanent grave markers were officially installed. It appears that this was a relatively popular initiative, as the digital project "Returned from the Front" has shown that these markers can be found in locations across the British Isles and beyond. The wooden crosses can be found on display in a variety of places, from churches to museums, and from memorial halls to private residences.[290] One such example of this is that of Morris Bickersteth's, which was sent to his family home in Canterbury, Kent. Unfortunately, where this cross can be found today is unclear,[291] as it has not been formally identified on the project's website. The interest in the scheme to return the wooden markers implies that relatives and friends were grateful to receive a relic from their grave to remember their lost loved one, as shown by its inclusion in many acts of mourning and presence in places of local importance. However, it cannot be ignored that this may not have been an option for all individuals, and particularly for those whose loved one was listed among the missing. It is unclear how the presence of these markers impacted upon their own grieving process; whilst outside of the scope of this thesis, it is nevertheless an interesting factor to consider when viewing these artefacts.

By October 1922, 11,325 applications had been received to have these original crosses sent home.[292] Several organisations separate to the Commission acted as agents for the concerned parties still wishing to receive the original wooden grave markers from the Commission during the transition to permanent grave markers, and this outcome often provides explanations as to why the temporary grave markers can often be found in the local church of the casualty, for example.[293] In addition to being a focal point of remembrance for those overseas, the use of these markers as permanent memorials for the graves at home had grown in popularity. While the Commission could potentially

288 Ibid.
289 'About,' *Returned From the Front*, 2016. Available at: http://thereturned.co.uk/the-grave-markers/ [Accessed 12th September 2019].
290 Ibid.
291 Jalland, *Victorian Family*, pp. 378-9.
292 CWGC, CWGC/2/1/ADD.6.2.4 (ADD 6/2/4), Annual Report of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 1922-1923, p. 6.
293 Ibid.

veto this decision by the families, if the casualty's name had been missed from its records or had been mis-recorded as being marked by a private memorial, if the families asked for it to be replaced years later this may have caused additional complications to the Commission's work.

From the perspective of the families with casualties buried closer to home it is unclear whether this directly impacted upon them. Many families would have made their own funerary arrangements for the remains returned to them, and this would have included making a decision as to whether or not to mark the grave privately. Indeed, in some cases the local or ecclesiastical authorities may not have allowed graves to be marked in its sites, and so the bereaved would have had to factor this into its own decisions. There are examples where the location of a particular grave is known in England, but the casualty is alternatively commemorated; this is usually on a screen wall, either elsewhere in the cemetery or in a nearby site, and the individual has typically been buried in a common grave. In these cases, temporary markers would never have been used and the grave itself likely never marked, and thus the families may have had a similar experienced to those grieving missing dead when viewing these temporary grave markers on display.

One of the queries concerning sites across the United Kingdom that the Commission had to create a policy related to the graves themselves. There was some prejudice in Britain at the time against graves being walked on, and it was therefore common to create a mound on the gravesite or to place a stone kerb around the grave in order to protect it. In contrast to this style, the standard Commission headstone had been designed to 'stand upright with a level of plot of grass in front,' which would not be possible if it was placed on a mound or within a kerb. At the 89th Meeting of the Commission in June 1926, it was formally agreed that the erection of a kerb or mound would not be suitable for the graves of the war dead. The rationale behind this decision, in addition to the reasons mentioned previously, was that it would potentially hide a personal inscription chosen by the grieving families, in addition to rendering the headstone 'somewhat insignificant looking, and all value of its proportions was lost' when placed within a civilian-looking grave.[294] However, as can be seen at countless locations across the United Kingdom, this policy was not always upheld. Where the families held influence, either in the form grave ownership or in their requests to the Commission, this policy could not always be enforced. Furthermore, the presence of private memorials created additional concerns that the Commission had to consider in order to undertake its work in the United Kingdom to the best of its abilities.

294 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/89 (WG1831/31), 89th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 9th June 1926, p. 7.

Thus, it is clear that there was some discrepancy from the outset between the types of commemorative practices that the bereaved could undertake as part of their mourning processes. For the families with loved ones overseas, abstract forms that connected them to the grave were of paramount importance; in contrast, those with their war dead buried close by could undertake more civilianised and private acts of mourning without the same symbols being utilised. This could also be seen through the ways in which individuals were memorialised in the United Kingdom more generally, with private memorials being a key point of contention for the Commission to consider. As will be highlighted in the next section of this chapter, private memorials often provided points of confusion for the public's awareness of war graves in their local area and enabled a divide between the bereaved to occur.

Private Memorials, Scattered Graves and Ownership of Graves

One of the core elements of the Commission's work was to create sites of memory that families and loved ones could visit and pay their respects to the dead in private or public events. In many ways, the Commission achieved much of its aims by basing its architectural designs on the traditional Western attitudes to death and the popularity of garden cemeteries during the Victorian and Edwardian periods. There were significant connections to the Classical architecture of the ancient world that were repurposed in this way, and it is clear that the Commission's architects took inspiration from the Neoclassical features that had proved popular over the last century, and incorporated both national motifs and symbols associated with death more generally into its cemeteries whilst also ensuring some semblance of uniformity. Indeed, it has been argued by Sonia Batten that the Commission's sites marked the opening of a new chapter in cemetery design that was just as influential as the garden cemetery had been a century earlier;[295] although it did not utilise all of the vocabulary of symbols associated with death, it nevertheless understood its importance in the commemoration and care of the nation's war dead.

While the Commission's aims could largely be achieved across the globe, it was more problematic in Britain due to the impact of familial involvement in the commemoration of their loved ones. It cannot be ignored that the Commission was having to deal retrospectively with the decisions made by the Cemetery Authorities and the bereaved during the conflict and these choices were often contrary to current Commission policies. Indeed, rather than designing the cemeteries with complete creative control, when working in the United Kingdom the Commission was required to create commemorative places that connected the dead in the United Kingdom to those overseas within the confines of pre-existing sites. Moreover, the closer involvement of loved ones when dealing with the dead created situations that were largely distinctive to the United Kingdom. Private memorials,

295 Sonia Letitia Batten, 'Memorial Text Narratives in Britain, c. 1890-1930' (d PhD Thesis, University of Birmingham, 2011), p. 14.

usually erected by the families, and situations which resulted in graves being lost provided the Commission with challenges where its policy needed to be altered or disregarded entirely. In this section, the administrative history and decisions made by the Commission regarding the presence of private memorials, scattered war graves and grave ownership issues will be described. This element of this discussion will highlight another discrepancy between the war graves at home versus overseas, and explain why the United-Kingdom based war dead were featured much less in the rhetoric around Remembrance compared to the dead along the former battlefields.

As has been highlighted previously, a core factor that made the situation in the United Kingdom more complex for the Commission is the influence and erection of private memorials. According to the literature created by the Commission in recent years, in the United Kingdom and on the island of Ireland, of the approximately 306,000 commemorations of British Empire forces from the two World Wars, over 37,000 of the graves found in these nations are marked with a private memorial.[296] These can range in size and design, from the addition of the name onto a family grave marker to a large monument dedicated solely to that individual. Indeed, these memorials were often created by the families or the comrades of the deceased and can reflect the degree of influence they or their family had during their lifetime. In the case of private memorials, the Commission has never owned or maintained them, as ownership is often automatically given to the family as part of the rights to the grave; however, the condition of these memorials are monitored to ensure that the name of the casualty is legible.[297]

The designs of these private memorials also often adhere to the traditional funerary monuments made popular during the Victorian and Edwardian period, with the individual tombs and headstones carrying a range of coded symbols within its designs. Among the most popular features seen in these markers are crosses, urns, angels, clasped hands and broken columns each with their own unique message about how the bereaved were feeling at the loss of their loved one.[298] These features make it increasingly complicated to distinguish these war graves from the other graves around them, particularly over time and as the standard Commission headstone became the expected marker for the British Empire's war dead. It is clear that there was some divergence between what the public wished to achieve from its commemorative styles by utilising these symbols; the long-held attitudes towards commemorating the dead, certainly among the social elites who could afford monuments, were deemed to be of more importance than the uniformity among the war dead. Perhaps this highlights a

296 *Commonwealth War Graves Commission in the United Kingdom and Ireland* [Leaflet providing an overview of the CWGC's commitment in the UK] (2020), p. 4.
297 Ibid.
298 Sonia Letitia Batten, 'Memorial Text Narratives in Britain, c. 1890-1930' (PhD Thesis, University of Birmingham, 2011), pp. 12-13.

broader relationship between the conversations around exactly who should own the memory of the war dead: the state, or the families.

Although the majority of the letters received by the Commission were relatively easy to respond to, in circumstances where private memorials were part of a particular request or problem the matters were somewhat complicated. The question of private memorials had been a prevalent issue for the Commission from the outset, with it being discussed as early as the fifth meeting of the newly-formed Imperial War Graves Commission in September 1918. During this meeting, General Nevil Macready voiced his viewpoint that he doubted whether the Commission would be able to resist the 'pressure of public opinion' in favour of relatives being allowed to erect their own memorials on graves in the United Kingdom in the same way as it had overseas. General Macready cited the rationale behind his opinion as relating to the differing conditions between the United Kingdom and the theatres of war.[299] It was clear to General Macready and the other Commissioners that the sites closer to home would be completely distinct to those found further afield due to the close proximity of the families to these sites of memory; indeed, many of the bereaved had already taken on the responsibility of funeral costs and maintaining their loved one's graves. The fact that this had already happened set a precedent in the United Kingdom, and this factor had to be considered when formalising the Commission's work at home more generally.

Moreover, early meeting minutes show that some Commissioners still hoped to extend the organisation's equality in treatment policies to sites in Britain. Many of those in favour of this particular solution often looked to the wider British Empire for support, in order to utilise their example to set a precedent in the United Kingdom more organically. Certainly, the Commission knew that the bereaved of the Empire would have similar difficulties visiting their loved ones buried overseas therefore wanted to utilise this situation in order to highlight that not all war graves in the United Kingdom were mourned locally exclusively. During the same conversation at the fifth meeting of the Commission, both Sir Frederic Kenyon and Harry Gosling noted that the Dominions were in favour of a similar treatment to those found on the former battlefields being applied to those commemorated in the United Kingdom, and emphasised that the relatives would 'be eager to accept such a memorial and would regard it as a great honour.'[300] The disparity between the Dominions and the families at home had to be carefully considered, particularly if a consistent policy was to be applied to the United Kingdom. Moreover, it was not acknowledged in this meeting that there were cases of Dominion dead having privately-marked graves; regardless of whether the families were close by or further afield, it appears that where policies had not been applied in the same way as those

299 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/5 (WG159), Fifth Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 25th September 1918, p. 3.
300 Ibid., p. 4.

in battlefield cemeteries many individuals took full advantage of their freedom to choose the type of commemoration over the grave.

Furthermore, these early decisions raise questions around how it chose to maintain a working relationship with the public, particularly when dealing with cases of private commemoration. At the 13th Meeting of the Commission in June 1919, it was also agreed that the Commission would not contribute financially to the cost of private memorials in the United Kingdom,[301]and there was much discourse during this conference and at later meetings about whether the Commission should erect a standard Commission headstone alongside an existing private memorial if the family wished for it.[302] This part of the conversation was also a difficult issue to resolve, as it directly challenged the Commission's principles surrounding dual commemoration. Indeed, the Commission's policies clearly stated that a casualty would only be commemorated in one site by the organisation, either using a headstone or a memorial as was appropriate. However, it was recognised by the Commissioners that individuals who were making requests for their loved one's grave in the United Kingdom to be marked by both a private memorial and a standard Commission headstone felt a great deal of sentimental value and pride over the grave holding a soldier, and therefore it was the Commission's moral duty to mark the grave accordingly.[303] It was hypothesised that, if the Commission were to reject such requests, it would cause 'considerable distress' to the bereaved and would be hard to justify when questioned about this ruling.[304] During this meeting, it was once again noted that the circumstances in the United Kingdom were unique to those in war cemeteries abroad for a number of reasons, including the fact that many people had begun to erect their own memorials to their loved ones on war graves in the United Kingdom prior to the Commission publicly acknowledging that it would take any action.[305] It was easy to presume that a proposal to remove the privately-erected headstones would be opposed by the next of kin, particularly as they had often contributed financially to these memorials. Furthermore, the fact that many casualties were buried in family graves, with their next of kin owning the grave rights, would need to be considered prior to making a clear policy.[306]

The presence of private memorials over graves in the United Kingdom was a long-term worry of the Commission as, in spite of the good intentions of these families, the markers chosen by them would

301 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/13 (WG585), 13th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 17th June 1919, p. 6.
302 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/93 (WG1831/35), 93rd Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 10th November 1926, p. 5; CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/209 (WG1831/151), 209th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 15th November 1937, pp. 8-9.
303 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/13 (WG585), 13th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 17th June 1919, p. 6.
304 Ibid.
305 Ibid.
306 Ibid.

often eventually fall into disrepair; this can be seen in the countless examples of civilian graves from the period. As the Commission had a responsibility to care for these graves in perpetuity, a new rule to ensure that the graves were marked appropriately would be needed. The rules for private memorials were not created to ensure that the casualty in question was commemorated equally or to a similar standard of those with Commission headstones; rather it was designed to guarantee that there was a limit to the Commission's responsibility in caring for the war dead. This was partly for financial reasons, as the Commission foresaw that provisions would need to be made in the estimates for each financial year to replace private memorials no longer cared for by the families. Unless some upper limit to the economic contribution of the Commission was stated, in addition to the approval of the next of kin to undertake this work being sought, the task would become unmanageable and create substantially more problems for the organisation. Once again, pragmatism and forward-thinking by the Commission was shown during the drafting of these policies, in order to ensure that its interests were kept as a priority.

Prior to any formal legislation, the Commission's policies surrounding private memorials and their challenge to the remit of the organisation was contradictory to its Charter. Indeed, if there was a physical set of remains within a plot in the United Kingdom, the Commission initially provided the family with the option of having a standard Commission headstone erected on the grave alongside the name being recorded on a family memorial, should the grave owner or next of kin desire it. This decision was altered by the latter half of the 1920s, and by the 93rd Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission in November 1926 Vice Chairman Sir Fabian Ware had begun to view this as a mistake. However, Ware's change in attitude was not due to the dual commemoration directly challenging the policy of being commemorated in one location only; it was because he felt that the existence of a private memorial 'often detracted from the appearance of the Commission headstone.'[307] Therefore, there was clearly another element to this problem that the Commission needed to consider before it could make a set of guidelines regarding the commemoration of a particular casualty.

However, there were conflicting views among the Commissioners regarding this issue. In the view of Mr Spens, later Baron Spens who was the future Chief Justice of India, the Commission had a definite obligation to care for all war graves in the United Kingdom under its original Charter. This meant that the Commission were potentially liable for an as-yet unspecified number of graves, and the Commission would ultimately be responsible for replacing all privately erected headstones with standard Commission headstones when this was required. In light of his predictions, in November

307 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/93 (WG1831/35), 93rd Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 10th November 1926, p. 5.

1932 Spens prepared a draft Charter to resolve the matter and shared it with the Commissioners for their approval. The terms included within the Charter relieved the Commission of its obligation to register any more graves, and of marking the graves currently denoted with a private memorial in the future. In spite of Spens' convincing arguments, there were elements of indecision on the part of the Commission about whether to implement his updated Charter. Indeed, whilst it may have been beneficial for the organisation to clearly provide an end date to this task, it was expected that representatives from member governments from countries far away may have a conflicting viewpoint on the matter.[308]

As a consequence of the potential difficulties caused by private memorials and other issues, a committee on the war graves in the United Kingdom was appointed in 1934, with Admiral Sir Morgan Singer as its chairman. Lord Arthur Browne, Sir Frederic Kenyon, Sir Herbert Ellissen, and Mr Housden also sat on the panel. The committee found that, from the outset, the Commission had no choice but to accept responsibility for all war graves, since the terms of its Charter bound the organisation to ensure that these graves were adequately marked and maintained.[309] In cases where the condition of a grave was perceived as unsatisfactory and was brought to the organisation's attention, it was believed by the committee that the Commission should take action. However, contrary to war graves marked by a standard Commission headstone, the maintenance of a private memorial erected by other individuals or organisations was not considered to be one of the Commission's duties by the committee. Moreover, in cases whereby private memorials were to be maintained by the Commission, it was believed that the organisation should either keep the memorial in good repair, substitute it with its own headstone or replace the private memorial for another form of commemoration, such as engraving the name on a Screen Wall, within the site. In terms of financial constraints, it was recognised that an exact figure would be difficult to estimate. This was due to the fact that the hypothetical expenditure involved would only be educated guesses, as the expense would be spread over a long period of time and thus be a gradual cost. However, it was reminded by Sir Frederic Kenyon, on behalf of the Committee at the 175th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission in July 1934, that the many of these graves had thus far cost the Commission nothing due to the families marking and continuing to maintain these burial plots at their own expense.[310] The findings of the Committee therefore legitimised the role of the Commission when considering cases of private memorials, and emphasised the fact that the organisation's expected work had in some cases temporarily been taken on by the next of kin and volunteers separate from the Commission's regular operations.

308 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/156 (WG 1831/98), 156th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 9th November 1932, p. 13.
309 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/175 (WG1831/117), 175th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 25th July 1934, p. 9.
310 Ibid., p. 10.

By the 209th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission in November 1937, the question of private memorials was raised once more. The situation in the United Kingdom was once again highlighted as being different from those found in the war cemeteries abroad, and thus a different response from the Commission was required in order to resolve the issue. In particular, it was noted that many of the families who had opted for a private memorial on the graves of their loved ones had made this choice prior to them being made aware that the Commission were going to take responsibility for the marking of war dead.[311] It was found by the Commissioners that the standards of private memorials varied greatly, as did the context within which they were created; a certain number of war graves in the United Kingdom were marked by both a private memorials chosen by relatives and a temporary wooden crosses that had been erected by the military authorities at the end of the First World War. These crosses were largely found to be no longer suitable for appropriately commemorating the war dead, and that the private memorials could generally be deemed sufficient; however, due to their installation by the military authorities there was an expectation for them to continue to be marked by the state. Thus, occasionally the Commission received requests to replace or renovate the wooden crosses that had been designed to act as a temporary grave marker. It was noted that the customary reply from the Commission when faced with such a request had been to say that the wooden cross would not be renewed, but that it was possible to place a standard Commission headstone on the grave should the applicant wish for it. Therefore, if this offer was accepted by the next of kin, the placing of a Commission headstone within a pre-existing plot where the casualty's name was already listed would go completely against the Commission's policies surrounding commemoration, as the grave would then be marked by two memorials.[312] Moreover, Sir Fabian Ware had come to the conclusion that the Commission headstone was out of place at the foot of the grave and that no more should be erected in this position.[313] It appears that Ware's suggestion was not always upheld, as this is the most commonplace location at which to find a Commission headstone within a family plot. This is due to the fact that it limits the damage to the family grave and mitigates the risk of disturbing the remains of the other occupants of the grave.

311 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/209 (WG1831/151), 209th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 15th November 1937, p. 9.
312 Ibid., p. 8.
313 Ibid., pp. 8-9.

Fig. 5: An example of a Second World War grave with the Commission headstone found within a family grave, with the headstone being placed at the foot of the grave. Found at Newark-Upon Trent-Cemetery, Nottinghamshire. Photograph: Author's Own.

In spite of the clear breach of usual policy, there was some concern about making this a new regulation. This was due to the fact that it was believed that the people who made requests of this kind attached a great deal of sentimental value to the grave because it was a soldier's grave. This then caused a fear that, should the Commission decide to refuse these requests, it would cause distress to the families and be hard to justify its rejection of these appeals. Creating such a negative image of the Commission, and to cause further suffering to the bereaved, was not something that the Commissioners wanted to generate through making such decisions. Lieutenant Colonel Vanier, on behalf of the High Commissioner for Canada, presumed that potential proposals to remove the privately erected headstones would also be opposed by the family for sentimental reasons, which the Director of Records, Major Chettle, agreed with. Furthermore, many of these privately-erected stones were part of family graves and the private memorials often commemorated other members of the family too. As a result of this discussion, in addition to the various nuances and potential negative consequences of changing current policy, it was agreed that the Commission would continue to erect

these headstones as it had in the past.[314] This is a policy the Commission continues to uphold: when a private memorial falls into disrepair, as outlined by the Commission's standards,[315] a Commission marker is put at the base of the memorial. In modern times, the Commission opt to use a pedestal or 'Gallipoli' marker instead of a standard Commission headstone, as the foundation required to keep the stone upright is shorter and thus the remains beneath are less likely to be disturbed during installation.

As part of the policy-making regarding private memorials, a number of different options to pre-empt some of the expected issues surrounding them were considered. Indeed, one of the solutions to this matter was to enlist the assistance of the voluntary organisations, such as the Women's Institute or the British Legion. It was believed that this would make sure that the graves were maintained, without creating a great deal of financial or labour-related costs for the Commission. This was of the utmost importance to the Commission during this period, as the costs of maintenance and upkeep could easily fall out of hand if not controlled appropriately. However, there were some difficulties connected to this option, as appeals to the public for funds had previously been opposed by the Imperial Conference; thus, the challenge to this precedence would compromise the Commission's legitimacy in its work. After the Commission rejected the option of voluntary support from charitable organisations, it therefore seemed that the only course was for the organisation to publicly state that after a fixed date it would not hold itself responsible for registering or commemorating any more war graves in the United Kingdom that were marked by private memorials.[316] This coincided with the dates utilised as the Commission's dates of responsibility to avoid any confusion or inequalities; nevertheless, as will be shown in later chapters this choice was not often understood or well-received by the public.

In spite of the discussions about working collaboratively with other organisations such as the RBL and WI, there is no archival evidence that this came to fruition – perhaps due to concerns regarding government funding and whether this would be impacted by the use of other organisations that rely on charitable donations. Although the specificities of the creation and running of the RBL and WI are outside of the scope of this thesis, it is important to note that the limited research into the RBL has highlighted some cross-over between them and the Commission. HRH the Prince of Wales (later HM King Edward VIII) was both the first President of the Commission and the National Officer of the British Legion between 1921 and 1937;[317] perhaps it can be seen that the overarching interest of the Prince of Wales may have provided the two organisations with mutual interests and ways of working.

314 Ibid., p. 9.
315 This mainly focuses on checking whether the name of the casualty can be read from around 2.5 metres away.
316 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/155 (WG 1831/97), 155th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 12th October 1932, p. 8.
317 N. Barr, The Lion and the Poppy: British Veterans, Politics, and Society, 1921-1939 (London and Connecticut: Praeger, 2005), p. 20.

The existence of private memorials over some of the graves in the United Kingdom added to the Commission's administrative burden through its various legal constraints. Unlike sites abroad, whereby the Commission usually had sole ownership over the graves, it could not simply remove private memorials and replace the grave marker with one of its own. This was especially paramount in situations where the individual had been interred within a family plot with their name added to the family's grave marker. By providing clear guidelines that the Commission were required to follow, it ensured that its perpetual work would be protected over time and strategies would be in place to deal with the changes in commemoration that would inevitably be required in decades to come.

Moreover, there was the additional difficulty of families utilising their family-owned plots as their focal point of remembrance, even when the actual remains were commemorated by the Commission overseas. This particular act of remembrance is commonplace at sites across the United Kingdom, and could cause some confusion among the public particularly when references to where an individual was official commemorated was not included on the monument. Consequently, the lack of differentiation between private memorials with a physical set of remains there and an act of private mourning for a loved one far away provided additional difficulties in terms of the Commission's remit, particularly when explaining its work to the public.

Fig. 6: An example of a family memorial which includes the name of a casualty buried overseas, found at Wigston Cemetery in Leicestershire. Photograph: Author's Own.

Scattered war graves more generally continued to be a problem for the Commission to consider in the United Kingdom. In a cemetery in Plaistow, for example, there were some 138 scattered war graves, 103 of which were in common graves.[318] In many cases the common graves were often multiple-occupancy graves that contained other civilian burials, and thus it was deemed inappropriate for the Commission to place one of its headstones among the larger "guinea markers" that often highlighted the location of the common graves. Perhaps this decision was partially reached due to the negative associations between common graves and the poorest within society, with a stigma relating to having no grave marker continuing to be perpetuated in this period. In the case of the cemetery at Plaistow, it was proposed that the 103 burials in common graves would be alternatively commemorated on a Screen Wall, to avoid drawing attention to the location of the war dead in these graves and to enable the Commission to appropriately commemorate the war dead.[319] In other circumstances, this may be seen as a policy being created based on a practical need, but this regulation was not adhered to across the country. For example, at Nottingham (Church) Cemetery, common graves within the site that contain war graves are dually marked. They have large recumbent stones, presumably installed by the Cemetery Authorities, with the names of all of the grave's occupants listed; a Commission headstone is placed at the end of the grave. The lack of consistency by the Commission when considering common and scattered graves, due to its varied control over commemorations in the United Kingdom, meant that the commemoration practices continued to be somewhat fluid and differing issues were often treated as individual, exceptional cases.

When studying death and bereavement practices in the early twentieth century, it cannot be ignored that both the 1832 Anatomy Act and the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act were still at the forefront of the public's understanding of death, and the legacy of this legislation was extremely far-reaching. As highlighted in the introduction, paupers' graves were often a source of extreme anxiety for the working-classes because of the connotations associated with such burial locations. Prior to explaining the nuances surrounding communal graves in the early twentieth century, it is important to highlight what the Acts meant. The Anatomy Act was passed alongside the 1832 Cemeteries Act, which enabled the building of the new commercial cemeteries that are commonplace in Britain today. The Anatomy Act allowed for the unclaimed corpses of paupers to be used by medical schools for dissection, and enabled the corpses of paupers to be treated as disposable commodities.[320] The practice of dissection had previously been reserved solely for those who were executed by the state

318 Common graves are sometimes called pauper's graves. There are some minor differences between these two types of these graves, but for the purposes of this thesis they will be discussed together as a common grave, unless explicitly related to a pauper burial.
319 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/110 (WG1831/52), 110th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 9th May 1928, pp. 4-5.
320 Sonia Letitia Batten, 'Memorial Text Narratives in Britain, c. 1890-1930' (PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 2011), p. 11.

for criminal activity,[321] and arguably criminalised poverty. Although there were some measures on an ad hoc basis to provide the corpses of the poor with as much dignity as material circumstances would allow, many were finally laid to rest within a communal pit on the outskirts of a churchyard or cemetery.[322] Many of the individuals who experienced this would have been from the local workhouses created as a result of the Poor Law Amendment Act; due to their abject poverty, and the presumed poverty of their loved ones, the remains of the workhouse dead were easily utilised for dissections prior to their interments.

Furthermore, the proposed cemetery reforms by Edwin Chadwick suggested a process of reusable cemeteries whereby graves were cleared every decade and the remaining bones were buried in communal graves. Indeed, this was not uncommon elsewhere in Europe at the time, with this practice being customary in Germany [323] and was often utilised in overcrowded cemeteries and burial grounds.[324] Nevertheless, the associations with communal graves in this way was met with widespread fear among the working classes, who wanted to ensure that they too were able to experience a "good" death and funeral. This anxiety was so widespread that many individuals contributed to burial insurance schemes and cremation propaganda emphasised the egalitarianism of the crematorium when compared to the paupers' pits in local cemeteries to encourage people to consider cremation.[325] Consequently, when the mass death experienced in the First World War became apparent there was a widespread worry about the mass graves being produced overseas and how they would impact on the memory of the war dead.[326] In particular, there was a fear that without a clear headstone or other 'commemorative paraphernalia' to mark the burial location, a common grave could easily become indistinct from its surroundings and lose importance over time.[327] This was of significant importance to those outside of the realms of poverty, who perhaps did not want their loved ones' memory to be connected to feelings surrounding communal graves.

However, for those who were more likely to have previous experience of visiting communal graves, these realities were slightly less terrifying. As has been highlighted by Thomas Lacqueur, the importance for many working-class families in death practices was in the funeral itself; many people,

321 Lucy Noakes, *Dying for the Nation: Death, Grief and Bereavement in Second World War Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), p. 25.
322 Sonia Letitia Batten, 'Memorial Text Narratives in Britain, c. 1890-1930' (PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 2011), p. 11.
323 James Stevens Curl, *The Victorian Celebration of Death* (Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing Limited, 2000), p. 126.
324 Ibid., p. 109.
325 Julie-Marie Strange, *Death, Grief and Poverty in Britain, 1870-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 161.
326 Jalland War and Peace, p. 129.
327 Julie-Marie Strange, *Death, Grief and Poverty in Britain, 1870-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 267.

not just paupers, were buried in communal graves and thus this would not be a surprise to a family.[328] For example, it may be of more importance to a family that their loved one be buried in consecrated ground and the only way they could ensure this was through the use of a communal or unmarked grave. A more unorthodox approach outlined in Julie-Marie Strange's work is to utilise common graves as a temporary location for burial while relatives accumulated the resources for a private grave; perhaps this was a hope for some families in the First World War, who saw the graves overseas as a non-permanent measure.[329] Indeed, for some this would have given them the sense of a decent burial if they were given some autonomy over the manner in which the death was conveyed into the grave.[330] The differences in opinions really add to the nuances surrounding paupers' graves, which has generally focused on the negative responses to this approach to death memory.

On the whole, there was a widespread anxiety surrounding placing soldiers from the First World War in what were perceived to be in paupers' graves, particularly if they were to be interred with non-combatants. This was the case in Reading Cemetery, where worries were raised over the fact that soldiers had been buried in paupers' coffins and graves, with their remains mixed with other paupers who had not died in service.[331] Indeed, it is apparent that there were obvious expectations regarding the war dead, and a separation between them and the poorest of society was vital in ensuring their memory was upheld to a heroic status.

The financial burdens relating to graves were not the only difficulties to be considered by the Commission when looking at its commitment in the United Kingdom; larger architectural features and buildings could also cause problems. One of the few Commission-owned sites, and the largest site in the United Kingdom today, is Brookwood Military Cemetery in Surrey. In 1930, it was decided that the site required a shelter in the form of a Record House that could be the focal point for a pilgrim's visit. The expectation was that, after paying their respects at a loved one's graves, the next of kin could go into the warm and learn more about the work that the Commission was doing more generally. The ideal price of this shelter for the cost-conscious Commission was about £500; however, the design provided by architect Sir Edwin Lutyens could not be erected at a price under £6,000.[332] This raised a great deal of doubt among the Commissioners regarding whether it should spend this type of money during a period of significant economic depression; indeed, Sir Fabian Ware himself

328 Thomas W. Laqueur, 'Memory and Naming in the Great War' in John R. Gillis (ed.), *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 155.
329 Julie-Marie Strange, *Death, Grief and Poverty in Britain, 1870-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 139.
330 Ibid., pp. 155-6.
331 CWGC/1/1/1/34/10 (SDC 4), Reading Cemetery, 26th May 1917.
332 According to The National Archives' Currency Converter, £500 in 1930 would equate to approximately £22,892.70 in 2017 while £6,000 would equate to £274,712.40. The National Archives, 'Currency Converter,' *TNA*, 2023. Available at: https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/#currency-result [Accessed 6th April 2023].

questioned whether the Commission could face 'such an expenditure under existing conditions.'[333] Thomas Trumble, representing the High Commissioner for Australia at the meeting, provided an alternative view. He said that he understood that the British section of the site 'suffered by comparison with the American Cemetery alongside' and that perhaps this would provide a solution to this problem. [334]

The American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC), some six years younger than the Imperial War Graves Commission, was made responsible for caring for the graves of American war casualties who had served since the United States' entry into the First World War in April 1917.[335] While the ABMC had fewer casualties and spatial commitments within the United Kingdom than the Commission, the fact that these two military cemeteries lay adjacent to each other would naturally enable comparison and conversation. There was not a shelter of any kind at Brookwood Military Cemetery at the time, so by being the organisation to provide refuge from the elements and an opportunity for pilgrims to reflect on their visit in warmth and quiet would potentially enable visitors to fully appreciate the work of the Commission. Moreover, this would enable pilgrims to look upon the Commission's work more favourably when comparing it to the American war graves next door, and thus improve the chances of them supporting the organisation's endeavours.

The ownership and legalities surrounding the control over graves also continued to plague discussions at the Commission's meetings. At the 146th Meeting of the Commission in December 1931, it was noted to the attendees that a letter had been received from the High Commissioner for Australia regarding an Australian soldier buried in the United Kingdom. They had asked whether arrangements could be made for the maintenance of the grave, in spite of the fact that the soldier was buried in the same grave as his civilian father; the grave was marked by a private memorial and had been maintained by the family. Although this could be perceived as a relatively simple request at a surface-level, this appeal was treated with caution by the Commission. Indeed, the request to maintain the grave instead of the family was seen to result in opening up a larger question for debate, as there were estimated to be 25,000 similar graves across the United Kingdom.[336] While there was no doubt under the Commission's Charter that it was responsible for maintaining all war graves of the British Empire dead globally,[337] cases such as the one described were arguably an exception to the rule. This theory

333 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/129 (WG1831/71), 129th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 9th April 1930, pp. 10-11.
334 Ibid., p. 11.
335 American Battle Monuments Commission, 'History,' *American Battle Monuments Commission*, 2020. Available at: https://www.abmc.gov/about-us/history [Accessed 28th November 2020]. For further reading, see Budreau, Lisa M., *Bodies of War: World War I and the Politics of Commemoration in America, 1919-1933* (New York: New York University Press, 2010).
336 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/146 (WG1831/88), 146th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 9th December 1931, p. 16.
337 Ibid., p. 17.

was supported by the outcome of a committee, led by Sir Thomas Mackenzie, which had considered the question of marking these graves during the Commission's formative years. The resulting report from the committee in 1920 had not imposed any rigid rules per se, but it was generally agreed that relatives of soldiers buried in the United Kingdom were permitted to erect private headstones on their graves,[338] while the Commission were responsible for marking all the graves that families did not decide to mark themselves.[339]As this grave was currently marked by a private memorial, no further work seemed to be required by the Commission, and the matter was closed for discussion.

The Vice Chairman emphasised that this case was not new; of an estimated 95,000 war graves on British soil, there were around 25,000 private memorials atop the graves at this time. Of these 25,000 cases, the Commission were maintaining approximately 8,000. The maintenance of these graves were different to those with Commission-erected memorials, as in the case of private memorials the Commission only ensured that the graves were kept clean and tidy; keeping the privately-owned headstone in an appropriate condition was not considered to be part of this maintenance work.[340] This policy is still utilised by the Commission today; although private memorials may be falling to the ravages of time or damaged, the Commission do not have the right or responsibility to maintain the memorial itself; as long as the name of the casualty is legible, it is usually deemed as an appropriate commemoration of that casualty.

While this was seen as the most appropriate thing to do in this particular circumstance, the decision reached by the Commission provided additional confusion. The representative for the High Commissioner for New Zealand, Mr Knowles, said that he thought the 1920 report had stated that 'in the event of a privately erected stone falling into disrepair the Commission would step in and, if necessary, erect one of its own stones.'[341] However, the legislation quoted by Mr Knowles did not provide as clear-cut of a solution as it first appeared to. In particular the report outlined that, regardless of who had the rights of ownership over the grave, the Commission would still be required to ask for permission from the next of kin prior to undertaking any work.

Although the example highlights a case where ownership could potentially be transferred to the Commission, it was also not uncommon for the Commission to receive requests to transfer its ownership rights to the families of the deceased. The Commission were not, in principle, opposed to passing the grave ownership onto the families, although this was done in a case-by-case situation. The

338 Ibid., p. 18.
339 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/155 (WG1831/97), 155th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 12th October 1932, p. 7.
340 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/146 (WG1831/88), 146th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 9th December 1931, p. 18.
341 Ibid.

transferal of Private E.H. Nottage's grave at Walthamstow Cemetery, for example, was considered to be a 'formal matter' in which the relatives wished to acquire the grave; it had previously been granted to the Commission by the Cemetery Authorities.[342] A common caveat imposed by the Commission when relinquishing its rights over a particular grave was that the organisation also renounced all responsibility to maintaining the grave. Thus, families would be required to ensure maintenance upkeep could be promised in perpetuity.

There were, of course, some exceptions to this rule, too. It was hypothesised that some families might not be able to upkeep a memorial in a war graves plot which, if not fixed, would potentially 'spoil the look of the plot.'[343] In cases where this occurred, it was surmised that 'the Commission would probably be bound to take action where cases of this nature arose.' However, Sir Fabian Ware thought that there would be only a few cases that matched this hypothetical situation.[344] Mr Spens raised a concern over private memorials where direct relatives had died and the extended family 'ceased to take an interest' in the graves of the war dead, which was a likely situation the Commission faced in the years following the conflict.[345] He suggested that vicars and other interested parties would write to the Commission to remind the organisation of its duty to look after these graves according to its Charter; if this was not agreed to, potential negative press caused by these individuals writing to local newspapers could bring the Commission into disrepute. This was not seen as a primary concern at the time of the 155th Meeting in October 1932, so it was agreed that this would be discussed at a later date.[346] Although no mention can be found of a further debate around this issue has been found, it can be presumed that the resolution was to outline that the next of kin would be responsible for the grave, even if they were not necessarily aware of their ownership of the grave.

Private memorials and scattered graves continued to be a concern on the outbreak of the Second World War, particularly as increasing numbers of dead from the current conflict were likely to be marked by their families. On the matter, Sir Fabian Ware observed that the Commission had no power to forbid private memorials being erected on the graves of Second World War casualties buried in the United Kingdom. This is due to the fact that the Commission had already allowed private memorials on the graves of First World War service personnel, which set a precedent for the families to follow; the Commission could not enforce a new rule for the current conflict. Moreover the Commissioners surmised that, Contrary to the reactions of the bereaved in the aftermath of the First World War, many relatives of those killed in the Second World War saw the Commission headstone as a mark of

342 Ibid., p. 21.
343 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/155 (WG1831/97), 155th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 12th October 1932, pp. 11-12.
344 Ibid.
345 Ibid., p. 12.
346 Ibid.

honour. Thanks to their understanding of the significance of the Commission's work, the organisation hoped that it would be highly likely that most families would opt to wait for a standard Commission headstone to be erected over their loved one's grave.

Furthermore, Cemetery Authorities in the United Kingdom were largely in favour of the treatment of the graves undertaken by the Commission, in part due to the good work being done by the organisation's inspectors at sites across the United Kingdom; indeed, in some cases the Cemetery Authorities had forbidden the erection of private memorials in the service plots they had set aside within its sites.[347] Thus, it was widely assumed that the graves of Second World War casualties in the United Kingdom would be, in the main, marked with a standard Commission headstone. This presumption of the Commission was generally correct, largely in part due to the preparations of Cemetery Authorities in creating war graves plots within its sites. The Cemetery Authorities and Commission had learned from the tribulations from caring for the First World War dead and did not wish to make the same mistakes. This may explain why it is common to see Second World War plots in a municipal cemetery with the First World War graves scattered throughout the site, particularly if there was not a number of war hospitals in close proximity to the cemetery.

To conclude, it is clear that private memorials were among the key ongoing issues that the Commission had to consider and create policies around during its formative years. Although it could not control the use of individualised markers by the families, the Commission had to consider how they fell into its estate and would be cared for in perpetuity. Ultimately, a pragmatic attitude and case-by-case solution was generally utilised which caused some of the unique situations found at sites across the United Kingdom. As will be shown in the next section of this thesis, the decision surrounding who could be considered to be entitled to a war grave more generally, as per the criteria decided by the Commission was often challenged by the families of veterans as these individuals began to age and pass away themselves.

Non-War Graves and War Grave Entitlements

One of the major administrative problems that the Commission had to consider was to decide exactly who the Commission were responsible for, and how far the remit of its work extended. In this section of the chapter, how the Commission decided which individuals fell within its responsibility will be discussed, and some of the opposing views experienced by the Commission with other organisations will be highlighted in order to show the complexities surrounding this decision-making process.

347 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/236 (WG1831/178), 236th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 30th April 1941, p. 5.

Under its initial Charter, the Commission were unable to look after the graves of the Mercantile Marines, Allied soldiers or enemy prisoners of war.[348] There were also questions surrounding those with no known grave who had died at sea and were not commemorated elsewhere, which was the case for many Royal Navy service personnel who had perished in the seas that surrounded Britain. Indeed, the Admiralty had provided additional resistance to the Commission's plans to commemorate their war dead, as they wanted to uphold their longstanding traditions. Thus, the Admiralty often chose to ignore or prolong their responses to enquiries from families looking for information about their missing loved ones, which added to the Commission's administrative tasks through the responses to follow-up letters.[349] Where the Admiralty had chosen to commemorate the naval dead, this was often done through their own channels and utilising specific "Admiralty Markers" in lieu of a standard Commission headstone. Although this thesis does not primarily focus on the unique ways in which the Royal Navy chose to commemorate its dead, the difference in attitudes among the Armed Services is important to note.

In spite of the resistance felt from the Admiralty, a decision relating to how the Commission would commemorate the dead of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines was finally agreed in 1920. When considering how to commemorate those who had died at sea, the Admiralty had appointed a committee to consider the proposals of the Commission, and the outcome of their investigation had recommended that the most appropriate place for these memorials to be placed would be at the Royal Navy's three main manning ports at the time: Portsmouth, Plymouth and Chatham.[350] These memorials were to be identical in design, with giant obelisks of Portland stone in the centre and the names of the dead inscribed at the base.

As has been shown with the private memorials marking many of the family-owned graves, symbolism was of significant importance when finalising the designs of the three naval memorials. The columns of the memorials were surmounted by sculpted lions at the base and the four winds were represented by four bronze figures below a copper sphere.[351] Moreover, the various allegorical references to the globe and winds emphasised the connection between the naval experience of the conflict and the monuments housing the names of the dead.[352] Designed by the newly-appointed Principal Architect for the United Kingdom, Sir Robert Lorimer, the memorials were anticipated to be completed by

348 CWGC, CWGC/2/1/ADD.6.2.2 (ADD 6/2/2), Annual Report of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 1920-1921, 1921, p. 5.
349 Crane, *Empires of the Dead*, p. 196.
350 CWGC, CWGC/2/1/ADD.6.2.2 (ADD 6/2/2), Annual Report of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 1920-1921, 1921, p. 5.
351 CWGC, CWGC/2/1/ADD.6.2.4 (ADD 6/2/4), Annual Report of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 1922-1923, 1923, p. 15.
352 Crane, *Empires of the Dead*, p. 197.

1924.[353] In addition to the Royal Navy's casualties being represented at these three sites, many of the kindred Services from across the Empire, such as the Royal Australian Navy, Royal Marine Light Infantry and the Royal Naval Reserve, were also commemorated on these memorials.[354]

During this time period, memorials to the missing were beginning to be constructed on both the home and fighting fronts, and their format and impact was becoming an increasingly prevalent point of discussion for the Commission. Although the three main First World War naval memorials were erected at the three main manning ports for the Royal Navy, the Hollybrook Memorial was attracting particular attention among the public. Located near Southampton, the memorial commemorated sailors who had lost their lives at sea as a result of enemy action along the British coastline.[355] It was also the memorial that contained the name of Lord Kitchener, who had been Secretary of State for War between 1914 and 1916 and organised the largest volunteer army Britain had ever seen. He had died off the coast of Orkney in 1916, on his way to attend negotiations in Russia with Tsar Nicholas II.[356] As a consequence of having such a prominent figure being named on this memorial, a great deal of public interest had been drawn to the site; the press in particular were enquiring about the date of the unveiling ceremony. No clear response could be given, as a range of factors could easily alter the date. Nevertheless, Sir Fabian Ware had asked Field Marshal Sir William Robertson, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff from 1916 to 1918, to carry out the ceremony if possible.[357] The memorial was eventually unveiled on 10th December 1930.[358] Details of ceremonies relating to the unveiling of cemeteries and memorials will be explored in a later chapter, but the importance of the Royal Naval memorials in the public's consciousness at this time cannot be overstated. As will be shown, the unveilings often attracted large crowds and provided a focal point for commemoration within that local community.

Another element of commemoration that the Commission had to consider were casualties who fell outside of its dates of responsibility, which would be later known as interwar or postwar graves. These particular grave types often concerned current service personnel from the British Empire Forces

353 CWGC, CWGC/2/1/ADD.6.2.4 (ADD 6/2/4), Annual Report of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 1922-1923, 1923, p. 15. According to the CWGC webpages for these cemeteries, the three naval memorials were unveiled in 1924.
354 Ibid.
355 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/130 (WG1831/72), 130th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 14th May 1930, p. 4.
356 'Kitchener, Horatio Herbert, Earl Kitchener of Khartoum,' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2011. Available at: https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-34341 [Accessed 13th November 2020].
357 CWGC/2/2/1/130 (WG1831/72), 130th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 14th May 1930, p. 4.
358 Commonwealth War Graves Commission, 'Hollybrook Memorial,' *CWGC*, 2020. Available at: https://www.cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/142019/HOLLYBROOK%20MEMORIAL,%20SOUTHAMPTON/ [Accessed 13th November 2020].

based on operations overseas, such as in the newly-established Northern Ireland. While there were clear guidelines that set forth the Commission's position regarding postwar graves, and in particular the graves of those who had died from causes connected with the Great War outside of the organisation's dates of responsibility, there had been some inconsistencies in implementation of this policy. For example, some of the Dominions had taken on the maintenance of these graves as if they were war dead if the casualty had died in their own countries. At the 108th Meeting of the Commission in March 1928, the Governments of both Australia and New Zealand had made requests that, as they were treating post-war graves in this way in their own countries, this action could be reciprocated for Dominion casualties buried in the United Kingdom.[359] Unfortunately, mostly due to financial concerns, the United Kingdom government were not prepared to follow the example set by the Dominions and the Commission itself did not have the funds to facilitate this as a consequence; the request was thus rejected.

However, there was a potential solution to the debate that was felt to suit the needs of the opposing sides. In its Supplementary Charter, the Commission had the power to treat these graves as war graves at its discretion and on a repayment basis at the expense of the government concerned. It was suggested that the Dominion representatives on the Commission could consult their governments as to whether this would be possible for these specific circumstances, so that it could resolve the matter.[360] It appears that this was agreed to on a case-by-case basis, as some interwar graves are cared for by the Commission as part of its significant agency work.

By the 155th Meeting of the Commission in October 1932, the potential of marking the graves of servicemen who had died outside of the Commission's dates of responsibility remained a point of contention. Around this time, there was also a suggestion from the British Empire Service League to use a miniature Cross of Sacrifice as a grave marker for veterans' graves; this was vehemently opposed by the Commission as the architect who designed it, Sir Reginald Blomfield, had always objected to the use of his design in 'any reduced form.'[361] Moreover, it should be noted that it could be seen as an infringement of copyright in cases where headstones and other key features of Commission sites were used; whilst it appears that this was a very real concern of the Commission, there does not appear to be evidence of the Commission ever actively seeking a copyright claim in these circumstances.

359 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/108 (WG1831/50), 108th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 14th March 1928, pp. 16-17.
360 Ibid., p. 17.
361 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/155 (WG1831/97), 155th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 12th October 1932, p. 13.

In the case of the postwar graves being marked in Australia and New Zealand, it was not perceived by the Commission to be an infraction on its copyright as the headstones were distinctive and associated with the grave of an ex-serviceman in New Zealand by the public.[362] However, by November 1933, the pressure to allow Cemetery Authorities and other key figures to erect standard Commission headstones, or a similar design, on the graves which were not considered war graves was mounting again. Once again, the Commission opted to issue a statement in the Press where it explained that the design of its headstone was subject to copyright, and it would only be used on the graves that were recognised as war graves, as outlined within the organisation's Charter.[363] The use of the Press by the Commission will be outlined in further detail in a later chapter, but it is clear that the Commission had learned by this stage the importance of explaining its decisions to the public when pressure mounted against the organisation's practice and policies.

While the regulations and procedures of the Commission relating to the dead of the Second World War are not the primary focus of this thesis, it is important to mention them within the broader context of discussions relating to the care of the First World War dead. During a wartime meeting in April 1941, outrage over the treatment of Second World War casualties was felt among the Commissioners, particularly those representing the Dominion governments. Indeed, instead of being cared for by an overarching body, Dominion forces were often being expected to pay for the land necessary to facilitate the burial of their troops who had died in the United Kingdom. This raised a great deal of concern, particularly as during the First World War the United Kingdom Government had paid for the land in similar circumstances. The Commission had begun taking steps to bring this to the notice of the British Government by the time it was brought to the meeting, and the organisation immediately decided to apply the same principle to Dominion graves of the Second World War as it had in the previous conflict. As with the First World War, it should not be ignored that it was in fact the Dominion forces and their representatives that pushed the Commission to care for the war dead within the United Kingdom.

The transfer of responsibility for the commemoration and care of Second World War dead to the Commission was undertaken relatively quickly when compared to the First World War, although its remit was added to slightly. Indeed, unlike during the First World War, the Charter for the Second World War dead included the commemoration of any civilian casualties of the conflict. While this was seen as a great responsibility that would continue to foster a positive public image of the Commission, the reality of caring for even more dead who were buried in the United Kingdom was another uphill struggle to consider. Nevertheless, the Supplemental Charter which empowered the

362 Ibid.
363 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/167 (WG1831/109), 167th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 22nd November 1933, p. 18.

Commission to compile the records of civilian war dead had passed the Great Seal on 7th February 1941.[364] This enabled the Commission to provide some form of commemoration for civilians killed in a range of situations, but most notably the significant losses sustained during the Blitz. Unlike those who were killed as members of the Armed Forces, the majority of the civilian casualties did not receive a variation of the standard Commission headstone to mark their graves; instead, they are listed in the Civilian Roll of Honour that is held within eight leather-bound volumes at Westminster Abbey. The Civilian Roll of Honour now names more than 68,000 Commonwealth civilians whose deaths were attributable to enemy action during the Second World War.[365]

However, there are some examples of civilian casualties having some form of uniform headstone. For example, at Nottingham Southern Cemetery in Nottinghamshire there is a small plot of civilians who were killed as a result of the bombing of Nottingham in 1941, each with pseudo-Commission headstones. While these were installed at the cost of Nottingham County Council, as opposed to the Commission, it is highly likely that such situations may have caused further confusion relating to the Commission's work and thus set a precedent for all civilian war dead to be commemorated in this way. Indeed, the listing of civilian war dead under the urban district they are buried in on the Commission's website often causes confusion among the public, and further creates barriers to understanding the scope of the Commission's work in the United Kingdom.

Fig. 7: The plot of civilian war dead killed during the Nottingham Blitz at Nottingham Southern Cemetery (also known locally as Wilford Hill Cemetery) in Nottinghamshire. Photograph: Author's Own.

The confusion surrounding exactly who was entitled to a war grave were among the many difficult conversations that the Commission had to consider when undertaking its work, and the policies made

364 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/236 (WG1831/178), 236th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 30th April 1941, p. 2.
365 Commonwealth War Graves Commission, 'Son Makes 17,000 Mile Pilgrimage to See Father's Name Added to CWGC War Memorial,' *CWGC*, 2018. Available at: https://www.cwgc.org/our-work/news/son-makes-17-000-mile-pilgrimage-to-see-father-s-name-added-to-cwgc-war-memorial/ [Accessed 18th November 2020].

by the organisation were often not fully appreciated among the bereaved. Indeed, in slightly similar ways to the experiences felt by those with relatives buried overseas, it can be seen that those enquiring into these policies often felt that their autonomy over how their loved one should be remembered and the identity of that individual as a veteran was being dictated by the state. Perhaps it is these situations, rather than the actual war graves found in the United Kingdom, that enabled common ground to be established among the bereaved regardless of where a particular casualty was buried; among all three groups, the war dead had to experience some form of "second-class death" or commemoration and therefore other forms of memorialisation had to be utilised. As will be shown in the final section of this chapter, the solution to these issues for many communities was to create a public space for mourning and remembrance with a war memorial at the centre of it.

Spatial Influence and The Commission's Relationship with the War Memorials Movement in Britain

It cannot be ignored that the Commission's work is not the only example of commemoration in the United Kingdom and it is clear that, for the most part, its work in the British Isles took on a secondary role in remembrance rites. War memorials have often been the focus of research into First World War memory and are largely the focal point of remembrance practices. Indeed, much of the historiography surrounding the culture and memory of the First World War has tended to concentrate on the variety of war memorials that are present within local villages, towns and cities. While very few permanent war memorials had been built by November 1919, their impact has arguably surpassed the expectations of their longevity. Indeed, from a United Kingdom perspective war memorials have tended to become the primary location for remembrance in a local community, perhaps because they remember all those lost from that area as opposed to individuals buried nearby.

The creation of permanent war memorials, work which largely began during the early 1920s, provided both a central focus for grief and bereavement locally and elicited a range of emotional responses. According to the research conducted by Alex King, war memorials have the ability to arouse a range of thoughts and feelings from the bereaved, from 'pious devotion to outright hostility.'[366] In spite of the slow start to the memorialisation movement, within a matter of years almost every town, city and village across Britain had its own war memorial that was designed to be a place to express collective grief.[367] However, while popular memory has seen this as a space that was able to replace the individual graves of the war dead,[368] this was not the purpose it was used for by everyone. The families of those from the United Kingdom who had died on British soil had the option of burying

366 King, *Memorials of the Great War*, p. 1.
367 Arnold, *Necropolis*, p. 252.
368 Ibid.

their loved one in a location close to their families, and in many cases their graves were marked by civilianised private memorials within the family plot. While this decision often pre-dated the Commission's involvement with war graves found in Britain, their impact cannot be omitted from the wider discussion of British remembrance practices. Indeed, perhaps it is because this experience challenged the broader narrative of some 'foreign field that is for ever England' being the only example of corporeal commemoration, that the presence of war graves across the United Kingdom is often absent from the wider narrative of remembrance in Britain. [369]

As mentioned in the literature review, Stefan Goebel has argued that there are three dimensions to studying war memorials: their iconography, their epigraphy and their ceremonial role.[370] Research into this area of historiography has shown that the majority of the twentieth century war memorials were erected in response to the First World War, which highlights both a shift in how people chose to remember their dead and how impactful the Great War was to broader commemorative practices. Indeed, Samuel Walls has estimated that 74.5% of all twentieth century war memorials have a connection to the First World War, if civilian casualties are included. Walls further contended that the memorials to the First World War 'set a commemorative pattern' that was replicated for subsequent situations requiring acts of remembrance as part of the grieving process.[371] Thus, as has been shown in earlier discussions of grief and bereavement in this period, the First World War can be seen to be marked as a key turning point in how the British public chose to mourn and remember their lost relatives.

The public organisation of these personal and private acts of grief through the erection of war memorials meant that mass death, and therefore futility, became associated with the British public's memory of the First World War.[372] As has been shown in the literature review portion of this thesis, the futility rhetoric gained significant popularity in the mid-twentieth century and has arguably perpetuated the popular memory of the conflict. Local war memorials highlighted the sheer number of people lost through the inclusion of their names on these monuments, and the impact of the First World War could not be ignored as a result. Moreover, the fact that it was largely a volunteer force that served from the British Empire further compounded this viewpoint of futility; those who had signed up, particularly prior to the enforcement of conscription in 1916, were seen to have almost a mythological heroic memory. When the Second World War began, and thus the Great War was

369 Rupert Brooke, 'The Soldier.' *Poetry Foundation.* Available at: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/13076/the-soldier [Accessed 9th March 2021].
370 Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory*, p. 23.
371 Samuel Walls, '"Lest We Forget": The Spatial Dynamics of the Church and Churchyard as Commemorative Spaces for the War Dead in the Twentieth Century,' *Mortality*, 16 (2011), p. 132.
372 Emma Hanna, *The Great War on the Small Screen: Representing the First World War in Contemporary Britain* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), p. 7.

relegated from the "war to end wars" to the "First" of the world wars, the moral reasons behind the First World War were further challenged.

War memorials have become a key part of many local landscapes as well as Britain's national memory; however, they tend to be largely ignored outside of Remembrance Sunday and other key anniversaries.[373] Indeed, Elizabeth Hallam and Jenny Hockey have maintained that these memorials may become virtually invisible as a result of habitual, indirect viewing and thus these memorials become marginal in terms of the longer-term processes of memory maintenance when compared to other elements of Remembrance rites.[374] Therefore, while war memorials are central to acts of remembrance within the modern memory of the First World War, they also largely take on a secondary role in day to day commemoration. This mirrors the wider attitudes seen towards grief and bereavement; often families will visit the graves of loved ones on key anniversaries, such as birthdays, but will not necessarily visit them on a daily basis once they have moved through their initial grief.

The fact that very few permanent war memorials had been built by November 1919 is not surprising, as communities often wanted to ensure that their war memorials were representative of the population as a whole and appropriate for the war dead. Most of those that had been built prior to the cessation of hostilities were created within smaller communities and were simpler in design, especially as the larger memorials synonymous with localised remembrance required more planning. Adrian Gregory has argued that there was an additional factor in the delay of war memorials initially being erected: the various disputes surrounding location of the memorial within a locality. The place within which the memorial was situated was fundamental to the bereaved and the wider community, and a prominent location within the centre of the town or village was often desired by memorial committees. There was, however, a conflict in terms of the locale as the choice of where to assemble a war memorial was usually between the civic centre or adjacent to a place of worship.[375] The tension between the civic versus religious hubs of a community in terms of the society's hierarchy is an important point to note; while there was a decline in organised religion during this period, places of worship were often near to the graves of war dead and a fundamental part of that area's history.

The range of memorial types in existence have received their own extensive analysis in other theses and academic work and are thus not the focus of this particular thesis. However, it is important to highlight examples when considering wider questions about remembrance and acknowledging the omissions within these rituals. There are estimated to be more than 100,000 items that can be

373 Anne Christine Brook, 'God, Grief and Community: Commemoration of the Great War in Huddersfield, c. 1914-1929' (PhD Thesis, University of Leeds, 2009, p. 1.
374 Elizabeth Hallam and Jenny Hockey, 'Remembering as Cultural Process' in Antonius CGM Robben (Ed.), *A Companion to the Anthropology of Death* (New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, 2018), p. 10.
375 Gregory, *The Silence of Memory*, p. 16.

considered to be war memorials in the United Kingdom, and they vary in both design and purpose. War memorials can be static memorials, such as a cross, obelisks and statues, or so-called "living" memorials, such as gardens and benches. Furthermore, their purpose can differ drastically, depending on their purpose: they can be designed to commemorate individuals, school alumni, regiments, or local communities.[376] In some cases, war memorials include all those who served from the community as opposed to those who fell during a particular conflict, which means there are some war memorials with individuals not included in the Commission's records. Again, the how the inclusion or omission of names on war memorials was decided is outside of the scope of this thesis, but the topic has received extensive attention in the historiography of First World War commemoration since the latter half of the twentieth century.

Most war memorials reflect traditional forms of architecture, such as crosses or statues, and these features were generally guided by local choices and used regional materials and labour.[377] Obelisks and wall tablets were frequently used as war memorials, as they were traditionally found in funerary monuments from previous eras; obelisks in particular were popular due to their connections to the Classical period. Conventional war memorials that had begun to appear since the nineteenth century tended to be created in Classic or Gothic styles,[378] and could thus connect the dead of this modern conflict to heroes of earlier ages.[379] Much of the symbolism associated with the war memorials connected the Great War to earlier major battles that had been mythologised among the public, such as the Crusades and Classical conflicts that made up myth and legends told in childhood. By linking the present battles to earlier legendary conflicts, the bereaved could be comforted by the fact that their loved ones had fallen into a familiar pattern of heroic acts and fighting for the "greater good."

However, not all memorials followed this type of commemoration, and could often omit religious or classical symbolism altogether. One of the most famous examples of this is Käthe Kollwitz's 'The Parents,' which depicts two individuals experiencing extreme grief. Jay Winter has emphasised the importance of this monument in challenging the popular beliefs of memorialisation in the First World War: it is striking because it does not include traditional Christian iconography, such as angels signs of the Passion or mourners. In his view, there is nothing in this sculpture beyond the 'horizontality of death.'[380] This therefore emphasises the personal grief that was often presented by monuments outside of the main, locally-raised monuments containing the names of the dead affiliated to that community

376 Olivia Smith, 'The Immortal Dead,' *Salient Points*, 1 (2020), p. 31.
377 Ian F.W. Beckett, *The Great War 1914-1918* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 610-11.
378 King, *Memorials of the Great* War, p. 1.
379 Ibid., p. 131.
380 Jay Winter, *War Beyond Words: Languages of Remembrance from the Great War to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 147.

and brings in wider discussion about the range of monuments being created in the immediate aftermath of the First World War.

There was one element that was often shied away from when it came to the memorials to the First World War: the presence of a recumbent deceased body. There was considerable resistance among memorial committees towards the idea of showing any form of dead body, as it was presumed that this may be a potentially traumatising experience for the bereaved. [381] However, it has been seen by historians that war memorials representing an anatomically whole human could provide the grieving families with a both literal and metaphorical replacement for the absent and incomplete bodies of the fallen that they were mourning.[382] One of the most famous war memorials that includes a stone representation of a deceased individual is the Royal Artillery Memorial at Hyde Park Corner in London, in which architects Lionel Pearson and Charles Sargeant Jagger included a recumbent corpse. However, the actual figure is largely obscured from view, with the figure being covered by their greatcoat and a helmet laid on top of the remains. In spite of the lack of an obvious display of the form in which the deceased would have likely appeared, the memorial was controversial when it was unveiled; nonetheless, the choice by Pearson and Sargeant Jagger to include this feature into their design highlights that it was not a universal view among the British public that the realities of war should be shied away from.

Fig. 8: Thrumpton War Memorial in Nottinghamshire is a rare example of a statue resembling a corpse lying in state being included in a war memorial. Image courtesy of Andrew Kelleher.

381 Ibid., p. 135.
382 Stefan Goebel, 'Re-membered and Re-mobilised: The "Sleeping Dead" in Interwar Germany and Britain,' *Journal of Contemporary History*, 39 (2004), p. 490.

Contrary to the reticence felt towards incorporating sculpted corporeal bodies into war memorials, it must be acknowledged that war cemeteries themselves are war memorials in their own right. They were sanctified in the same way as civic war memorials, and George Mosse has argued that the basic design of the British Empire's war cemeteries enabled the link between the fallen and the Christian sacrifice, with its hope of resurrection, to be brought together.[383] This emphasises the consistent connection between the popular, Victorian attitudes of the symbolism associated with death and mourning, and the connections that the communities included between religion and the mass death experienced. Indeed, even as secularism and spiritualism were increasing in popularity and interest in participating in organised religion was decreasing, these symbols from the past enabled the bereaved to connect their loss with the wider heroism and Biblical stories learned over the centuries.

Conventional war memorials that were less controversial than the Royal Artillery Memorial were not the only option for appropriately remembering lost loved ones during this period. Utilitarian or "living" memorials were also a popular option. According to George Mosse, in the immediate aftermath of the First World War attempts were made for ceremonies or sporting events to be held around a number of local war memorials across Britain in order to transform these sites of memory from 'dead to living memorials.'[384] While this could be based around wider events for remembrance, such as memorial sporting events to remember lost sports people, there was a movement to make memorials useful to the local community in addition to being a place for quiet reflection and remembrance. These can include physical sites, such as bus shelters or recreational grounds, to abstract memorials such as commemorative funds. Families of the bereaved often took on the role of beneficiaries of these commemorative schemes; scholarships were provided for children of the dead, and relief funds were made available in some places for the dependents of war dead, disabled survivors of the war and ex-servicemen who had other difficulties.[385] They were designed to enable the community to have the facilities they needed, such as medical or educational sites, in addition to providing a space to ensure that the sacrifice of the dead was not forgotten.[386]

In spite of their usefulness within the local community, many members of the public were not convinced that utilitarian memorials were the appropriate way to commemorate the dead. For example, the journalist Philip Gibbs was an advocate of monumental war memorials as he believed that they would remind people of the horrors faced in conflict and 'teach them to avoid such stupidity in future.'[387] Through discussions such as the argument outlined by Gibbs, it is apparent that an additional role of First World War memorials was to ensure that the situations experienced during the

383 Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, p. 94.
384 Ibid., p. 110.
385 King, *Memorials of the Great War*, p. 68.
386 Ibid., p. 2 and p. 68.
387 Ibid., p. 7.

conflict were never repeated. As a side effect of these views, the dead were politicised further than they had been elsewhere and a narrative that the war was futile was pushed in order to encourage young people to avoid making the same "mistakes" as their predecessors. As the grief school of the historiography of the First World War suggests, reflections of the traumas of 1914-1918 through war memorials provided a symbolic focus of bereavement and functioned as substitutes for graves.[388] This meant that there was a greater emphasis on ensuring that these monuments remembered the dead appropriately and reassured families that they would never be forced to experience this loss again.

Another form of war memorial was that of so-called "Thankful" villages. These are places in the United Kingdom that did not experience any losses from their local community during the First World War, with those few places that also did not lose anyone from the Second World War being considered "Doubly Thankful." The writer Arthur Mee, who coined the phrase "Thankful Villages" in the 1930s, identified 32 places who fulfilled this criterion, but this has since been revised to 52. Of these villages, 14 can be considered as "Doubly Thankful."[389] Whilst it may be expected that these sites would not have memorials to remember their dead, in recent years some of these villages have decided to place a memorial in a prominent location, possibly where they would have erected a war memorial to the dead from that area, to promote the fact that they did not lose anyone from their local community.

Fig. 9: Wysall in Nottinghamshire, which is a "Thankful Village." Photograph: Author's Own.

388 Stefan Goebel, 'Re-membered and Re-mobilised: The "Sleeping Dead" in Interwar Germany and Britain,' *Journal of Contemporary History*, 39 (2004), p. 487.
389 Jon Kelly, 'Thankful Villages: The Places Where Everyone Came Back from the Wars,' *BBC*, 2011. Available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-15671943 [Accessed 7th April 2020].

The primary purpose of a war memorial is to honour the dead, but the aim of these designs did not dictate the style or structure it should be created in; it was far more important that the reaction to these memorials from the local community was measured and appropriate. According to Sam Edwards, war memorials are political shrines that have tended to 'encode the values and ideals of the modern nation state,' such as the honour, glory, duty and patriotism that contemporary poets such as Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon critiqued.[390] The politicisation of war memorials is a common discussion point among historians researching the memory of the two World Wars, and the fact that war memorials serve as both sites at which to focus on individual loss and a place filled with collective representations and national aspirations enabled the mythologisation and politicisation of these war memorials to occur. [391] Dan Todman has highlighted that many children in the generations since the First World War continue to receive ambivalent messages about the conflict: on the one hand, they learn that it was a terrible event that touched the lives of many, whilst on the other hand they are told it was a glorious struggle involving heroism and adventure.[392] It is this confusing narrative that has arguably kept war memorials relevant in the British public's consciousness, and may explain why Commission sites in Britain that did not provide an opportunity to match this rhetoric did not receive the same degree of attention.

In spite of these permanent war memorials being created throughout the 1920s, surprisingly few were unveiled on 11th November.[393] However, the significance of war memorials as a regional shrine after their erection cannot be ignored. This further supports the view that war memorials encompassed the experiences of loss, and thus the ritual acts and ceremonies associated with these places, and established them as the foci of remembrance in Britain.[394] Indeed, unlike the smaller plots that dominate the types of war graves found across the United Kingdom, war memorials were a central location to remember all who had died within a local community; therefore, people could be united in their grief while being connected with bereaved individuals in public acts of mourning that were popular during this period.

War memorials should not be seen as completely separate to the Commission's work, in spite of their uniqueness. The Cross of Sacrifice was a popular war memorial design and was often copied or repurposed by local communities. According to Richard A Fellows, the design of the Cross of Sacrifice was pirated by stonemasons who produced their own versions, and they often copied the

390 Sam Edwards, 'Sacred Shrines of the Secular Age: War Memorials and Landscape in the Twentieth Century and Beyond' in Frank Jacob and Kenneth Pearl (eds.), *War and Memorials: The Age of Nationalism and the Great War* (Leiden: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, 2019), p. 46.
391 Ibid.
392 Dan Todman, *Myth and Memory*, p. 23.
393 Gregory, *The Silence of Memory*, p. 26.
394 Hanna, *The Great War on the Small Screen*, p. 7.

features from photographs or pre-existing examples.[395] Philip Longworth, in his landmark work on the history of the Commission produced by the organisation in the 1960s, estimated that some 323 Crosses of Sacrifice were the focal point for local Armistice Day services, and the standards set by the Commission through these key features provided the inspiration for many local war memorials and private headstones.[396] While the Commission had a degree of autonomy over its work being copied, there are many examples of private memorials being nearly identical to a standard Commission headstone; in many cases, these are for veterans who died years later and who wished to be commemorated in a similar way to their lost comrades.

Fig. 10: Cranwell (St Andrew's) Churchyard in Lincolnshire shows a range of Private Memorials that are designed to resemble the standard Commission headstone, or to include elements of one. Photograph: Author's Own.

The Commission's work more generally has received more attention in recent years. While battlefield tourism never disappeared completely, the last two decades have seen a tremendous growth pilgrimages to these sites. Furthermore, the building of war memorials and writing about them has increased exponentially.[397] As the last veterans of the conflict passed away and the creation of the internet enabled more people to engage in genealogy, it seems to have been deemed incredibly important for the modern public to ensure the memory of the First World War lives on through the presence of war memorials and pilgrimages. The importance of remembering and the rituals associated with it can largely be traced to Victorian attitudes towards death. Indeed, the traditional Victorian rites discussed in the introduction to this thesis, such as deathbed scenes, were incredibly

395 Fellows, *Sir Reginald Blomfield,* p. 106.
396 Longworth, *The Unending Vigil*, p. 124.
397 Michael Rowlands, 'Remembering to Forget: Sublimation as Sacrifice in War Memorials' in Rowlands in Adrian Forty and Susanne Kuchler (eds), *The Art of Forgetting* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2001), p. 129.

important in ensuring a so-called "good death" for a relative. When the context required for a "good death" to occur was impossible, new methods were required to commemorate the dead in order to reassure the bereaved that their loved ones had not suffered a wholly "bad death." Among those rituals created to resolve this anxiety include the ceremonies at the Cenotaph and the erection of local civic war memorials.[398] Indeed, one of the most famous examples of rituals of this nature are those that surround the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior.

In addition to being one of the most iconic war memorials for the British Empire dead, the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior holds arguably the most famous war graves casualty cared for by the Commission in Britain, who are legally responsible for the Warrior's remains. The Unknown Warrior was buried at Westminster Abbey in 1920, after a days of state ceremony and the ritualisation of his repatriation that followed patterns usually reserved for Royalty and the social elite. His corporeal remains had been selected from a few casualties taken from each of the main British battlefields that dominated popular memory of the First World War, and the chosen corpse was then brought back to the United Kingdom on HMS *Verdun*. Upon its arrival in Britain, the coffin was transported into London Victoria Station via a train from Dover. His tomb was filled with 100 sandbags of battlefield soil, with his coffin draped with a Union Flag flown at Ypres and a posy of flowers cut from the Ypres battlefields being laid in the tomb.[399] When he was buried in 1920, special provisions were made for bereaved women to attend the service, with mothers taking priority over widows at the ceremony.[400] All of the symbolism and ceremony that was included in this ritual cannot be overstated, and much discussion about the motifs included in the transportation and interment of the Unknown Warrior has been had among historians.

The Tomb of the Unknown Warrior is a fascinating grave which plays a fundamental part in British acts of Remembrance. Indeed, Adrian Gregory has argued that the tomb provided a surrogate body for those who could not hope to ever see the grave of their lost loved one, which emphasises how far-reaching the impact of this grave was.[401] This is supported by contemporary reactions, as within the first week following his burial over one million people queued up to visit the Unknown Warrior's grave in Westminster Abbey.[402] The Tomb of the Unknown Warrior was the perfect companion to the Cenotaph, which was unveiled in its permanent form on the same day as the Unknown Warrior's

398 Pat Jalland, 'Bereavement and Mourning (Great Britain),' *1914-1918 Online*, 2014. Available at: https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/bereavement_and_mourning_great_britain?version=1.0 [Accessed 17th November 2019], p. 7.
399 Mark Connelly and Stefan Goebel, *Ypres*, Great Battles (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 67.
400 Michael Roper, *The Secret Battle: Emotional Survival in the Great War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), p. 221.
401 Gregory, *The Silence of Memory*, p. 23.
402 National Army Museum, 'The Mysterious Story of the Unknown Warrior,' *National Army Museum*, 2020. Available at: https://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/unknown-warrior-mystery-solved [Accessed 21st December 2020].

burial. The Cenotaph was an abstract war memorial that had originally been designed to be temporary but has become one of the most famous examples of a British war memorial. The word "cenotaph" comes from the Greek word for "empty tomb," and the Cenotaph was designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens to represent the numerous metaphorical empty tombs that families were experiencing. However, where the Cenotaph could not fulfil the void for a physical set of remains that the public could project their grief upon, the Unknown Warrior could.[403] Indeed, as reasoned by Peter Ross in his discussion of celebrity graves, the balancing of private and public becomes even more of a delicate situation to manage once an individual passes away and can no longer police their own preferred boundaries.[404] While Ross' argument was particularly focused on the graves of individuals who have achieved fame in the modern world as opposed to ordinary people who had died in the First World War, his argument can be extended to the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior and some of the graves cared for by the Commission that are more well-visited.[405] Indeed, for the casualties commemorated overseas in particular it is clear that their memorialisation is principally based on what was deemed suitable by the Commission, and the personal wishes of the individual casualties could not be explored or followed in the same way that these viewpoints could be enacted by families with loved ones buried in Britain.

This can be extended to the stories of repatriations, both legal and illegal. Indeed, as has been discussed in a previous chapter some casualties were repatriated either prior to the repatriation ban in 1915 or illicitly after it was enforced by those with the power and influence to do so. However, it should not be ignored that those who died on British soil were returned to their next of kin, who could therefore commemorate them in a way that best suited their own needs and viewpoints. The fact that this could happen legitimately and on such a large scale again challenged the impact of the Commission's work in Britain, as the proximity of the bereaved arguably gave them more autonomy over their loved one's remains in both a moral and legal sense.

As has been shown in this section, war memorials dominate the popular memory of the First World War in Britain, as they often highlight the names of those lost within a community. Unlike Commission sites found overseas, which often contain large numbers of casualties, the singular or scattered graves that are commonplace in churchyards and cemeteries across Britain do not provide an alternative place to publicly participate in group rituals of Remembrance. It is therefore likely that this lack of connection to the mass losses experienced by the British Empire Forces which causes the sites of memory found in Britain to be largely overlooked by both academic and public history circles.

403 Gregory, *The Silence of Memory*, p. 25.
404 Peter Ross, *A Tomb with a View: The Stories and Glories of Graveyards* (London: Headline Publishing Group, 2020), p. 112.
405 Notable burials can include Victoria Cross recipients, those from affluent families, and those who were famous through family or personal history.

Moreover, the lack of connections between local communities researching broader sites outside of a particular area may enable a feeling of uniqueness among those who know there are war graves locally; while the cemeteries and churchyards found nearby may hold unique situations and adaptations by the Commission, the scale of the organisation's work in the United Kingdom is significant enough to warrant its own place within the history of Britain's commemoration of its war dead.

To conclude this chapter, it is clear that numerous additional factors could cloud or limit the impact of the Commission's work in Britain among the public, and it was largely the complications during its early years that meant that the war dead buried closer to home could not experience similar levels of pilgrimages to those overseas. The fact that these locations were often kept separate from commemorative practices more generally meant that a divide between state-sponsored, public acts of grief and private moments of mourning could occur and more civilianised approaches to the war dead in the United Kingdom could be found. Moreover, it appears that there was a differentiation between the purposes of war memorials versus local war graves in the same way: while war memorials were designed to enable all members of the community to mourn its dead, the individuality of a grave nearby meant that private moments of reflection could also occur. It is this differentiation that therefore perpetuated the war dead in Britain to be omitted from the popular memory of the First World War, and for the public to experience a different response to these sites of memory.

Chapter Four: Acts of Diplomacy: Foreign Nationalities Commemorated by the Commission in the United Kingdom

Contrary to popular perceptions of the Commission's work the commemorative task that the organisation was undertaking, both in the United Kingdom and overseas, was not limited to the war dead of the British Empire; another aspect for the Commission to contemplate related to ownership of the graves of foreign nationals who had died on British soil. From Belgians to Russians, a range of nationalities are represented in the graves of foreign nationals buried in Britain. In this chapter, the case of German war graves in Britain will be utilised to highlight the ways in which the Commission worked with international powers and similar organisations to create sites of memory for all war dead. Through this case study it will be emphasised that, while the Commission for the most part interacted with international families in a similar way to those at home, it is clear that these individuals often had even more autonomy than British families. This is due to the fact that their requests were often supported by their government's intervention, and thus had significantly more authority.

Formulating a Landscape of the Dead: International War Dead Organisations

Prior to an in-depth discussion of the interactions between the Commission and the bereaved, it is important to highlight the similarities and differences between commemorative practices across the combatant nations. For many of the combatant countries, attitudes towards death and bereavement were generally similar but there are clear differences in the ways in which they chose to organise the memorialisation of their war dead. This particular section will focus on two of the combatant countries: France, Germany and America. The three nations chosen to analyse for this section were selected due to their direct connections with the Commission's work from the outset; they inspired the work of the Commission as well as being influenced by it, and therefore provide vital contextual clues for those studying the work of the Commission in its early years.

Across the combatant nations, war memorials to honour the Great War dead were purposefully established in civic rather than religious spaces. Although the three states highlighted in this chapter arguably had differing views regarding precisely how to commemorate their war dead, and which religious practices influenced these choices, the impact of this decision was profound. As Sam Edwards has argued, the dedication of 'a symbolic tomb' that these memorials embodied enacted a claim and conversion of this spatial landscape within a community. Through this land being appropriated, it created a 'special' space that was sanctified the secular and whose sacredness was

reinforced by the ritual activity that surrounded it.[406] Furthermore, the qualitative differences of these sites of memory was created through the establishment of two particular memorial forms: battlefield trophies erected by units of the Allied armies, and the carefully-planned commemorative programmes initiated by organisations like the Commission.[407]

However, there were some fundamental differences between the commemorations that occurred in combatant nations, with the most well-known being the policies of repatriation. While Britain enacted a strict non-repatriation policy from 1915, France, Germany and America theoretically still allowed the return of its war dead home. This disparity created significant variations in commemorative practices across these nations, and caused significant challenges to the Commission in its own work. Indeed, the policies of repatriating war dead by these nations were used by the Commission's opponents to challenge the policy of non-repatriation for hygiene reasons, as the distances being travelled by the war dead of other combatant nations directly challenged these notions. These policies were largely due to promises made by governments either prior to entering the First World War or during the early days of their nation's involvement in the conflict, and in order to keep the public on side those in power needed to uphold this decision.

The most commonly-cited example of this can be seen in the commemoration of twentieth century war dead by the United States. From the outset of their active involvement in the conflict in 1917, the United States' Secretary of War Newton D. Baker publicly pledged to the nation that the government would ensure a home burial for all who died overseas in its service, should they wish to.[408] While this may have seemed a relatively straightforward approach by the government, the consequence of this statement was the massive and highly-controversial repatriation of American war dead from the battlefields to the United States during the immediate aftermath of the conflict. The confirmed repatriation of American war dead completely undermined the British government, and later the Commission's, approach of non-repatriation as it emphasised that there were potentially ways of returning the dead back to the bereaved without issues relating to hygiene and logistical issues; moreover, it created an established a 'resolute pact' and expectation between the American bereaved and the government.[409] It cannot be ignored that a large reason why this mass repatriation was possible is due to advancements in death aftercare, particularly regarding preservation of the corpse. In the United States, embalming was an increasingly popular practice as part of death rituals, and in a

406 Sam Edwards, 'Sacred Shrines of the Secular Age: War Memorials and Landscape in the Twentieth Century and Beyond' in Frank Jacob and Kenneth Pearl (eds.), *War and Memorials: The Age of Nationalism and the Great War* (Leiden: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, 2019), p. 54.
407 Ibid., p. 50.
408 Lisa M. Budreau, *Bodies of War: World War I and the Politics of Commemoration in America, 1919-1933* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), p. 21.
409 Ibid., p. 36.

time of war where remains could be increasingly disfigured the process of embalming demonstrated honour, eased the grief of the living and promised a way of maintaining an identity. This process was incredibly costly; thus, there was an added benefit to undertakers and funeral parlours to offer the service for a hefty profit.[410]

The reality of repatriating American war dead was more complicated than Newton D. Baker probably imagined, particularly within the chaos of postwar Europe. In 1919, the Ministry of the Interior for France passed a decree forbidding all exhumations and corporeal transportations from its soil for three years, and the consolidation of isolated graves into concentrated locations often meant that a body was exhumed several times before being transported home.[411] Once the repatriation of the dead was permitted, there was then the logistical dilemma and requirements of huge numbers of transport means, coffins and labour; nevertheless, by April 1921 more than 14,800 bodies had been returned to the United States.[412] However, for those wishing to have their loved ones remain in the country they were killed in there were limited options: next of kin were not given the option of leaving bodies in their original grave, and the United States government were not creating agreements with countries where there were American war dead remaining.[413] For example, Lisa M. Budreau has highlighted a 1920 letter from the British treasury to Sir Fabian Ware regarding policy guidance about land and maintenance of American graves in Britain where the official emphasised that, given the Commission were caring for British war dead overseas, it was difficult to see why the United Kingdom should offer the upkeep of Allied graves in the United Kingdom.[414]

It was perhaps through these fears that the creation of the American Battlefield Monuments Commission (ABMC) occurred in 1923. In the midst of fears among the American public that the nation's contribution to the Great War would be overlooked by the allies, there was a growing belief that the War Department should retain control of war memory and the national cemeteries being created or added to on United States' soil.[415] However, perhaps due to the precedent set by the Commission, there was a move by the United States to create the ABMC, with President Harding signing a bill that created the organisation in March 1923.[416] Unlike the Commission, the ABMC was never designed to be a permanent body and, in a similar vein to the experience of the Volksbund discussed later in this chapter, they often had control of the cemeteries and memorials taken over. In

410 Ibid., p. 29.
411 Ibid., pp. 39 and 53.
412 Ibid., pp. 77-8.
413 Ibid., p. 117.
414 Ibid., p. 119.
415 Ibid., p. 109.
416 Ibid., p. 111.

1933, their work was transferred into the control of the Quartermaster Corps, but one year later an executive order returned the control back to the ABMC.[417]

When visiting an ABMC-maintained site today, the attention to detail, manicured lawns and cruciform marble headstones are to be expected, and there is often a comparison between these and the Commission sites. This is especially true at Brookwood Military Cemetery in Surrey, where the American cemetery now lies between the First and Second (sometimes known as Canadian) Commission-owned plots. It is difficult to avoid such comparisons, especially in environments where the sites lay in close proximity; however, it cannot be ignored that budgets and differing approaches to commemoration can cause these unique results.

Similarly to the United States, France also allowed the return of its war dead's remains to the bereaved; while not strictly a repatriation, given they had often died in France and were thus theoretically "home," to transport them across country would still be a phenomenal task. In the summer of 1920, the French government announced that it would begin returning remains to families that requested this, but officials such as André Maginot publicly expressed personal views that the dead should be buried with their comrades on the battlefields. The French government attempted to incentivise families to consider leaving the war dead where they fell by offering perpetual care and a free annual visit to the graves for parents, widows and children;[418] it is unclear how many people chose this option because of this promise.

In order to undertake this work, two weeks after the Armistice the French government passed a decree that transformed the burial services attach to each of the French army corps into a semi-autonomous Office des Sépultures Militaires within the Ministry of War. Over the next two years, the military replaced mass graves with individual tombs and attempted to regroup them into distinct military cemeteries similar to those found for the British Empire's war dead.[419] However, the French burial service remained chronically understaffed and ill-equipped to cope with the disorder of warfare, especially the isolated graves and fragmentary unidentifiable remains across the former warzone.[420] Rather than utilising the methods used by the Commission for its unidentifiable war dead, the French opted to create ossuaries near to key locations. The first of these was at Verdun, where proposals for an ossuary were approved in March 1921.[421]

417 Ibid., p. 161.
418 Daniel Sherman, *The Construction of Memory in Interwar France* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 77.
419 Ibid., p. 74.
420 Ibid.
421 Antoine Prost, 'Verdun' in Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory*, Volume 3: Symbols (Chichester: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 385.

Construction of the ossuary at Douaumont took twelve years, and cost fifteen million francs.[422] In spite of the significant cost of the site, only one million francs was contributed by the state with the remainder being raised among the publicly; this was largely due to the mythological memory of Verdun among the French public. Ossuaries like the one at Douaumont were given the status of hallowed ground, with the public organising processions and pilgrimages to the site to honour all of their nations war dead, including those whose only corporeal remains were fragmented and unidentifiable. This connected with the larger Catholic rituals associated with bereavement, such as visiting the dead on All Saints' Day in early November. The proximity between Armistice Day and All Saints' Day led to the connection between how commemoration was undertaken in France; like in Britain, many individuals placed flowers or wreaths on war memorials to honour the dead.[423] Moreover, in some towns where a cemetery lay nearby, processions relating to Armistice Day often firstly stopped at a cemetery and flowers were laid on the grave of every service personnel buried there.[424] This connection to religious rituals and commemoration of the conflict enabled such spaces to become hallowed ground, and to further connect the public with its localised war dead.

As has been seen in this section, the connection between the Commission and other combatant nations was of vital importance, as it enabled the organisation and its counterparts to work together to create sites of memory. However, it cannot be ignored that respect for the war dead was passed into international war in the aftermath of the First World War under the Versailles Peace Treaty, there was an agreement to respect and maintain war graves within the territories of the Signatory Powers; this included an obligation to maintain graves between the Allies as well as their enemies.[425] Thus, the Commission had to take into account the graves of former enemies as well as other nationalities buried in the United Kingdom that could be considered as war casualties. Although the commemoration of all foreign nationals by the Commission is outside of this thesis' remit, it provides interesting introductory comparisons. Indeed, when allowing for the maintenance of German graves in the United Kingdom, the Commission assumed a similar degree of responsibility as it had over the British graves. As a consequence of these agreements, the Commission duty-bound to provide a

422 Ibid., pp. 387-8.
423 Antoine Prost, 'Monuments to the Dead' in Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory*, Volume 2: Traditions (Chichester: Columbia University Press, 1997), p. 319.
424 Ibid.
425 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/130 (WG1831/72), 130th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 14th May 1930, p. 9; Article 225 of the Versailles Treaty. A copy of this can be found at Yale Law School Lillian Goldman Law Library, 'The Versailles Treaty June 28, 1919: Part VI,' *Yale Law School Lillian Goldman Law Library*, 2008. Available at: https://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/partvi.asp [Accessed 27th September 2022].

financial contribution to the relevant Cemetery Authorities or Incumbents to look after the graves of both British and German casualties to the same standard.[426]

In spite of the regulations outlined in the Versailles Treaty, no real thought had been given to how the cost of maintaining the enemy dead's graves would be enacted. Thus, the Commission had to create its own policies with the governments concerned. In the tax year of 1921-22, negotiations were being made with the German government regarding the interpretation of clauses in the Treaty of Versailles that related to burying and caring for the dead. At the time, the Commission decided to place the cost of maintaining the graves of former enemies against its own funds, thus creating a quick resolution to this question. While this was seen initially as temporary, it was clearly implied in the Commission's Annual Report that it was highly likely to be a permanent fixture in the organisation's work.[427]

There are almost 40,700 graves for foreign nationals commemorated in Commission sites across the world, which include the service personnel of allies and enemy combatants alike. This work is undertaken as part of the broader agency work completed by the organisation, with reciprocal arrangements often being made with the appropriate government or body in charge with that country's commemoration. The headstones of these individuals look different to those found to mark the grave of the British Empire war dead, and the designs of these headstones were created through liaising with the appropriate group to ensure that the marker reflected that country's wishes.

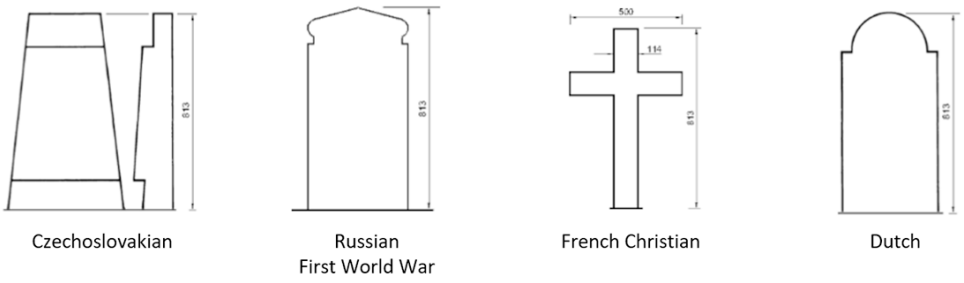

Fig. 11: Examples of some of the different types of headstone utilised by the Commission to mark the graves of foreign nationals. Image courtesy of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.[428]

The reciprocal arrangements that the Commission cultivated with international organisations and governments largely follow the same structure, although the types of groups being worked with varied depending on the policies of that particular nation. The Commission was the first organisation to

426 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/144 (WG1831/86), 144th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 7th October 1931, p. 29.
427 CWGC, CWGC/2/1/ADD.6.2.3 (ADD 6/2/3), Annual Report of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 1921-1922, 1922, p. 4.
428 Commonwealth War Graves Commission, 'What Kind of Grave Headstone will I see?,' *CWGC*, 2022. Available at: https://www.cwgc.org/visit-us/visiting-a-cwgc-site/cwgc-headstones/ [Accessed 3rd August 2022].

undertake this type of work on a global scale, and thus when it first begun its task it was often liaising exclusively with governments. Over time, this changed as similar organisations began to be created elsewhere in the world and thus the Commission had to adapt to working with these groups. While some countries, such as Russia, continue to place the responsibility for its war dead within a government department, there are a number of organisations that are similar to the Commission that operate internationally today. These include the Oorlogsgravenstichting (OGS) for Dutch war dead, the American Battle Monuments Commission (AMBC) for Americans, the Office National des Anciens Combattants (ONAC) commemorating French war dead and the Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge (Volksbund or, more recently, VDK) being more recently tasked with honouring the memory of German war dead.

Due to such high numbers of organisations being represented within the category of foreign national organisations, the relationship between the Volksbund and the Commission will be the primary focus of this chapter. This is due to the fact that, unlike many of the other institutions mentioned, the agreements here were between two nations that had previously been enemies; thus, the working practices may have been somewhat more complex than those between former allies. Moreover, the history of the Volksbund and its interaction with German war dead is equally complicated; while much more needs to be written about its background, the organisation has received increased interest in recent years among the public. In order to provide some context about this, a brief introduction to the history of the Volksbund needs to be understood.

Unlike the Commission, the Volksbund has not always maintained control over the memory of Germany's war dead; nor did it always receive government funding. The organisation was created in 1920 as one of the organisations in Germany designed to help maintain the nation's war graves and cemeteries in foreign lands, although this task was increasingly difficult when compared to the Commission's work.[429] Indeed, many countries whose land had been used as the battlefields for the First World War did not want to gift areas within its borders to the former enemy for its war dead. As a result of the restrictions in place towards the erections of memorials in France and Belgium, a number of Germany's war dead were taken back to Germany or exhumed to be concentrated into a few cemeteries and often placed in mass graves, such as those found at Vladslo or Langemarck Cemeteries in Belgium.[430]

In a similar fashion to the Commission's work overseas, the cemeteries for Germany's war dead were often built to a design; however, it was felt by German architects that the stylistic features

429 Monica Black, *Death in Berlin: From Weimar to Divided Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 60.
430 Stamp, *The Somme*, p. 98.

incorporated in British cemeteries was did not fulfil their needs. While the architects employed by Germany to design its war cemeteries were impressed with the appearance of British cemeteries, they often felt that these sites were 'too manicured, their entrance halls too bombastic, and the white headstones too alien-looking' to fit in the landscapes within which they were being placed.[431] The German architects did also create lodges and walls in a similar way to the Commission, but their designs were more in line with the rugged Arts and Crafts style than the Classical features employed by the Commission. Moreover, dark stone was favoured by the Volksbunds's main architect for its war graves, Robert Tischler, and thus the majority of its concentrated war cemeteries utilised darker marble-like stone to list the names of its dead.[432]

In a similar fashion to the cult of the dead experienced in many of the other combatant nations, in Germany a cult of the fallen was also embedded into the memory of the First World War. This phenomenon has been explored heavily in George Mosse's work, who has argued that Germany's cult of the fallen was built upon deeply-rooted traditions, which were designed to enable the public to cope with the shock of the significant loss of life and to connect it to the past. Within the *Heldenhaine*, or Heroes' Groves, that were a common feature of many German war cemeteries, the folklore character "Young Siegfried" was a popular figure.[433] Indeed, it was hoped that these Heroes' Groves would become sites of patriotic festivals, where these national cults could be fostered.[434] Moreover, the war dead were given a heroic status; even in cases where they had been buried in a civilian cemetery, the graves of the war dead were usually kept separate by a fence or wall and became sites of pilgrimage that the bereaved could visit.[435]

Furthermore, the natural world was also a feature to be utilised within German cemeteries. Nature was a core part of Germanic folklore, and in war cemeteries it symbolised the eternal as opposed to the restless modern spirit. The regeneration that the natural landscape regularly experienced was tied symbolically to the cult of the fallen, highlighting that nationhood was also regularly changing and growing. Nature also had a practical function, in a similar fashion to how the Commission utilised it, as it was meant to displace the thoughts of death to the contemplation of nature within these cemeteries and enable them to become places of worship. It was also perceived to be a comfort to the bereaved, as they would be consoled by the knowledge that their loved ones were resting in the same

431 Connelly and Goebel, *Ypres*, p. 90.
432 Stamp, *The Somme*, p. 90.
433 George L. Mosse, 'National Cemeteries and National Revival: The Cult of the Fallen Soldiers in Germany' *Journal of Contemporary History*, 14 (1979), p. 3.
434 Ibid., p. 14.
435 Ibid., p. 7.

kind of surroundings that brought the living calm and peace.[436] It is through these attitudes that the work of the Volksbund should be perceived, as it is inextricably connected to its work.

In spite of the formal plans laid out by the organisation, in the immediate aftermath of the First World War, the Volksbund did not experience the same degree of responsibility at a federal level that the Commission had received; initially, there were numerous other organisations attempting to undertake the same work as well as a responsibility on the German government to set the precedent for how its nation's war dead would be remembered. The Volksbund was relieved of its task of caring for soldier's graves abroad by the German government, with *gräberoffiziere* or burial officers being appointed to organise and keep track of interments.[437] Indeed, it was not until the mid-twentieth century that the Volksbund emerged as the organisation solely responsible for commemorating Germany's war dead. Some explanation of the Volksbund's work will be provided in a later section of this chapter, but this factor is important to note when discussing the different individuals that the Commission was working with to honour Germany's war dead.

Diplomatic Relations: How the Commission Liaised with International Governments and Similar Organisations

It cannot be ignored that the work that the Commission was doing to establish its sites of memory was a diplomatic one, with agreements between individuals, organisations and nations being a significant part of its task. While there has been significant focus on its work to receive the rights to the land upon which the cemeteries overseas were built in perpetuity, there has been a limited study of its broader relationship with different nations when caring for their war dead. Indeed, outside of the British Empire's dead there are numerous nationalities represented within the organisation's casualty database, including allies and enemy nations. From a United Kingdom perspective, many of the nations denoted in sites across the country are highlighted by casualties who died in similar ways to those from the British Empire; for example, there are a number of Zeppelin crews who died whilst on operations over British territory, and thus are buried in the United Kingdom. However, there is also a significant number of prisoners of war included within the war dead interred in Britain. Many of these individuals would have been held at locations near to where their remains now lay, and would have potentially worked on the land in the surrounding areas as part of their imprisonment. Generally, prisoners of war appear to have died due to illness while detained such as from influenza outbreaks.

When considering the prisoner of war dead who are among those buried at Cannock Chase, it must be acknowledged that there were inconsistencies among the combatant nations in relation to the

436 Ibid., p. 13.
437 Black, *Death in Berlin*, p. 92.

amalgamation of the cemeteries. For British Empire war dead who were prisoners of war, the Commission placed them within centralised war cemeteries almost immediately after the First World War. In contrast to this, as Heather Jones has noted in her work relating to prisoners of war, the German prisoners of war who died in the United Kingdom received no special treatment by the Volksbund, Commission or any other organisation or authority. Indeed, in spite of the negotiations undertaken by the German government and the Commission in the interwar period, the graves of German prisoners of war were only amalgamated into a centralised cemetery in 1964 as part of the mass movement of German war dead buried in the UK to Cannock Chase and having been delayed by the Second World War.[438] Whilst it is clear that the delay in this protocol was largely due to the lack of influence the Commission had over sites across the United Kingdom compared to overseas, the significant delay in creating a centralised cemetery for German dead cannot be ignored especially when comparing to the prisoner of war sites for those imprisoned in Germany.

As mentioned in the introduction, the negotiations between all groups tasked with caring for the First World War dead held their origins within the clauses of the Versailles Peace Treaty. At the time of its Annual Report in 1921, the Commission noted that it had decided to make the cost of maintaining enemy graves in the United Kingdom in particular a charge against its funds. While this was considered a temporary measure, until the negotiations had been concluded, this decision was felt to be an 'Imperial obligation' by the organisation.[439] Presumably, the decision not to include the war dead overseas was due to the ongoing concentration of sites that was not taking place in the United Kingdom; thus, the Commission could find more stability in this work at home compared to overseas.

The work being undertaken by other governments for British war dead was of significant interest to the Commission, who wished to replicate or improve upon the standards set overseas by these nations at cemeteries in its territories. At the 101st Meeting of the Commission in July 1927, references to a committee who had visited Germany some years previously had found that many British war graves in the country had been well-treated and even marked by its German counterparts with a concrete headstone. The example shown in Germany motivated the Commission to extend its maintenance obligations to maintain German war graves, and to aim to replicate this in the United Kingdom. However, it does not appear that the erection of these headstones was a surprise for the Commission; it is noted in the minutes for this meeting that a large proportion of the headstones required for German casualties in the United Kingdom had already been erected, with plans for the remainder to

438 Heather Jones, Violence Against Prisoners of War in the First World War: Britain, France and Germany, 1914-1920 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 325.
439 CWGC, CWGC/2/1/ADD.6.2.3 (ADD 6/2/3), Annual Report of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 1921-1922, 1922, p. 4.

be assembled in due course.[440] Thus, it is clear that both nations upheld their duty to care for enemy war dead.

It is clear that the maintenance of enemy war graves was not always easy for the Commission to standardise, particularly at sites where it was having to use contractors or Cemetery Authorities to undertake this work. From a legal standpoint, the Commission had agreements in place with Cemetery Authorities or Incumbents to look after the German graves at a particular location to the same standard as the British graves found there, which therefore provided it with significant authority over the upkeep of these graves.[441] Nevertheless, the reality was that these graves were not always kept to the specifications expected by the Commission or the German Embassy. It was found at the 147th Meeting of the Commission in January 1932 that many of the war graves in the United Kingdom, whether British or German, were not well-maintained by the Cemetery Authorities who were receiving payment by the Commission to look after them. However, according to the Commissioners it appeared that this situation was improving under the pressure of the inspections being carried out by the Commission at more regular intervals.[442] This comment in itself is particularly interesting when considering the Commission's work in the United Kingdom, as it appears that prior to this the Cemetery Authorities entrusted with this task were not being audited by the Commission and could thus undertake different standards of work.

Furthermore, it appears that international organisations and federal governments did not fully understand the remit of the Commission, with requests similar to those expressed within British families being received by the organisation. For example, during the 147th Meeting of the Commission it was reported that the German Embassy had asked the Commission for a definite statement in relation to the permanent marking of German interned civilians in the United Kingdom. The Commission highlighted that these graves were not perceived to be within its responsibility, as the organisation was only charged with caring for war graves and not all losses as a result of warfare.[443]

By the 175th Meeting of the Commission, the Commission had received a request to permanently mark the 487 graves of German civilian internees that were situated on British soil by the government of the United Kingdom and thus the organisation had to assume responsibility for this work. Of the

440 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/101 (WG1831/43), 101st Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 13th July 1927, p. 10.
441 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/144 (WG1831/86), 144th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 7th October 1931, p. 29.
442 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/147 (WG1831/89), 147th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 13th January 1932, p. 16.
443 Ibid., pp. 15-16.

two options provided by the Commission to mark these graves, an upright headstone was seen as the preferred commemoration type by United Kingdom government. However, it was noted that, if the German authorities expressed a strong preference for the pedestal marker, then this would be agreed without any disagreement from the Commission.[444] This shows that, while the Commission were taking on the responsibility of caring for these graves, it was deemed important by the organisation to ensure that the relevant foreign governments were happy with how it was caring for their dead. It is also apparent that the Commission's work varied significantly between the international and British Empire dead; due to the backing of the United Kingdom government and amidst pressure from the German government, its remit could be extended to graves that were considered to be civilians.

The German headstones more generally caused complications for the Commission, as the style of commemoration often deteriorated at a quicker rate than a standard Commission headstone. Indeed, at the 186th Meeting of the Commission in October 1935, it was found that German headstones became illegible shortly after installation and significant adverse criticism had been passed onto the Commission. This was not necessarily the fault of the Commission in this case, as there was not an active policy to make sure these markers were of a lesser quality than the headstones of the British Empire dead; rather, it is implied that the type of stone being sent to the organisation by the German government were of a lower quality than expected. In an effort to resolve the matter, the organisation asked the German authorities whether the replacement of the headstones could be undertaken at the expense of their government; however, the Germans replied that they were unable to do so, presumably due to the inflation and other economic issues being faced at this time. Consequently, the Commission requested that a better type of stone could be sent to the organisation; the Germans agreed to this, on the provision that the Commission bore the cost of erecting the replacement stones.[445]

In a similar move to the work being undertaken along the former battlefields, the German government in the interwar years wished to concentrate its war dead into at least one large cemetery in the United Kingdom, so that maintenance would be easier to undertake. At a meeting of the Anglo-German-French Committee in April 1937, this matter was brought to the attention by Dr Eulen who was a founding member of the Volksbund. He highlighted that, should this work be done, it was necessary for the treatment of the war graves to be adapted to its surroundings; thus, a knowledge of English landscape and architecture was required.[446] While the Middle Ages figured centrally in the

444 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/175 (WG1831/117), 175th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 25th July 1934, p. 11.
445 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/186 (WG1831/128), 186th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 16th October 1935, p. 8.
446 CWGC, CWGC/1/2/D/12/5/10 (ADD 1/40/10), Anglo-German-French Mixed Committee, 29th-30th April 1937, p. 8.

remembrance rhetoric of both Britain and Germany,[447] as highlighted earlier in this chapter the exact design features of German and British war cemeteries differed somewhat in style.

After visiting many of the war cemeteries in the United Kingdom, Dr Eulen and his team deemed that the German war graves found here could be classified into four categories, ranging from the well-maintained Cannock Chase war cemetery down to those buried in local cemeteries and cared for to differing degrees. By April 1937, the German government wished to concentrate its war dead to two sites in England; the airmen's graves would be moved to Potters Bar, while its sailors would be concentrated into a site at Saltburn-by-the-Sea.[448] However, difficulties in acquiring the land at these locations were soon felt, in spite of Dr Eulen having obtained 50,000 Reichsmarks for the purchase of the two sites.[449] At Potters Bar, the Ministry of Health denied consent to any new burial ground within that urban district, and thus it was felt that an alternative site was needed.[450] The administrative requirement of the maintenance of German graves altered some years later; in 1963, as part of the German Government's policy to remove all graves situated in cemeteries or war graves plots from the two World Wars that were not maintained by the newly-renamed Commonwealth War Graves Commission, many German graves were moved to the large Volksbund-maintained Cannock Chase German Cemetery in Staffordshire, which is adjacent to Cannock Chase War Cemetery.[451]

The construction of Cannock Chase War Cemetery took place within a broader context that began to reassess the memory of the First World War in Germany, and particularly the symbolism that had been overshadowed by its use by the Third Reich between 1933 and 1945. In Germany, many road names that had once been based on key First World War battles such as Langemarck were being replaced as during the Third Reich they had utilised the myth of Langemarck as a way to stand for sacrifices made on all fronts.[452] By the time that the German cemetery at Cannock Chase was being constructed, the 'ghosts of war' described by Monica Black, or at least not those from the First World War, did not seem to bother the Volksbund; indeed, it was felt by the organisation that the 'waning interest' of families regarding the conflict would mean that the mass movement of these graves would be unlikely to cause emotional distress for the families.[453] Consequently, the Volksbund often

447 Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory*, p. 1.
448 CWGC, CWGC/1/2/D/12/5/10 (ADD 1/40/10), Anglo-German-French Mixed Committee, 29th-30th April 1937, p. 9.
449 CWGC, CWGC/1/2/D/12/5/10 (ADD 1/40/10), Anglo-German-French Mixed Committee, 11th May 1938, p. 5.
450 CWGC, CWGC/1/2/D/12/5/10 (ADD 1/40/10), Anglo-German-French Mixed Committee, 15th May 1939, p. 15.
451 Commonwealth War Graves Commission, 'Cannock Chase War Cemetery,' *CWGC*, 2020. Available at: https://www.cwgc.org/find-a-cemetery/cemetery/2000401/cannock-chase-war-cemetery/ [Accessed 10th March 2020].
452 Mark Connelly, and Stefan Goebel, 'Forgetting the Great War? The Langemarck Myth between Cultural Oblivion and Critical Memory in (West) Germany, 1945-2014,' Journal of Modern History, 94 (2022), p. 7.
453 Ibid., p.16.

destroyed the original and personal grave markers placed on the graves without consulting the bereaved as part of the process; the number of complaints received as a reaction to this were insignificant from the Volksbund's point of view, but it nevertheless emphasises that by the mid-twentieth century it was felt by many that the First World War and its dead were not as hallowed as they had once been.[454] This can be perhaps seen in the waning interest of the British public, too, which will be discussed in Chapter Five.

Alongside the significant work being undertaken in the United Kingdom to provide an appropriate final resting place for the graves of German war dead, the international Christian movement Toc H, most famous for the 'everyman's club' Talbot House in Poperinghe (now called Poperinge) in Belgium, had been in contact with the German Embassy. Toc H had suggested to the Commission that their organisation should assist in the maintenance of the German graves in the United Kingdom. At the time, in the United Kingdom alone there were estimated to be 60,000 British and other war graves situated 10-12,000 cemeteries; due to the geographical spread of the casualties, in addition to the ongoing problems relating to grave and site ownership previously noted, the potential opportunity to maintain the graves at a uniform standard was considered to be a near-impossible task.[455] As a result of the careful ongoing work of the Commission, the standard of maintenance found within the sites was gradually improving, but a perfect solution still had not been found. Therefore, it was seen to be of the utmost importance that Toc H should be made fully aware of all the facts before the Commission could agree to their proposal and take advantage of their offer.[456]

During this time period, Germany was not the only country trying to establish the commemoration and maintenance of its war dead in Britain, as Russian graves were also highlighted in the early meeting minutes of the Commission. Russia had started the First World War as a British ally, but had not signed the Versailles Treaty due to their early withdrawal from the conflict in 1917. Consequently, there appeared to be no legal obligation on the Commission to care for the graves of the Russian dead. However, the casualties had been members of the Allied Army, and in normal circumstances would have been acquired in the same way as other Allies' graves had. The graves themselves were scattered within several sites, and it was highly probable that they would need to be purchased prior to maintenance work beginning. In the case of Russian dead, the cost of acquiring the burial rights would not be charged to Commission funds but to the funds of the United Kingdom Treasury.[457] The exclusive rights of burial for these graves carried an obligation for the owner to maintain the graves if this was not alternatively arranged. Sir Fabian Ware was particularly interested in recommending to

454 Ibid.
455 Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory*, pp. 29-30.
456 Ibid.
457 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/130 (WG1831/72), 130th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 14th May 1930, p. 9.

the United Kingdom government that the Commission would assume the responsibility for maintaining the graves of Russian casualties and any other foreign nationals buried in the United Kingdom whose situation was similar.[458] When considering the socio-political climate at the time, and in particular its context within the aftermath of the Russian Civil War and rise of Communism in eastern Europe, this decision could be seen as quite controversial. Nonetheless, it can be presumed that this would have been gratefully received by their next of kin.

Russia, and later the Soviet Union, were no exception to the often-complicated relationship with the First World War experienced globally, not least because war monuments connected to Tsarist conflicts were rarely proposed or built during the early years of the Soviet Union.[459] This meant that the First World War largely shifted out of public consciousness, and many sites of memory lay untended for decades. In 1946 an order for the care of war graves was created by the Soviet Union, but by 1955 the Control Ministry found that this order had been poorly implemented.[460] Furthermore, the Second World War became the dominant conflict memorialised by the Communist Party; it was not until 1966 the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier was dedicated in Moscow, and it took almost a century for memorials to the First World War to become commonplace.[461] While this particular aspect of memorialisation history is outside of the scope of this thesis, it is important to acknowledge this context when highlighting the Russian soldiers commemorated in the United Kingdom by the Commission; indeed, it might have been the only time that Russian war dead were cared for appropriately and in a constructed way, and therefore could have perhaps provided comfort for both migrant families and the bereaved who could not visit their loved ones.

Another considerable difficulty that the Commission had to contend with were the policies implemented by other nations, particularly when they contradicted its own attitudes to commemoration. The American approach to commemorating its war dead was one such example, as the Secretary of War, Newton D. Baker, had publicly pledged from the outset of the United States' involvement in the conflict that the government would ensure a home burial to all who died in its foreign service.[462] While there was some initial difficulties upholding this promise in the immediate aftermath of the Armistice, there was eventually an opportunity for many of the families of the dead to bring their loved ones home. Indeed, by April 1921 it is estimated that more than 14,800 bodies had

458 Ibid., p. 10.
459 Aaron J. Cohen, *War Monuments, Public Patriotism, and Bereavement in Russia, 1905-2015* (London: The Rowman and Littlefield Publishing Group, 2020), p. 152.
460 Ibid., p. 107.
461 Ibid., p. xvii; p. 152.
462 Lisa M. Budreau, *Bodies of War: World War I and the Politics of Commemoration in America, 1919-1933* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), p. 21.

been returned to the United States.[463] For those whose families chose to have them remain in the country where they fell, however, there was some confusion over their maintenance both prior to the establishment of the ABMC and in the organisation's formative years.

As highlighted in the previous section, in 1920 an official from the British government's treasury wrote to Sir Fabian Ware discussing policy guidance relating to the land to ask for policy guidance regarding the land and maintenance for American war graves in Britain. It appears that this official was looking at ways to save money, as they highlighted to Ware that it was difficult to see why the British government should offer to upkeep Allied graves in the United Kingdom particularly as the British Empire was maintaining its own graves in Allied countries.[464] It can be presumed that Ware responded with a reference to the conditions outlined in the Treaty of Versailles, but perhaps the working model that the Commission utilised encouraged organisations such as the ABMC and later the Volksbund to follow a similar style in being the main body to care for their country's war dead. From a United Kingdom-based war dead perspective, this did create some anxieties among the Commissioners regarding comparisons between the Commission's and the other organisations' work in Britain as highlighted by the discussions surrounding Brookwood outlined earlier. Nevertheless, it is clear that the Commission opted to follow the procedures it had agreed upon regardless of the country it was working in: either a similar organisation or government could care for its own war dead, or the Commission would undertake this work for them on an agency basis.[465]

While much additional work is required to fully comprehend the task the Commission faced when caring for the dead of other countries, it is clear that its pragmatism extended to the graves of foreign nationals. The organisation's attitude towards the war dead of both allies and enemies reflected the treaties signed by relevant governments and, in spite of the challenges these provided, enabled the Commission to gain further support from other countries and maintain a positive working relationship with them. Indeed, by caring for the international graves on British soil the Commission could be better placed to negotiate for additional land and control over the sites found overseas. While this may have detracted somewhat from the Commission's care of the British Empire's war dead in Britain, it nevertheless strengthened support for the work being done by the organisation.

It is clear that the work being done by the Commission was of great interest to the governments it was liaising with, especially as they wanted to ensure that their war dead were appropriately being

463 Ibid., p. 78.
464 Ibid., p. 119.
465 Although little has been previously discussed about the Agency work the Commission does, it is a vital part of its work. More research, and public engagement from the Commission itself on the topic, would be a welcome addition to the literature on the history of the organisation.

commemorated. As a consequence of perhaps the better standards of work being undertaken by the Commission to commemorate international dead, a significant interest in visiting these locations can be found within the archival records. As will be highlighted in the next section, interactions between the bereaved and the Commission's work in the United Kingdom when dealing with foreign war graves were similar to battlefield pilgrimages overseas with rites and rituals being a vital part of these excursions.

Interactions between the Bereaved, Governments and the Foreign War Graves in the United Kingdom

In a similar way to the experience of British commemoration, it is clear that many of the other belligerent nations felt that it was their duty to visit the graves of the war dead. Indeed, from the archival evidence relating to German war graves it is apparent that there were a considerable number of ceremonies, with both religious and civic origins, that were participated in as part of German commemoration. Much has been written about the importance of Langemarck in the German memory of the First World War, but less has been considered in relation to the sites in Britain. In this section, some elements of the German interaction with sites of memory in the United Kingdom will be considered in order to explain the similarities and differences with British commemoration.

As highlighted in the first section of this chapter, the German authorities quickly identified Potters Bar as a core location of German memory in the United Kingdom. This was largely due to the fact that the crews of two Zeppelins were buried at a cemetery in Potters Bar, and thus significant connections to the German Air Force could be made. It was noted at the 192nd Meeting of the Commission in March 1936 that an annual German commemorative service had been held at the cemetery in Potters Bar, with the focus on the graves of the two crews. The fact that this was already deemed to be an annual event suggests that the service had become cemented into the broader calendar of events associated with German remembrance by this time, and thus it was expected that significant numbers would be in attendance. In spite of its involvement in the maintenance of this site, the Commission had not been actively invited to attend the ceremony by the organisers, suggesting a private event, but on learning of the event Sir Fabian Ware had arranged for a representative of the Commission to attend. However, this pressure to attend does not have necessarily seem to be in order to foster the ongoing relationship between the Commission and the German government; rather, it was more of a move to highlight the Commission's work to the press. This is evidenced by the mention of a notice appearing in the press to state that the Commission had been represented at the event, and could therefore be connected to the memorialisation of German war dead at Potters Bar.[466]

466 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/192 (WG1831/133), 192nd Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 11th March 1936, p. 7.

Moreover, there were significant commemorative events around the international graves that had their origins in religious services; in particular, the resurgence of the participation in All Saints' and All Souls' Day services. While there was a decline in the number of people actively participating in organised religion in Britain in the aftermath of the First World War, many of the commemorative events at Commission grave sites continued to have similarities to religious ceremonies.[467] All Saints' and All Souls' Days in early November were and continue to be part of Anglican and Roman Catholic ceremonies that provide an opportunity to remember the dead among those communities, as well as the observances of certain feast days associated with remembering the dead. Indeed, there were services at the Belgian plot in Brookwood Military Cemetery and the French section of Beaconsfield Cemetery during the interwar period that were connected to the observance of All Saints' and All Souls' Days,[468] and this can also be seen at war graves plots with significant numbers of Polish service personnel who died during the Second World War. These events, sometimes known by the French *Jour des Morts* ("day of the dead") are noted regularly in Commission meeting minutes and provide a connection between the Allied dead and the work of the Commission in the United Kingdom. It appears that the overseas graves were the primary focus for these services, perhaps as it provided the opportunity for the sites of memory to be visited en masse by the bereaved and dignitaries. For example, the French Ambassador was present at *Jour des Morts* commemorations at Brookwood Military Cemetery in November 1946, and it was reported that he had 'expressed pleasure at all the Commission had done for the French graves.'[469]

In spite of the more general decline in the number of active participants in organised religion in this period, All Souls' Day in particular saw a massive revival in the number of events relating to it during this period;[470] this is perhaps due to the significant losses sustained, and the comfort that having a set day of remembering the dead provided many of the bereaved. In spite of its importance within civic communities, it was arguably a controversial event among different branches of the Christian faith, with Protestant and Catholic communities in particular having differing views about how All Souls' should be best practiced in Christian circles. The Commission never seemed to have embroiled itself

467 For further reading, see Pat Jalland, 'Bereavement and Mourning (Great Britain),' *1914-1918 Online*, 2014. Available at: https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/bereavement_and_mourning_great_britain?version=1.0 [Accessed 17th November 2019], Stefan Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory: War, Remembrance and Medievalism in Britain and Germany, 1914-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 232 and Catharine Arnold, *Necropolis: London and its Dead* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2006), p. 225.
468 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/263 (WG1831/205), 263rd Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 15th November 1944, p. 3.
469 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/286 (WG1831/228), 286th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 21st November 1946, p. 3.
470 Gregory, *The Silence of Memory*, p. 57.

in the politics of these events, potentially to avoid being seen as supporting one particular viewpoint over the other; nevertheless, it is clear that it understood the importance of such an event to the bereaved and would make sure that the larger sites were prepared for an increased number of visitors. Moreover, the Commission understood that this would provide it with the opportunity to directly interact with the bereaved and would thus potentially ensure some of the Commission's staff, such as the Area Superintendent, were nearby to explain the Commission's work and receive thanks for the organisation's unending task of maintaining the graves and memorials.

Another area of direct engagement with Commission sites among international groups, and war graves in the United Kingdom more generally, were the frequent visits of German delegations to sites across Britain. As has been mentioned previously, there was a clear interest in appropriately commemorating German First World War dead in Britain from the German government, particularly in the aftermath of the two World Wars. The conversations between the Commission and the German government during the interwar period clearly highlight this, but the dialogue surrounding this can be further extended through looking at the visits the German government made during the 1920s and 1930s in particular. In 1935, a party of German delegates visited the graves at Cannock and placed flowers upon them;[471] a year later, another party of foreign ex-servicemen visited the cemetery again and conducted a similar ceremony. This was as part of their visit to the United Kingdom, and where they were guests of Lord Harrowby at Sandon Hall.[472] While there was no evidence of further visits of this nature in the archival documents, it can perhaps be presumed that these two incidences were not the only times that foreign ex-service personnel from Germany came to visit the graves of their fallen comrades in the United Kingdom.

It appears that during the interwar period, there was not significant outrage over German war graves in the United Kingdom, nor was there animosity towards them visiting their war dead. For example, *The Times* regularly included reports about the Anglo-German-French Committee in its features, noting that the permanent marking of German war graves in the United Kingdom had been discussed in 1938 and the German delegation in the UK for the May 1939 meeting had opted to do a tour of the sites with its war dead in after the conclusion of that particular Committee meeting.[473] The fact that a well-read, national newspaper would highlight these events without adding a negative or emotional commentary about this suggests that the German delegations' wishes to visit such locations were largely respected by the British public and deemed acceptable by them.

471 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/181 (WG1831/123), 181st Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 10th April 1935, pp. 2-3.
472 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/195 (WG1831/137), 195th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 10th June 1936, p. 4.
473 'Lessons of War Graves,' *The Times*, 12th May 1938, p. 11; 'War Graves,' *The Times*, 15th May 1939, p. 9.

However, while German visits to war graves across the country were often reported in the local newspapers, the Commission are not often mentioned as part of the coverage; this is perhaps due to the fact that the organisation may not have been active participants in the personal visits of families, or it could be because its work was not the primary focus of the article. Indeed, it appears that there was much interest in German visits to the United Kingdom to visit their war dead as it provided the Press with the opportunity to share the similarities between the British and German approaches to commemoration and thus reconcile the former enemies in the public's consciousness.

In April 1935, the Commission noted that on 17th March the Germans had held a *Heldengedenktag* ("German Day for the Commemoration of Heroes") at Commission sites globally. This included events hosted by the German community in London at the site in Potters Bar and at Cannock Chase. Cannock Chase was not yet the site of large-scale German memorialisation that can be found there today; however, even at this time the Staffordshire town was a key site of German memory. *Heldengedenktag* took place in March each year and was often the key event for Germans to visit local cemeteries and remember their dead. It appears that, much like the British public desired to make pilgrimages to their war dead commemorated overseas, the German public also hoped to make such visits to overseas sites where possible. Indeed, as part of the commemorations in 1939, another party of Germans visited Park Hall Prisoners of War Cemetery in Whittington, Shropshire. On this particular pilgrimage, the German delegation were met by Mr Dix, the Commission's Area Inspector, and the day's organiser decided to make arrangements to transport some of the small rhododendrons from Cannock Chase for replanting in Germany,[474] a symbolic gesture that has similarities to British commemorative practices. In many cases, British visitors to the former battlefields often brought home soil or cuttings from flowers grown on the graves of loved ones, in order to replant them in a place that could become an area of private reflection.

However, it cannot be ignored that German approaches to memorialisation and remembrance during the interwar period were heavily influenced by the Nazi cult of the dead. Indeed, there were massive thematic campaigns by the propaganda ministry designed to give special attention to the war dead, which included Heroes Memorial Day.[475] Similarly to the Commission's approach surrounding such events, special attention was given to the relatives of the dead for ceremonies; they would often receive personal invitations,[476] with mothers often being at the forefront of these events. Mothers were seen in the Nazi world view as the bearers of future soldiers in addition to the attributions given to

474 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/226 (WG1831/168), 226th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 19th April 1939, p. 2.
475 Jay W. Baird, *To Die for Germany: Heroes in the Nazi Pantheon* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), p. xvi.
476 Ibid., p. 225.

them among other grieving nations as the primary mourners for the dead, and thus were the object of a great deal of the propaganda produced in this period.[477]

Prior to the formalisation of core days of remembrance among German communities, days associated with religious feast days in Christian communities were often at the forefront of commemoration. However, All Souls' Day, which is celebrated on 2nd November, was potentially as controversial among the foreign nationals as it was for British society, again due to the different attitudes among the branches of Christianity regarding how best to commemorate it. In Germany, Bavarian Catholics insisted on focusing their remembrance activities around the period of All Souls rather than the key state-sponsored days of national remembrance such as the *Volkstrauertag*.[478] This focus on All Souls' day thus hindered the initial creation of the forerunner to *Heldengedenktag*, the *Volkstrauertag*, which did not formally begin until 1924.[479]

The *Volkstrauertag* was an event that was planned to be held in the spring, a few weeks before Easter, in order to connect the memorial day with regeneration in addition to separate it from the more Catholic-based All Souls' Day. The Nazi regime made significant changes to the *Volkstrauertag* when they came to power, including renaming it to *Heldengedenktag* in 1934, and the rituals surrounding the regeneration and regrowth were further exacerbated. In particular, the German cemetery in Langemarck (now known as Langemark) became a symbol of this type of remembrance, with the Nazis presenting the site as a place at which the dead were linked to the regeneration of the Reich and to the hope for a national rebirth.[480] Thus, the events at Cannock Chase and Potters Bar previously described can be seen to be part of these commemorative events that were important in Germany during the interwar period, and highlight the complex nature of interpreting Commission sites among different groups.

In order to understand the significance of Langemarck on the German memory of the First World War, it is important to provide some context relating to just how much of an impact it had on the culture and memory of the conflict. According to Jay Baird, this location went beyond the protection of king and country perpetuated among the British Empire war dead buried in Flanders; if a German soldier had died at Langemarck, the propaganda informed the public that his blood took on the properties of the blood of Christ. Indeed, the individual's death was seen as redemptive for both himself and his family, and offered to simultaneously wash away sins and offer a promise of national

477 Ibid., p. 228.
478 Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory*, p. 251.
479 Tim Grady, *The German-Jewish Soldiers of the First World War in History and Memory* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011), p. 89.
480 Baird, *To Die for Germany*, p. 244.

resurrection.[481] Although it is apparent that Langemarck was of particular prominence to the German national memory of the First World War, it appears that to a lesser extent the graves of those found overseas more generally were given significant symbolic importance to the grieving public.

Moreover, the graves of foreign nationals were often discussed in local newspapers and visits from international dignitaries were regularly included in columns of the British Press. It appears that this was often done in order to highlight how the relevant governments were working with the Commission and British government, and to encourage viewpoint that peace would now be upheld. This included considerable coverage of the meetings of the Anglo-German-French Committee in London, as shown by *The Western Daily Press and Bristol Mirror* in June 1936. Even three years prior to the beginning of the Second World War, there does not appear to have been animosity to such meetings or hints of what was to come; reporting tends to be fact-focused rather than emotive, with the names of the dignitaries in attendance being mentioned.[482] Perhaps this can be explained through the peace treaties of this period; there had been much work in the aftermath of the Versailles Peace Treaty to ensure that peace in Europe was kept, and diplomacy was focused on this. It can be presumed that this extended to commemorative practices, where each of the dead were considered firstly as a lost relative and secondly as a fallen combatant.

Furthermore, months before the declaration of war, regional newspapers were still reporting on the presence of German war graves at British military cemeteries globally in a positive way. *The Northern Daily Mail* in April 1939 included a section regarding such graves in France, which featured a discussion from Sir Fabian Ware. Ware is quoted in the piece as stating that the presence of German graves in British war cemeteries 'added to the message which these reminders of the Great War have for the thousands of people of many nations who constantly visit them.'[483] The fact that such a prominent member of the Commission stated this opinion emphasises the stance of the Commission regarding the graves in its care: its role was to care for the war dead without prejudice. German graves continue to remain a discussion point for many pilgrims, both at home and abroad, but the message from the Commission remains the same: that those who served on both sides of the conflict should be remembered with equal care and attention.

Finally, it is essential to consider how the Commission interacted with both Cemetery Authorities and religious communities to ensure that the graves of international war dead were cared for equally, prior to the removal of the majority of these graves to Cannock Chase. There are a number of examples of

481 Ibid.
482 'Imperial War Graves Commission: German and French Members Arrive in London,' *Western Daily Press and Bristol Mirror*, 8th June 1936, p. 8.
483 'German War Graves in France Carefully Tended by British Gardeners,' *Northern Daily Mail*, 26th April 1939, p. 3.

such conversations between the Commission and the groups in charge of the broader sites of memory, although the majority of those that survive appear to have been written during the Second World War. Perhaps it can be surmised that there was a growing worry among the Commission in this period that these graves would be neglected or desecrated in some way, and thus the organisation wanted to ensure that this did not occur. For the purposes of this particular aspect of international remembrance, examples held within the Kent County Archives will be utilised to illustrate such discussions.

In 1943, the Commission wrote to the Reverend of Paddock Wood (St Andrew) Churchyard to ensure that the future upkeep of a German grave at that location would be maintained. This was supported financially by the Commission with an offer of an annual fee of 5/- to cover the cost of the work.[484] Moreover, at sites across the local area the Commission were making arrangements for the commemoration for Second World War dead being interred at sites across the county; this can be seen at Upchurch (St Mary), where in November 1941 the Commission made arrangements with the Vicar of the site to maintain three German war graves for 5/- per grave per annum. It appears that these early arrangements mirrored the type of work being undertaken by the Commission to assume responsibility for the war dead of the British Empire from the Second World War, in order to ensure that the inconsistencies found with the commemoration and care of First World War dead did not happen again.

In addition, it is apparent that there was some familial interaction between the bereaved in Germany and the Commission. After the Commission wrote to the Vicar of Ide Hill (St Mary) Churchyard in Kent to request that he cared for four German Air Force graves at the location in 1943, the family of one of the war dead wrote to the administration of Ide Hill four years later to confirm that their son, Albert Eichhorn, was there. In their letter, the family also wished to know whether any of his personal effects could be sent to them someday with the father stating that it was his 'greatest wish' to have his son's grave put into the permanent care of the church with them covering the cost to any maintenance required.[485] It appears that these families were interacting with the work of the Commission, and the other organisations associated with commemoration in the United Kingdom, in a similar way to those whose British Empire war dead were remembered overseas. While this may seem like the most logical way of interaction, it cannot be ignored that the situation was unique; unlike the Commission's work overseas, which predominantly took place in the territories of former allied nations, the families from Germany were engaging with nations that their country was currently at war with.

484 Kent Archive and Local History Service (hereafter KALHS), P45B/6/2, Documents relating to Paddock Wood (St Andrew) Churchyard, 6th- 15th September 1943.
485 KALHS, P357B/6/18, Documents relating to Ide Hill (St Mary) Churchyard, 2nd- 26th June 1947.

It is perhaps due to this inability to see their loved one's graves that the British Red Cross, as well as other organisations such as the Salvation Army, organised photographs of the German war graves situated in Britain to be taken. This is exemplified by a letter from 1943 to the Vicar of Upchurch (St Mary) Church in Kent by the Commission, where it was forewarning the church that this would be taking place. The particular programme is acknowledged to have been a part of a reciprocal arrangement with Germany, in which the International Red Cross were taking photographs of British war graves to show that the war graves maintained there were well-kept in spite of the ongoing hostilities. In the letter, the Commission asked the Vicar to ensure that the German war graves in the extension section of his churchyard were 'tidy and in good order,' with the graves weeded and tidied prior to the photographs being taken.[486] The notes found in this correspondence make it clear that the Commission potentially expected the site to not be adequately maintained, and thus would be facing scrutiny from families back in Germany over the lack of care shown to their war dead. This may have caused further diplomatic strains, both between the Commission and German government and the broader relationship between Germany and Britain at the time, which would have equally wanted to be avoided by the organisation.

In addition, the Commission wished for the Vicar at Upchurch to report on the condition of the temporary wooden crosses marking the graves of the German dead at the site. Although it is unclear whether these markers would match the types seen on British Second World War graves, and indeed the First World War graves prior to their permanent marking, the Commission nevertheless felt it necessary to monitor these graves for degeneration. This may have partially been due to the fact that the permanent marking of German graves in the United Kingdom was still a matter up for consideration by the Anglo-German Mixed Committee, and who were unlikely to make a decision on the issue until after the cessation of the current conflict.[487] Whilst it is unclear whether the Vicar followed the Commission's instructions, or reported to the organisation on the state of the war graves at the site, it is clear that the Commission were continuing to uphold its duty to maintaining the war graves of enemies even during the Second World War.

As has been shown by this section, the interactions between both the bereaved and government institutions from Germany with the Commission's work in the United Kingdom varied considerably in their form and style, but ultimately matched the types of commemorative practices being undertaken at home in Germany. The similarities between German and British remembrance practices are considerable, although it cannot be ignored that the interwar period muddied the differences between German commemoration and Nazi ideologies relating to appropriately honouring the

486 KALHS, P377/3/5, Documents relating to Upchurch (St Mary) Churchyard Extension, 11th May 1921-4th November 1936.
487 Ibid.

memory of the dead. However, it is apparent that from the outset the German communities engaging directly with the Commission were not entirely content with their war graves being scattered in churchyards and cemeteries across the country and were pushing for a location to concentrate its dead into. This ultimately became Cannock Chase German War Cemetery in Staffordshire, which will be utilised as a case study for German commemoration in the United Kingdom in the next section of this chapter.

Case Study: The Removal of German War Graves to Cannock Chase, Staffordshire

As referenced throughout this chapter, there was a significant push among the German authorities charged with the care of that nation's war dead to create a central cemetery in the United Kingdom for all German war dead to be remembered within. Whilst it appears that over the decades this task became increasingly strained, not least due to the start of the Second World War, it was eventually brought to fruition almost five decades after the end of the First World War. Although Potters Bar and Shropshire were initially considered to be among the forerunners for this location, due to the issues mentioned in section one of this chapter the proposed cemeteries at these sites could not be achieved. Instead, Cannock Chase in Staffordshire was eventually chosen as the location for the central German war cemetery in the United Kingdom.

In this section, how this site came into being will be discussed in order to explain the administrative, operational and legal burden placed on both the Commission and the Volksbund to undertake this monumental task. This will be utilised to highlight a broader sense of an arguably greater autonomy felt among the foreign war graves found in Britain, and emphasise how the Commission could be placed into a secondary role should communities have the power of a federal government behind their cause. Indeed, it is clear that the families of British Empire war dead would not have been able to conduct a similar task, due to the restrictions on exhumations and repatriations; nor could the Commission concentrate all of its war dead into a central location as a consequence of the limited rights over various burials it had. Moreover, Cannock Chase provides a fascinating insight into the memory culture surrounding war dead more generally; many individuals may visit the German War Cemetery as part of pilgrimages or school trips, but not acknowledge the Commission-maintained war cemetery in front of it. Perhaps this case study lends itself to suggesting that war graves are potentially more impactful on remembrance rhetoric when they are situated within an international territory rather than at home: when placed outside of the usual sites of memory, they can become hallowed ground and state-sponsored places of Remembrance that the civilian cemeteries cannot quite emulate.

For those who were buried in German war cemeteries overseas, the chief architect from the Volksbund Robert Tischler preferred to create centralised monuments with mass graves. These design features were chosen in order to ensure that there was no doubt in visitors' minds that the war dead were both comrades in arms and, above all else, members of the nation rather than individuals to be privately mourned.[488] Robert Tischler regularly attended the Anglo-German-French Mixed Committee meetings during the interwar period, but by the time of his death in 1959 the site at Cannock Chase was still very much in its infancy. Thus, while some of the features favoured by him appear at the site, the German war cemetery in Staffordshire arguably stands out from its counterparts nearer to the battlefields.

Before discussing the intricacies associated with the mass-movement of the thousands of German and Austrian remains to Cannock Chase, it is important to briefly explain the policies of Germany at this time surrounding exhumation and repatriation. Unlike the British, the German authorities never adopted a ban on exhumation and repatriation for its war dead; however, according to Dominiek Dendooven's research this task was considered a private matter that was undertaken at the family's expense.[489] This may have perhaps been due to the fact it was arguably easier to transport the war dead back to Germany, particularly on mainland Europe, and partially as a result of a central war graves organisation not formally being tasked with policy-making until much later than for other nations. However, it cannot be ignored that in reality this may have only happened in very exceptional circumstances, as the German commemorative practices associated with the First World War placed more emphasis on the ideal of the community of soldiers, and therefore communal sacrifice, as opposed to individual graves and gallantry.

In cases where families wished to repatriate their loved one back to Germany from Britain, they needed to send to the Home Office via the Volksbund details of where their relative was currently buried and the consent of the legal next-of-kin was required. This paperwork was then submitted to the Home Office alongside the Volksbund's certificate of the former burial grounds, and the authority given by the local government in Germany or Austria for the reburial.[490] The licences issued to the families for the repatriation were due to last for three months, and were signed by one of the Principal Secretaries of State by the Home Office; no fee was required for the issuing of these licences, presumably partly as a gesture of goodwill and due to the significant administrative burden it would

488 Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers,* p. 95.
489 Dominiek Dendooven, '"Bringing the Dead Home": Repatriation, Illegal Repatriation and the Expatriation of British Bodies During and After the First World War' in Paul Cornish and Nicholas J. Saunders (eds.), *Bodies In Conflict: Corporeality, Materiality and Transformation* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), p. 174.
490 The National Archives at Kew (hereafter TNA), HO 282/21, Exhumation from Graves throughout the UK and Re-Interment in the German Military Cemetery, Cannock Chase, Staffs, of the remains of German Servicemen Killed in the First and Second World Wars, 1959-1963.

cause. [491] However, it cannot be ignored that these requests for repatriation were happening almost four decades after the death of the casualty, and after the Second World War; it could be argued that the soldierly community myth perpetuated during the interwar period no longer had as significant a role in the memory of the First World War in Germany, and therefore the movement of war dead closer to home was no longer felt to be an important part of the bereavement process. Although it is outside of the scope of this thesis to fully explore how many were returned to Germany, when considering the archival evidence relating to the construction of Cannock Chase it is clear that many individuals took the Commission up on its offer. From records found in the National Archives at Kew, there are references to 18 casualties being removed from the German Cemetery at Cannock Chase for repatriation that had been organised by the families. Three of these individuals were brought back to Austria, with the rest being returned to families in Germany.[492]

Although the idea of a cemetery like Cannock Chase had been the goal of the Volksbund and the German government had been considered for quite some time, it was not until almost a decade after the end of the Second World War that any formal agreements were reached. Indeed, the foundations for what became the German war cemetery at Cannock Chase were based on an agreement signed in Bonn on 5th March 1956 regarding Commission sites in Germany, where it was acknowledged that a reciprocal arrangement would need to be found for German graves in the United Kingdom.[493] The following agreement relating to German graves in Britain was signed by John Profumo and Joachim Friedrich Ritter on 16th October 1959, and the Agreement outlined the role of the Volksbund, working on behalf of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany. It is important to highlight that the Agreement was exclusively with the Federal Republic of Germany as opposed to the German Democratic Republic, which again emphasises the difficult geopolitical situations also associated with this work. The Agreement included plans to concentrate approximately 4,800 German war graves from both World Wars into a new German cemetery at Cannock Chase. This was a fraction of the over 7,000 war graves attributed to Germany that were buried across the United Kingdom; it thus appears that from the outset those graves that were located within pre-existing war graves plots would remain in situ. [494]

491 KALHS, MH/SE/C2/31, Documents relating to German and Dutch War Graves in Kent, 4th January 1961-12th October 1964.
492 TNA, HO 282/21, Exhumation from Graves throughout the UK and Re-Interment in the German Military Cemetery, Cannock Chase, Staffs, of the remains of German Servicemen Killed in the First and Second World Wars, 1959-1963.
493 Nottinghamshire Archives (hereafter NA), DR/1/1/2/7917 Retford, Headon, Tuxford, Wysall, Worksop: faculty for exhumation of German War Dead, 4th May 1961-26th January 1962.
494 TNA, HO 282/21, Exhumation from Graves throughout the UK and Re-Interment in the German Military Cemetery, Cannock Chase, Staffs, of the remains of German Servicemen Killed in the First and Second World Wars, 1959-1963.

The construction of the German Cemetery at Cannock Chase received some press coverage, most notably in *The Times*. In the article, it highlighted that 2,779 First World War and 3,788 of the 1939-45 War lay buried across the United Kingdom in 920 graveyards. The report emphasised that only those buried outside of Commission cemeteries would be moved to Cannock Chase, with the Commission acting as agents in the arrangements for the cemetery.[495] This is a particularly interesting article as it is one of the few times that the Commission is named within the context of caring for the war dead in the United Kingdom since the Second World War; after the death of Sir Fabian Ware, the Commission did not receive as much coverage. Furthermore, the article demonstrates the work that the Commission did on an agency basis and how intrinsically linked it was to the commemoration and care of First World War dead.

While the construction of the German cemetery was taking place, and the logistics of this work was being undertaken, the Volksbund would maintain an office in Maidenhead in order to maintain contacts throughout the United Kingdom; it is perhaps this decision that encouraged the Commission to move its offices to Maidenhead in the 1970s. Moreover, the Volksbund opted to utilise its own labour to undertake the work; although many of these individuals were recruited from Britain, as opposed to being brought to the United Kingdom from Germany. This suggests that the Volksbund were attempting to operate the organisation of this work completely separate from the Commission, in order to assert its authority over ensuring that the commemoration of Germany's war dead were upheld to its specifications without the interference of the Commission.[496] Perhaps this was partly due to the Volksbund still being in its infancy in regard to formally being responsible for honouring the memory of Germany's war dead at a federal level, and therefore wanted to maximise the impact of Cannock Chase German War Cemetery.

However, not all German war dead were taken automatically to Cannock Chase. At this time, there were approximately 1,000 German war graves situated within special plots directly maintained by the Commission; it is unclear whether the Commission directly vetoed the removal of these particular graves, but it was nevertheless made clear to the Volksbund that these graves would not be moved to Cannock Chase. Moreover, in situations where the remains of German service personnel were to be removed from graves which also contained the graves of any other individuals whose nationality was not German or Italian was to be prohibited. It is perhaps due to the longstanding alliance with Italy that enabled the disturbance of Italian service personnel if they were in a multiple occupancy grave

495 'Central Cemetery for German War Dead,' *The Times*¸ 29th June 1960, p. 12.
496 TNA, HO 282/21, Exhumation from Graves throughout the UK and Re-Interment in the German Military Cemetery, Cannock Chase, Staffs, of the remains of German Servicemen Killed in the First and Second World Wars, 1959-1963.

with German casualties, and where those graves were opened the Italian war dead were to be moved to the designated Italian plot at Brookwood Military Cemetery in Surrey.[497]

As part of the mass movement of the German war dead to Cannock Chase, regulations imposed by the British government for such work was still to be upheld. The Home Office were required to issue the necessary licences to permit the removal of remains under Section 25 of the Burial Act 1857, with copies of these agreements being sent to the Cemetery Authorities, Medical Officer of Health and the Volksbund prior to any movement taking place. Furthermore, the cost of this monumental task was to be borne by the German Federal Government, with the Volksbund liaising with the Commission in order to create the cemetery features and grave markers that are present at the site today.

However, in spite of the Commission not having a particularly active role in the actual transportation of the remains it was given a significant role by the United Kingdom government: to approach the ecclesiastical authorities about the removal of remains in consecrated ground.[498] The Commission were presumably chosen for this task by the British government due to its longstanding working relationship with these authorities, which would have arguably stood them in better stead than a new war graves organisation requesting the exhumations. This is due to both the British attitudes towards the long-term commemoration of its dead, as outlined in the introduction to this thesis, and due to the fact it may have confused such authorities regarding precisely who was responsible for the commemoration and care of war dead. Indeed, if the ecclesiastical or Cemetery Authorities had received a request from two different organisations tasked with caring from war dead, there would have been the opportunity to potentially confuse which institution was responsible for which nation's war dead.

There was a longer limit given to the validity of the licences for the war graves moved to Cannock Chase, presumably because the Home Office knew that this would be a huge task to complete in an incredibly limited time frame. In the cases for individuals moved to Cannock Chase, the licence was provided for a year under certain conditions. These were that:

- Each removal of the war dead should be undertaken with due care and attention to decency, early in the morning. The removal should be done with the ground in which the remains are interred screened from the public gaze.
- Freshly made ground lime should be sprinkled freely over the coffins, soil and elsewhere if necessary.
- As soon as the identity of the remains has been established, the remains should be placed in the approved plastic containers for transportation. If the plastic containers were found to be too small to contain all of the coffin's contents, the casualty would instead be transported in a wooden coffin with suitable and sufficient absorbent material.

497 Ibid., 6th May 1963.
498 KALHS, MH/SE/C2/31, Documents relating to German and Dutch War Graves in Kent, 4th January 1961-12th October 1964.

- The removals should be carried out under the supervision and to the satisfaction of the Medical Officer of Health for the local district.
- The remains should be conveyed safely to Cannock Chase to be reinterred; if transportation could not be carried out immediately, the remains should be transported to a mortuary and kept safely and decently until transportation and reinterment could be effected.[499]

The plastic containers that were to be utilised to complete this work were also clearly outlined in the agreements relating to Cannock Chase. These cases were to be made of a rigid plastic, with the two pieces fastened with aluminium rivets and the inside lined with a soft plastic material; these features were designed to ensure that the container was completely air and watertight. The dimensions of the casket were also clearly identified, with the recommended dimensions being 68cm x 35cm x 28cm.[500] It is clear that for all parties involved in this work that both hygiene and logistics were of paramount importance; the dangers associated with the toxins released by corpses were well-known by this time, and thus public health was a matter of great importance to also be considered.

The Volksbund were also keen to ensure that the various cemetery authorities were aware of this task prior to its staff arriving at the site, and there are a number of examples of correspondence between them and the cemetery owners. Examples of these correspondences can be seen in the county archives in Kent, a county within which significant numbers of German remains were interred. On 22nd February 1961 the Volksbund wrote to a Rector in Kent to explain its plans for exhuming German servicemen for reburial at Cannock Chase, emphasising that the site would soon be visited by its employees in order to being this work.[501] Moreover, the organisation's Technical Director wrote to inform the Vicar at Underriver Churchyard in Kent that work on the exhumation and removal of German remains in the area would take place between 15th and 25th October 1962.[502] These correspondences mirror the type between the Commission and cemetery authorities or families in Britain outlined in previous chapters, which emphasises the significance of this type of information for both the bereaved and those charged with caring for the war dead.

It appears that the work undertaken by the Volksbund moved quickly, as by 1966, the work to move the remains to Cannock Chase had largely been completed. Once the majority of this work had been undertaken, a meeting in February 1966 formally laid out where the responsibilities of the Commission and the Volksbund lay and whose authority took precedence over various aspects of the

499 TNA, HO 282/21, Exhumation from Graves throughout the UK and Re-Interment in the German Military Cemetery, Cannock Chase, Staffs, of the remains of German Servicemen Killed in the First and Second World Wars, 1959-1963.
500 Ibid.
501 KALHS, MH/SE/C2/31, Documents relating to German and Dutch War Graves in Kent, 4th January 1961-12th October 1964.
502 KALHS, P326B/3/B/7, Documents relating to Underriver Churchyard, 11th October 1962.

ongoing work, including the maintenance and horticulture of the site.[503] The site itself was designed by the architect Diez Brandi, and clearly be seen to draw influence from other Volksbund war cemeteries as well as the forest surrounding the location.[504]

This significance of how the majority of German graves in Britain were moved with relative ease may bring into question why the Commission did not use the Home Office to exact a similar approach to the British Empire dead in Britain; once again, it cannot be overstated the significance of the family of British service personnel in this task, and in particular the legal and moral practicalities associated with the work. Indeed, it is important to highlight how the Commission once again had to adapt to the differing needs of the various governments in power at the time and the construction of Cannock Chase German Military Cemetery remains a fascinating example of differing approaches. It is not clear how much coverage this work received in the British media at the time, but from local correspondence between the Volksbund and the various authorities it is apparent that the task was well-known.

However, there are a third category of individuals to be considered with this work; those who were not repatriated nor taken to Cannock Chase, and who were not in pre-established war graves plots. It appears that this situation was generally due to the fact that consent from their families could not be received, and thus the graves were in a situation of limbo. While there has not been significant archival evidence relating to this category of war dead, from anecdotal evidence it is clear that these individuals were provided with a second-class commemoration to a large extent; they were removed from the Commission's maintenance agreements with the local authorities, but the Volksbund did not assume responsibility for the grave. These examples seem to be similar to those of private memorials for British war dead; while more evidence is required, these exceptions to the rules outlined provide a fascinating example of the complications surrounding ownership of graves.

The movement of the majority of Germany's war dead to Cannock Chase in the 1960s can therefore provide a fascinating insight into the diplomatic history of the Commission's work, and how its role in these situations differed based upon the needs of the government in question. As this chapter has shown, the Commission's work in relation to this particular type of task has been a key aspect of its agency work, but has nevertheless provided further challenges to its ongoing work in the United Kingdom. The example of Cannock Chase German Cemetery, and the broader relationship between the Commission and those charged with the care of war dead from former allies and enemies, provide

503 CWGC, CWGC/7/3/3/390, German War Graves in the United Kingdom German Military Cemetery, Cannock Chase, 25th March 1966.
504 Lorraine Evans, *Burying the Dead: An Archaeological History of Burial Grounds, Graveyards and Cemeteries* (Yorkshire: Pen and Sword History, 2020), p. 145.

the opportunity to consider precisely who the Commission felt accountable to: the United Kingdom government. As has been highlighted by this thesis, unless the United Kingdom government emboldened the Commission to undertake a particular type of work the organisation was limited in its scope. This therefore enabled inconsistencies, and provided federal governments from overseas liaising with the United Kingdom government to undertake commemorative practices felt to be appropriate within their grieving practices.

To conclude this chapter, it is clear that the graves of foreign nationals in the United Kingdom provided many similarities to the work being undertaken to remember the British Empire war dead situated in the country, but also many additional challenges. Although the Commission were potentially used to having significant constraints with regard to its remit for British war graves, the graves of international dead further exaggerated these limitations. Once again, the Commission had to adapt to the needs of those with the grave rights in order to ensure that it was able to undertake its task as far as practicable, and to support other individuals or organisations trying to challenge its policies in order to guarantee that all interested parties were satisfied. The Commission were incredibly conscious of negative press potentially impacting upon its work, and thus had to be pragmatic and adaptable to continue with its task; as will be highlighted in the final chapter of this thesis, the media and the Commission often worked incredibly closely to create and maintain a positive public image of the organisation.

Chapter Five: The Importance of Public Image: The Use of Media by the Commission to Highlight their Work in the United Kingdom

Across the historiography currently covering the work of the Commission, it is clear that research has primarily focused on its work overseas. Moreover, academic studies and public viewpoints have largely followed similar patterns, and a disconnect has often been felt between the British public's perception of the work of the Commission in the United Kingdom and the broader Remembrance rhetoric. However, that is not to say that this has always been the case; many families continued to acknowledge their dead buried closer to home, and thus the reality is a lot more nuanced than both the academic historiography and popular history of the First World War has suggested thus far. In the final chapter of this thesis, how the relationship between the mainstream media and the Commission developed during its formative years will be explored. While much of this relationship has been considered before, this chapter will utilise examples of newspaper reports to illustrate the wider Press' reportage that exclusively dealt with the work the Commission was doing in the United Kingdom. These sources will be combined with documents held in the Commission's archives relating to their experiences of such situations, and highlight some of the broader work that the Commission was doing to raise its profile. Through this study, it is hoped that explanations as to why the war dead commemorated in Britain have largely been omitted from these histories can be reached.

Contrary to presumptions about the Commission's working pattern being quiet and stoic, with limited active interaction with the Press, the Commission has never shied away from both responding to and actively engaging with the public. As has been highlighted in previous chapters, much of the administrative burden faced by the Commission has concerned responding to relatives and interested groups and actioning their requests where appropriate. While this has often been included in the current historiographies, the actual presence of the Commission at events has often been omitted; moreover, the work that would be called "outreach" today has largely been ignored. Through discussing some of the tasks that the Commission were doing in its formative years in this chapter, it is hoped that a conversation about this subject can begin. This particular chapter will primarily utilise sources from the interwar years, as this was arguably when the Commission was most focused on emphasising its role in remembering the First World War dead; as its job expanded, the differentiation between the two World Wars muddied. Moreover, it was during this time period that many families and communities were at the height of their grief, and were thus more likely to be visiting these sites of memory and holding commemorative events. For the sole purposes of providing context and a springboard from which further research can be included, some later examples of media interactions were utilised as sources in order to highlight how the relationship between the media and the Commission shifted over time.

There are countless references to a representative of the Commission being present at the various events designed to publicly commemorate the First World War dead, and employees of the Commission were often invited to speak to the public about its ongoing work. These interactions tended to focus on the organisation's global commitment, but they nevertheless highlight the fact that the Commission has always known the power of the press. Over the course of this chapter, examples of the ways in which the Commission have utilised various media platforms over the last century will be highlighted and explored within the broader context of its work in the United Kingdom. Through these case studies, it is apparent that the Commission have actively sought to create a positive public image in order to assert and maintain its authority over the care and commemoration of the British Empire's war dead.

As has been shown throughout this thesis, the role of the Commission in England, and the broader United Kingdom, varied considerably from its remit overseas due to the unique circumstances faced here. Indeed, due to this differing situation, the Commission's work in the United Kingdom has largely been ignored both in the academic world and among the public. It has been generally presumed that the public has always primarily been familiar with the work of the Commission overseas, and have first interacted with the organisation while visiting the former battlefields. It is clear that the Commission's focus was largely on those remembered overseas for two reasons: sites abroad were less likely to be regularly visited by the bereaved, and the graves found in the United Kingdom were more complicated in terms of the Commission's involvement. As it was still a relatively new organisation, the Commission prioritised gaining the public's support by focusing on the architectural feats and beautiful horticulture found in the overseas cemeteries, not those in the United Kingdom that were often difficult to maintain and provided additional legal issues. However, it is clear through the research presented in this thesis that this does not provide a full picture of the reality and that the answer is more nuanced than previously believed. Indeed, while it cannot be overlooked that many individuals first interact with the Commission's work through visiting the former battlefields found along the Western Front, the graves found in the United Kingdom have been utilised as a part of Remembrance practices in Britain since the immediate aftermath of the First World War.

Although these sites of memory have not necessarily been acknowledged in public discourse, and focus on commemoration in Britain has primarily been on war memorials, their importance within spaces of grief and mourning cannot be ignored. They were often the focal point of private acts of grief for families and ceremonies for the bereaved to share their mourning publicly were regularly featured in local media. Through analysing the Commission's meeting minutes, and references to ceremonies at cemeteries and churchyards across the country in newspaper articles, it becomes clear that the interaction between the public and the sites across Britain varied drastically depending on the

time period in which these sites were being visited. Indeed, rather than being sidelined by war memorials, they were often incorporated into local acts of mourning. While the work of the Commission in maintaining these sites may have not been at the forefront of such conversations, the impact of its work on the public's consciousness has been relatively consistent.

Moreover, rather than being a stagnant area of concern as previously represented, the chapter will argue that the Commission's involvement in the British public's commemoration of its war dead has been a more fluid commitment that has varied and adapted in line with the wider perception of the First World War. In particular, it will be highlighted that the work of the Commission in the United Kingdom was underrepresented at times due to the deaths of veterans and those who personally knew the dead. It is clear that the impact of the war dead found in Britain and the longevity of remembering them bears parallels to civilians who die outside of a conflict; the remembrance practices found at their grave sides altered as they shifted out of living memory.

This chapter will also begin a discussion on the broader endeavours that the Commission had to increase awareness of its work. While the Commission has always been aware of maintaining a positive public image, its role has adapted over time. Indeed, much like the changing nature of memorialisation rituals connected to the First World War, the Commission has transformed from being an institution maintaining these sites in a passive way into a modern heritage organisation that actively seeks to increase the awareness of its work among the public. This shift has enabled the Commission to re-engage actively in the public's memorialisation practices globally, including in England. Furthermore, through this focus on increasing awareness in a more proactive way, the Commission has begun to change how the sites of memory in England are seen by the British public and enabled the organisation to highlight its commitment to care for individuals commemorated on British soil.

The chapter will be broken down into different sections, in order to reflect the different types of media that have been utilised by the Commission to inform the public of its ongoing work. These will include external sources, such as newspaper cuttings, in addition to anecdotal information held in the Commission's own archive. Unfortunately, some of the media mentioned has been lost over the last century; nevertheless, its importance cannot be ignored and thus these sources are referenced based on the anecdotal evidence provided by other archival documents.

A Brief History of Media Interactions with the Commission's Work

Before providing examples of how media has been utilised by the Commission, it is important to understand the relationship between the media and the evolving commemoration practices associated with Remembrance in Britain. Through researching the local and national newspapers for records relating to remembering war dead, it is clear that the trends found in the mainstream media often reflect the patterns found within the historiography of the First World War. In national media, there have been peaks and troughs in interest towards the First World War and its impact on modern Britain, but this fascination has never completely disappeared; rather, it has evolved. This can also be seen on a more localised scale through the regional, with unveiling ceremonies and other commemorative events being regularly reported in these outlets, perhaps as a way to continue to connect local communities with the war dead they had lost.

From the outset of the Commission's work in the United Kingdom, there was a degree of interest in their work in the national press. Most notably, *The Times* and the *Daily Mail* have regularly included reports about the Commission in their coverage. In addition to sharing details of the annual reports, *The Times* was a particular advocate for highlighting the Commission's work. An article from the eve of Armistice Day in 1929 is particularly interesting as it compared the work of the Commission at home to its work abroad. In the piece, there was an anxiety expressed about there being a 'danger' that the 67,000 graves in sites across the United Kingdom may be forgotten. The article utilises Hampstead Cemetery in London as an example of one of the many 'sadly forlorn' cemeteries found across the country, and critique the Commission for its lack of care for these war graves. Indeed, the writer notes that the local residents would gladly arrange for local rose bushes to be planted in order to make the site appear more like the cemeteries overseas, but the Commission was yet to give permission for this request.[505] Through this article, it is clear that the emotional impact and legacy of these cemeteries was of significant interest to the public; although the nuances found in the United Kingdom were not necessarily understood at this time, the caring for the graves to the highest of standards was of real importance.

It appears that after unveiling ceremonies of cemeteries and war graves plots had largely been completed in the 1950s, there was a loss of interest in commemorative events more generally during the 1960s and 1970s. A range of reasons can be utilised to explain this, most notably the deaths of the majority of First World War veterans, but nevertheless there is a sharp decline in media interest towards the conflict in this period. This matches the popular arguments being displayed in both academia and public history at this time; the prevalent "mud, blood and futility" movement that still

505 'War Graves at Home and Abroad,' *The Sunday Times*, 10th November 1929, p. 18.

dominates popular understanding of the conflict further changed the media's interest in this war and how wider battles were remembered decades later. Instead, media attention during the mid- to late-twentieth century seems to have focused less on the individual stories of First World War casualties and instead drawn attention to the losses sustained on a mass scale, with numbers and statistics outweighing the distinctive stories of particular casualties. The change in the style of reportage around the memory of the First World War during this time can perhaps also explain why cemeteries found in Great Britain and on the Island of Ireland were largely ignored; smaller cemeteries and churchyards, like many of the ones found in these areas, would not have been able to fulfil the needs of such stories. Indeed, the *Blackadder*-esque image of going "over the top" did not appear, in the media's eyes, to be represented in the stories of the casualties buried at home.

A paradigm shift in the historiography of the First World War, as outlined in the literature review, occurred again in the late 1980s and into the 1990s, with the creation of mass media and through the British experience of conflicts such as the Second Gulf War and the Iraq and Afghanistan campaigns. Once more, people were experiencing the loss of a loved one on a slightly larger scale and in a military setting than had been faced for some time; indeed, the image of coffins being returned to the United Kingdom via Royal Wootton Bassett, before being paraded through the local high streets in funeral corteges, became more commonplace. Consequently, it became important to connect the current conflicts to the heroism and sacrifices bestowed on the dead of the two World Wars. This arguably made the losses in contemporary conflicts more palatable to the British public, as it placed these casualties within the greater history of heroic sacrifices for their country.

The creation of mass media and the internet, and later social media, added to the interest that already existed in the First World War during the 1990s. For the first time, records previously held in archives across the country that related to early twentieth century history could theoretically be viewed, digitised and shared with people from across the globe. Families became increasingly interested in their own ancestry, and thus began to research these areas. As a consequence of the research that individuals were doing into their genealogy, many people found that they had previously-unknown relatives commemorated by the Commission, or finally learned where these individuals were laid to rest. This newfound history often encouraged people to make pilgrimages to these sites on behalf of their families, and learn more about the organisation who cared for the British Empire's war dead as a by-product. The Commission's own databases have been in the public domain since the 1990s, with its latest iteration being publicly available since 2011. Here, individuals could find out key information about the graves of the casualties, including next of kin details and grave locations.

However, there appears to have been a disconnect over the last century between the public consciousness about the First World War dead and the organisation who maintains them. Many

members of the public often confuse the work of the Commission with being one of the duties of other organisations and charities associated with Remembrance practices, such as the Royal British Legion. This appears to be a consequence of the lack of interest in the Commission's work during the mid-twentieth century, which has led to inaccurate information being perceived as fact. Furthermore, this common viewpoint is further confused by individuals who believe that this work is one that is undertaken by a government body. The Commission is clear in the media that the organisation is the sole custodian and that, while its work is funded by member governments, it is not a government body; nevertheless, this can be confusing for those being introduced to its work. These distinctions are paramount for the sites overseas but, as has been shown in this thesis, when considering the examples of the Commission's work found across the United Kingdom based this is not always wholly true.

There is a clear distinction between how much attention the work of the Commission in the United Kingdom received when compared to its overseas counterparts. Through the examples shown in this chapter, it is clear that the United Kingdom war graves did receive some attention, but the primary focus of Remembrance from the outset was on highlighting the connections between localised war memorials and the dead buried overseas. This once more emphasises the fact that the situation found in Britain was a lot more complicated than those elsewhere in the world; many of the war dead in Britain were in graves that pre-dated the Commission or were owned by their families, and thus did not fulfil the image of immaculately kept cemeteries and memorials that the Commission based its image upon. Thus, the Commission do not appear to have actively promoted its work in Britain to the same degree as its sites overseas, or at least not after the death of Sir Fabian Ware.

However, it is clear that the situation in Britain was a lot more nuanced, with certain areas of the Commission's work here gaining more coverage than other aspects. Indeed, the next section of this chapter shows just how well-covered the Commission's ongoing work was in localised media during the immediate aftermath of the First World War, with Ware often being mentioned as attending events such as unveiling ceremonies. There was a resurgence of interest into the Commission's work with the creation of cemeteries and memorials for the Second World War, which are outside of this thesis' remit, but once again the interest waned in the mid-twentieth century. It is arguably only in the last few years, partly due to the global pandemic, that the stories of those commemorated in the United Kingdom have once again been given attention to the same extent that is seen in the example newspapers.

To summarise this section, the media have always had a degree of interest in the work of the Commission, but this has matched the broader interest in the history of the First World War shown by the public. Throughout the last century, there has to some extent been a mention of the Commission's work in the United Kingdom, but this has often been made in broader reference to the cemeteries

overseas as opposed to an isolated conversation about them. Indeed, there has primarily been a focus on the ceremonial importance of Commission sites, and later the stories that can be learned at these locations, as opposed to a great deal of discussion about the operational side of the Commission's work at home. As the next section shows, many of the larger sites that conformed to the image of sites of memory expected for British Empire war dead often gained more attention in the mainstream media, both through their creation and the longevity of their ceremonial importance within the local community.

The Ceremonial Importance of Commission Sites and its Portrayal in the Media

As has been shown through previous histories relating to the commemoration of the First World War in Britain, the ceremonial importance of Commission sites as part of its cultural memory cannot be overestimated. Images of military cemeteries from across the globe are regularly featured in broadcasts and articles about the two World Wars, and these expansive sites are synonymous with the popular memory of the First World War. The Commission have always been aware of the significance of its role in Remembrance rituals, and have thus made a considerable effort to ensure that its work is represented in the most positive way possible. While there are many reasons why the focus on the Commission's work in the media has primarily surrounded its work overseas, the Commission did not completely neglect to cover its ongoing work in the United Kingdom. Indeed, much like the majority of the sites in its care in Britain, coverage of these locations were often on a smaller, more localised scale. In this section, instances of historic local newspaper articles will be used as an example of just one way within which the Commission's work in the United Kingdom was presented to and shared with the public.

Primarily, these articles tended to be focused on recording the unveilings of local cemeteries as these were often events that were both known to and well-attended by the community. Regional newspapers in particular often undertook this task by describing these ceremonies in the same way as the unveilings of local war memorials were discussed; this is due to the fact that abstract features, such as Crosses of Sacrifices, could be and were often repurposed as centralised local war memorials. An interesting aspect of the Commission's response to this increased interest is the fact that the Commission utilised many of these stories to connect its work in the United Kingdom to the tasks being completed overseas, as opposed to focusing on its role in Britain. Through these stories in regional and local newspapers, it is apparent that the Commission were aware that the sites in Britain did not quite match the image it was trying to portray of its work, and therefore tried to bring back the attention to its sites overseas. Indeed, by connecting the war graves found in municipal cemeteries and churchyards in the United Kingdom to those closer to the fighting fronts, the Commission could highlight its key cemeteries and memorials to the public and emphasise the beauty in the work that the

organisation was able to do when families were not directly impacting upon how their loved ones were commemorated. The complex relationship between the Commission and its sites in the United Kingdom can be seen through the reportage of its unveiling ceremonies, with the main part of services being primarily based around the Cross of Sacrifice, and thus the communal sacrifice, as opposed to the individualised graves that were largely scattered throughout the cemetery.

In the interwar period, ceremonies to honour the memory of the First World War dead locally was of great interest to traditional media. For example, *The Times* and the *Daily Mail* often included articles relating to the topic on or around what became Remembrance Sunday. In 1933, *The Times* highlighted the work of the Commission that year using statistics from the organisation's Annual Report with a particular focus on the number of Crosses of Sacrifice being erected locally. Indeed, the article highlights that 323 Crosses had been erected in cemeteries in the United Kingdom and that these monuments were increasingly being used as focal points for local Armistice Day services.[506] The fact that the Commission's work was being directly connected to such commemorative pieces emphasises that the public was aware of its work in the United Kingdom, and the value that the Cross of Sacrifice in particular held within the rhetoric of Remembrance.

The importance of having the local community at the unveiling of cemeteries and memorials near to them is something that was heavily considered. Indeed, one of the key areas discussed at early Commission meetings when considering how to appropriately assume responsibility of its estate was the way in which the organisation was going to ensure that it had staff representation at unveiling services, which included sites in the United Kingdom. It is apparent that, similarly to the format utilised at cemeteries overseas, such ceremonies in Britain usually involved the unveiling of the Cross of Sacrifice as part of a Christian-inspired service, which also celebrated the erection of permanent Commission headstones over many of the war graves. These services, which occurred at larger cemeteries across the United Kingdom, were of particular importance to the Commission, as shown by regular references to them in the organisation's meeting minutes.

When considering these unveiling ceremonies as part of the role of the Commission in the United Kingdom, it must not be forgotten that the Cross of Sacrifice is only usually installed at sites where there are 40 or more burials. Therefore, these services would have primarily taken place at larger burial grounds or where there were potentially pre-existing war graves plots. Although these may have only had a few war graves, in comparison to the regimented plots found overseas, it would nevertheless have been easier to acknowledge the casualties remembered at that site where the Commission's work was arguably more obvious. However, the majority of sites that include war

[506] 'War Graves,' *The Times*, 10th February 1933, p. 9.

graves in the United Kingdom contain 10 or fewer commemorations and would thus be unlikely to have a Cross of Sacrifice to direct people to the war graves.[507] Thus, it must be acknowledged that the majority of cemeteries found in the United Kingdom would have not been given the same treatment, and it is unlikely that there was a significant delegation of Commission staff present when these headstones were installed. Rather, this is likely to have been an exclusively familial event, where private acts of mourning could be expressed outside of the media spotlight. This gap in the historic record is a significant one, and once more reiterates that the Commission's primary goal was to highlight the larger, potentially more impressive, sites in its care.

Unveiling ceremonies of the larger sites were regularly reported in local media during the early years of the Commission, thanks to both a continued interest in remembering the dead and a potentially hospitable ongoing professional relationship between the Commission and the Press. One of the most prolific examples of such reportage that is found in the *Hampshire Telegraph* is the unveiling of the Portsmouth Naval Memorial by the Duke of York in 1924. Although the event was also covered by a special correspondent from *The Times*,[508] the local newspaper article arguably includes more information about the event – perhaps due to the personal connection of the *Hampshire Telegraph*'s readership. The piece, which covered most of the page and included a dominating image of the memorial across the centre of the page, supported the broader ideas of memorialising those who had made the ultimate sacrifice and who were missed by their loved ones. It was reported that in 'hundreds of homes' the memories of the dead were recalled as a result of the unveiling, with an 'enthusiastic and loyal welcome' being extended to the Duke of York at the ceremony.[509] The formalities of the service are described in vivid detail, and the service appears to have largely followed the typical protocol for such occasions: members of the Armed Forces, other officials and local inhabitants, in addition to those with relatives named on the memorial, were present at the event. The report estimated that between nine and ten thousand tickets had been issued by the naval authorities, but those who had joined the service from vantage points nearby could have easily trebled that number. Of those in attendance, around five thousand people were relatives who had travelled far and wide to attend the ceremony.[510]

According to the coverage in the *Hampshire Telegraph*, the official attendees were split into two groups: the 'friends of the fallen' and members of the Armed Forces. Some two thousand serving

507 90% of all war grave burial sites found in the United Kingdom and Ireland contain 10 or fewer graves, highlighting the importance of families when considering where their loved one was laid to rest. Commonwealth War Graves Commission in the United Kingdom and Ireland [Leaflet providing an overview of the CWGC's commitment in the UK] (2020), p. 4.
508 'Naval Memorial at Portsmouth,' *The Times*, 16th October 1924, p. 11.
509 'Unveiling of Portsmouth's Naval War Memorial,' *Hampshire Telegraph and Post*, 17th October 1924.
510 Ibid.

members of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines were present, as were retired Admirals who may have commanded those remembered on the memorial; however, the military representatives do not seem to have been seen as the most important members of the congregation. Many of the members of the public present were noted to have been 'women and girls' and were considered to be responsible for 'every kind of floral tribute' that could be found at the memorial after the event. When commenting on actions after the cessation of formalities, the site was alleged to have been 'literally besieged' by the relations of those listed on the memorial. This emphasis on the feminine contribution to the event is something that is synonymous with discussions around commemoration at this time; as has been discussed previously, public displays of grief were largely expected to come from women, who were at the forefront of historic funerary practices. Indeed, the expectation among the public on women to prepare the remains for burial was altered through these memorial services, where instead they were expected to lay posies and wreaths and lead the community in their mourning.

The fact that the Mayors and Corporations of Portsmouth and Gosport are said to have been assigned space in 'a corner on the western side' of the monument is particularly interesting.[511] At modern ceremonies surrounding war memorials, representatives from all levels of government are considered to be among the most important individuals in the event and are therefore given a prime spot at which to stand during the service. The fact that, in 1924, these same individuals were placed in the corner, as opposed to front and centre, underlines their perception as minor participants in such events at this time. Furthermore, this detail highlights how commemorative practices towards war dead have altered over time in Britain. In debates surrounding remembrance practices of the First World War, historians regularly highlight that the women who had experienced the loss of a loved one were considered to be the most important at such events. Indeed, the mothers of the deceased were often viewed as the primary mourners of the dead and were thus the key figures in attendance at commemorative events. This is supported by the placement of individuals at the event reported in Portsmouth, with the widows, mothers and daughters at the centre of the service. Thus, it is clear from this newspaper article that there was a hierarchy at such unveiling ceremonies, and this order has differences with modern-day events. These distinctions can also be seen at other contemporary ceremonies such as the events surrounding the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior in 1920.

As shown by the *Hampshire Telegraph* article, unveiling ceremonies for the Commission's memorials and cemetery features appear to have been popular occasions for the public to attend, with similar numbers of people attending unveiling ceremonies for locally-created plots by the Commission across the country. Indeed, one of the most popular features of a Commission site among the public was the Cross of Sacrifice, which served as the focal point of many unveilings and later local remembrance

511 Ibid.

services. The choice to focus on unveiling the Cross of Sacrifice, as opposed to the individual graves, may have been both for moral as well as logistical purposes; by emphasising the importance of an abstract aspect of the Commission's architecture, as opposed to an individual's grave, private acts of mourning would have been able to take place whilst ensuring that those whose loved ones were buried overseas could also attend and feel connected to those they had lost.

The Cross of Sacrifice is a feature that has dominated the public's understanding of the Commission's work for decades, and the unveiling ceremonies at which it was at the centre were often in the presence of people who were very important within either the Commission or the local community. For example, the Cross of Sacrifice erected by the Commission at Plumstead Cemetery in Woolwich was unveiled by Colonel HS de Butt in 'the presence of a large gathering,'[512] whilst at Ramsgate Cemetery Sir Fabian Ware was charged with the unveiling. The fact that these individuals opted to attend these ceremonies shows their acknowledgement of the importance of such events to a community, while simultaneously giving the Commission the authority and legitimacy that may have encouraged more Press coverage and community turnout. Indeed, this is reflected in the references to high numbers of attendees in many of the newspaper articles. At Ramsgate, for example, it was reported that 'nearly two thousand people were present'[513] at the unveiling of the Cross of Sacrifice in the local cemetery. While this high turnout could have been created by individuals wanting to see whom among the social elites attended it can also be suggested that, to the local people, attending these ceremonies was deemed to be an essential act made by them as a way to honour those from their community who had made the ultimate sacrifice.

As highlighted in the reportage regarding the unveiling of the Portsmouth Naval Memorial, in most cases those in attendance at these events included local dignitaries; when members of the Armed Forces and other social elites were not in attendance, the Mayor of a particular town was often called upon to unveil the Cross of Sacrifice.[514] Invariably, the Commission had a presence at these events and could thus provide a report to the Commissioners about the event at the following Commission meeting, which means that historians can often connect these items with the local media reports of the event. Other regular attendees were representatives from the Armed Forces, and in particular the local Regiment. This is particularly important as, although some may not have joined their local Regiment for a range of reasons, the fact that there was a military presence showed that the Armed Forces were

512 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/93 (WG1831/35), 93rd Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 10th November 1926, p. 2.
513 Ibid.
514 Examples of this include the unveilings at Watford Cemetery, CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/118 (WG1831/60), 118th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 13th March 1929, p. 3; as well as Linthorpe Cemetery, Middlesbrough, CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/90 (WG1831/32), 90th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 14th July 1926, p. 3.

connecting with their comrades and regimental history, and therefore understood the importance of remembering those they had lost both locally and personally. For example, at Mansfield Cemetery in Nottinghamshire, detachments from both the Notts and Derby Regiment (sometimes colloquially known as the "Sherwood Foresters") and the Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry were present at the unveiling of the Cross of Sacrifice at the site.[515] It is interesting to note that ceremonies at which the Armed Forces had a significant presence seem to have conformed to the expected format of a Remembrance service that a modern audience would be familiar with; both the Last Post and Reveille were sounded at Mansfield, and the National Anthem was reportedly sung as part of the service.[516]

Through studying the passing references to cemetery unveilings found within the Commission's meeting minutes, it is apparent that both the architecture of the organisation and the Commission staff themselves had a fundamental role in these services early in its history. As can be expected, the events in the United Kingdom are generally viewed as being comparatively smaller than those occurring along the former battlefields, yet the fact that they were still popular among the public emphasises the importance of expressing loss through public acts of mourning. It is interesting that the Commission did not capitalise on this moment of centralised focus to highlight its work at home; perhaps the complicated and as-yet unresolved nature of its work in the United Kingdom meant that the organisation wanted to direct the public's attention away from the individual graves and more towards those civic, abstract forms of remembrance that appeared to prove popular within local communities. Nevertheless, the importance of the cemetery features that are now synonymous with the Commission's work at these ceremonies cannot be overstated.

It is clear that the Commission were very aware of the importance of the Cross of Sacrifice to the local community, as there was much discussion about the form these features would take in the United Kingdom and how similar they would be to those found overseas. Designed by Sir Reginald Blomfield, the Cross of Sacrifice is a feature synonymous with the cemeteries found along the former battlefields, as there are very few that do not have one included within their design. This architectural feature proved popular at home too, with some communities adopting the Cross of Sacrifice as their communal war memorial or creating pseudo-Crosses of Sacrifice as their focal point of local remembrance and reflection. While they were never designed to fulfil this purpose, Crosses of Sacrifice have had a profound impact on the public, as they enabled them to have another connection to the battlefields on their doorsteps; for those who did not have the means to visit where their loved one was commemorated abroad this was often viewed as an appropriate substitute. Furthermore, it can be argued that the fact it was the most obviously-Christian symbol within a Commission site meant

515 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/118 (WG1831/60), 118th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 13th March 1929, p. 3.
516 Ibid.

that it somewhat satisfied many individuals who wished to have a cruciform symbol marking their loved one's graves.

It is clear that the Commission wanted to ensure that the Crosses of Sacrifice in the United Kingdom were explicitly connected to the former battlefields in the public's consciousness, and this was ensured by including an additional feature on UK-based Crosses of Sacrifice. Indeed, in many UK cemeteries the Crosses of Sacrifice found there often have an inscription at the base of them. The wording, chosen by Rudyard Kipling in his role as the Commission's Literary Advisor, for the base of the Cross was "This Cross of Sacrifice is one in design and intention with those which have been set up in France and Belgium and other places throughout the world where our dead of the Great War are laid to rest." For Crosses erected after the Second World War, the wording was altered so that it stated that "This Cross of Sacrifice is one in design and intention with those which mark the British cemeteries on the battlefields of the World Wars."[517] Through this inscription, the Commission were intentionally connecting these sites in the UK to the former battlefields without drawing direct attention to the state of the graves locally. Furthermore, the statistical connection of 40 burials in order for a site to warrant a Cross of Sacrifice alluded to the presence of war dead within a site without directly highlighting them to the public.

The Cross of Sacrifice is arguably one of the key motifs of Remembrance in the United Kingdom, with its symbolism and connotations actively engaging with the contemporary public's attitudes to remembering the First World War. Indeed, many of the original complaints that the Commission received about its work came from families wanting a cruciform style headstone, and so perhaps the Cross of Sacrifice provided a compromise for some of those wishing to have Christian motifs within all Commission sites. The design of the Cross is very aware of the motifs that are included, and it is clear that Sir Reginald Blomfield wanted to ensure that the architecture of this feature connected the present with the past. For example, the "Crusader's Sword" in bronze at the front of the Cross is pointed downwards. This decision is to connect the Cross with remembrance, as a historic military way of showing respect and commemoration was to point weapons to the ground. Furthermore, the Christian symbolism associated with the Crusades, in addition to the cross-shaped design, meant that the design was obvious in its intention to hark back to Britain's military past and connect modern conflicts to historic ones. Moreover, the emphasis on the sword associated the Cross with chivalric codes and the perceived godly duties of these historic knights, romanticising the past and placing the modern war dead among the heroism of Britain's past. Through this presentation of Britain's history,

517 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/286 (WG1831/228), 286th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 21st November 1946, p. 6.

the sacrifices made by those affected by the conflict were potentially more likely to be perceived as justifiable, or at least more palatable for the bereaved.

The impact of the Cross of Sacrifice on the commemorative memory of the First World War in Britain cannot be overstated. Many families were disturbed to find that their loved ones would not receive a cruciform grave marker, and thus the Cross was seen as a compromise for this. However, it was not expected to be used as a substitute grave marker; nevertheless, some families requested it to be utilised as a grave marker on their loved one's grave. Furthermore, it was hoped in some communities that a miniaturised version of the Cross of Sacrifice could be used to mark the graves of veterans. In October 1932, the British Empire Service League wrote to the Commission with the suggestion that a miniature Cross of Sacrifice could be utilised to mark the graves of servicemen who had died outside of the Commission's dates of responsibility, possibly to continue honouring those who fought for their country and had died as a consequence of this service. At this time, it appears that the Ministry of Defence did not always automatically claim these graves as being its responsibility, although some graves were considered 'non-war graves' and were incorporated into pre-existing plots in Britain. The suggestion by British Empire Service League was ultimately vetoed by the Commission; the organisation's reasoning was that the architect who had designed the feature, had 'always objected to the use of his design in any reduced form.'[518] Although suggestions similar to the one outlined by the British Empire Service League appear to have always been politely declined by the Commission, the fact that some families saw this design as an appropriate alternative grave marker emphasises its central role in Britain's commemorative practices, and perhaps explains why the Cross of Sacrifice was often chosen as the central point for services and unveiling ceremonies in the United Kingdom.

When considering the Cross of Sacrifice and the number of requests to incorporate the design into other features, such as war memorials or non-war graves, it often leads to the question surrounding the legal repercussions of using the design. Indeed, it may be wondered by those interested in the topic whether copyright claims were imposed by the Commission if it found that an individual or group had violated its claim over the original designs. While this particular area of research is outside of the scope of this thesis, it is clear that the Commission were primarily focused on maintaining a positive public image at all times, and thus there are not any references to copyright issues in the archival material that has been studied for this thesis. Perhaps this was an intentional, pragmatic approach by the Commission to keep public support; filing a copyright claim against an individual, family or small organisation hoping to do their moral duty of remembering those who had served their country would have likely been met with public outcry and significant media attention. While further research into

518 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/155 (WG1831/97), 155th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 12th October 1932, p. 13.

this particular topic is required in order to provide a more definitive answer, it can likely be presumed that copyright claims by the Commission were incredibly rare, and often kept out of the public eye as far as possible.

The unveiling ceremonies that took place at sites across the United Kingdom also provided the Commission with the opportunity to share more about its work with the public through the Press coverage. An example of this can be seen in a report from the *Gloucester Citizen* in June 1923, which was recounting the installation of a Cross of Sacrifice locally. In addition to advertising details of the upcoming event to the local community, the article also provided information about the context surrounding the erection of this monument. In the article, it is noted that arrangements between the Commission and the City Council had begun the previous year, with the Council acting as the Burial Board to grant the rights of burial and erection of memorials across the site to the Commission. The war plot within the cemetery was then selected and created, having been found to be the part of the site with the largest number of war graves near to each other. As is commonplace in such places, this was where the Cross of Sacrifice was to be erected, so that the connection between the graves scattered across the burial ground and the Cross could be made obvious.[519] Indeed, in most cases in Britain the Cross of Sacrifice is either placed near the main entrance of a cemetery, in order to grab the public's attention from the outset, or near to the largest concentration of war graves in a particular cemetery.

The context surrounding the installation of the graves within the site is also described in the article, with the ground being depicted as having been 'carefully levelled and turfed' prior to the event, and the details found on a standard Commission headstone listed within the report.[520] It was emphasised in the article that the work was carried out at the expense of the Commission; it can be assumed that this may have been included in order to highlight which organisation was legally responsible for the care of the war dead and raise the Commission's profile among the public.[521] The dignitaries expected to attend the event were also mentioned, and the guest list included a Bishop blessing the Cross and the local Mayor unveiling the memorial. Furthermore, the Commission's representation is also noted: *The Gloucester Citizen* observed that it was hoped that Sir Fabian Ware himself would be in attendance,[522] possibly due to the closeness of his family home to the site. While Commission representatives are often mentioned in such reports, perhaps the potential of the Vice Chairman of the Commission attending the ceremony created a great deal of intrigue surrounding the occasion and thus encouraged people to attend. Furthermore, the announcement prior to the ceremony shows that the newspaper

519 'Gloucester's War Graves: Cross of Sacrifice in the Cemetery,' *Gloucester Citizen*, 2nd June 1923, p. 1.
520 Ibid.
521 Ibid.
522 Ibid.

knew how important it was for the bereaved to have an opportunity to participate in collective remembrance and were thus providing them with significant warning of the event to maximise attendance.

It seems that many Cross of Sacrifice unveilings took place on a Sunday afternoon, possibly to include it as part of weekly Church services or due to the day's perceived role as a "holy day" among Christian communities. This could be a particularly helpful plan if the unveilings were occurring within the churchyard. One example of an unveiling on a Sunday afternoon is at Aylesbury Cemetery in March 1924, which was reported in the *Bucks Herald* prior to the event. Again, Sir Fabian Ware was due to attend the service and unveil the Cross, with the sculpture being dedicated by the Bishop of Buckingham,[523] thus connecting the service to religious services that were typical of the period. In the article, instructions for those wishing to attend the event are listed; it is noted that relatives, friends and members of the public are invited to the event and should be in position near to the Cross by 2.50pm, with wreaths being laid at the foot of the sculpture after the service.[524] Thus, there was a clear protocol to be followed at such unveilings: there would be a short ceremony with hymns that would be found in church services, the Cross would be unveiled by a local dignitary and then the opportunity for private reflection could occur after the cessation of the formalities. Furthermore, fact that the newspaper opted to list relatives first suggests that the hierarchy among non-VIP guests continued to be upheld as part of these remembrance rituals.

As shown previously, the involvement of the local regiment was also a key part of such ceremonies. At the Cross of Sacrifice unveiling at Lancaster Cemetery, the band of the 5th Battalion the King's Own Royal Regiment accompanied the opening hymn and played the Last Post and National Anthem, whilst a party from the nearby depot for the Regiment fired three volleys after the dedication of the Cross.[525] The ceremony was attended by various local dignitaries, including the Mayor, Alderman and members of the Commission. The report in the *Lancashire Daily Post* to accompany the event cited the information provided to the local Mayor about the Crosses of Sacrifice. However, it appears that the details given to the Press were misinterpreted by the newspaper; they erroneously wrote that:

> Wherever there was a war cemetery, one of those crosses was erected as a memorial to the dead, except in places where local conditions made it desirable to erect something of a more sturdy kind, or headstones to mark individual graves.[526]

While some elements of this introduction to the Commission's work in this report have some groundings in truth, it makes it seem that the Cross of Sacrifice was erected in lieu of individual headstones to mark the graves. Perhaps this was an understanding that was widespread across the

523 'Unveiling and Dedication of the Great War Cross,' *Bucks Herald,* 1st March 1924, p. 1.
524 Ibid.
525'Cross of Sacrifice Unveiled in Lancaster Cemetery: Work of the Imperial War Graves Commission,' *Lancashire Daily Post*, 21st May 1925, p. 7.
526 Ibid.

United Kingdom and could provide another explanation as to why there was more of a focus on the Cross of Sacrifice than on individual graves when remembering the war dead in the United Kingdom.

When considering the work of the Commission within the context of remembrance and commemorative events, there is often a focus on the sites of memory abroad. Indeed, there is much discussion about local communities "adopting" graves along the former fighting fronts of the two World Wars, and these stories continue to dominate national media outlets in the run up to the remembrance period.[527] However, to ignore the events that both historically and currently take place at sites across the United Kingdom significantly limits the historiography's understanding of interactions with local war dead. It has become clear through this research that, whilst it is relatively unknown among the general public the true scope of the Commission's commitment across the British Isles, they have engaged with the Commission's work as a secondary aspect to their own acts of remembrance. Thus, a more nuanced approach must be adopted when considering how far the public has engaged with its local war graves.

Many of the commemorative events that directly link to sites in England are connected to civic services already ingrained in the public's consciousness, such as Empire (and later Commonwealth) Day and Memorial Days. Furthermore, these services tend to have focused more on the Dominion dead buried locally than the war dead who were members of that community. As highlighted elsewhere in this thesis, this is possibly due to a feeling among the community that the families of the Dominion dead were less likely to be able to visit their loved ones regularly. An example of this appears at the 204th Meeting of the Commission in April 1937, which noted that the Orpington Branch of Women's Section of the British Legion had written to the Commission, expressing their intention to place some flowers at the gravesides of the Canadian graves at Orpington as part of their Empire Day celebrations, which occurred annually on 24th May.[528]

While it does not appear that this group were asking permission from the Commission to undertake this act of remembrance, especially as it is within land owned by the local church rather than the Commission itself, the fact that the organisation was approached by the British Legion emphasises that its work was known to be connected with the graves at Orpington. Indeed, even today the Commission usually requests to be made aware of events taking place in its sites as a courtesy rather

527 One example is the "Flower children" at Arnhem Oosterbeek Cemetery in the Netherlands. An example of a media reportage of this can be found at 'Flower Children from 1945 Wanted for 75th Memorial Service in Oosterbeek,' *Renkum News.Nl*, 2019. Available at: https://renkum.nieuws.nl/market-garden-news-english/47924/flower-children-from-1945-wanted-for-75th-memorial-service-in-oosterbeek/ [Accessed 15th June 2020].
528 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/204 (WG1831/146), 204th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 14th April 1947, p. 7.

than as a way of gaining permission. In this case, the request appears to have been met with little opposition from the Commission, as by the 205th Meeting in June 1937 it had been reported that members of the local section of the British Legion had visited Orpington (All Saints) Churchyard on Empire Day and had held a ceremony at the Canadian plot in the site; as part of the ceremony, they had placed flowers on the graves.[529]

This practice matches many of the common features of modern Remembrance in Britain, with many schoolchildren visiting the former Western Front as part of an educational trip to learn more about the First World War. Much of the descriptions of these events, with small tokens being laid at the graveside of certain casualties, match the way historically people engaged with the war dead and provide an insight into the rituals that have become ingrained within Britain's remembrance practices and ceremonies. In particular, the fact that children were being encouraged to visit these sites suggests a twofold reason: to remember the dead, and to ensure that the rhetoric of "never again" is upheld. Indeed, many believe that seeing the scale of losses, the ages of the casualties and hearing the stories of the individuals remembered at that site will make the subject matter being discussed more poignant and memorable; in military history circles, it is commonplace to hear individuals discussing their first trip to the former Western Front as a child or young adult, and how this impacted on them so greatly that they continue to be fascinated by the topic and to visit these sites of memory.

Canadian casualties in particular appear to have been a focal point for many ceremonies near to where they had been based during the First World War, as services at sites with large numbers of Canadian casualties were often reported in Commission's meeting minutes. For example, on 21st June 1937, local schoolchildren from Folkestone, Sandgate and Hythe participated in what was described as being by then an annual ceremony at Shorncliffe Military Cemetery in Kent. As part of this service, they placed flowers on all of the war graves at the site; at the time of this particular ceremony, the majority of the war graves at this location were for Canadian casualties. This event was added to further by the presence of a representative of the Canadian High Commissioner and 160 Canadian schoolchildren who were visiting England at the time.[530] The connections between the local community and the war dead are clearly important to these events; many of the schoolchildren from England in attendance would have been the children of current service personnel, and their proximity to the military camps that were situated along the Kent coastline meant that regular interactions with members of the Armed Forces was highly likely. By connecting the dead with the living's own local

529 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/205 (WG1831/147), 205th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 9th June 1937, p. 5.
530 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/206 (WG1831/148), 206th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 14th July 1937, p. 5.

and national histories, it enabled the creation of foundation stones intended to remind the next generation of their predecessor's sacrifices and ensured that they were not forgotten.

Another example of Allied services being a key part of the remembrance calendar comes from American communities. While there are only four sites in the United Kingdom dedicated to American serviceman and cared for by the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC), three of which commemorate Second World War dead,[531] American Memorial Day ceremonies on 30th May remained a key part of remembering United States war dead in the United Kingdom. This was highlighted at the Commission's meeting in June 1936, where it was mentioned that an annual ceremony in the American section of Brookwood Cemetery had been held the previous month. At the event, a wreath was also laid by the American community on the Cross of Sacrifice in the British part of the cemetery as a symbolic way of connecting the contributions of all Allied service personnel to the war effort to the service.[532] At a meeting a year later, the Memorial Day commemorations were mentioned again; at this particular anniversary, the Commission was represented at the service by Captain Murphy.[533]

Captain Murphy, in his role as the Area Superintendent for the United Kingdom, attended a number of events on behalf of the Commission. For example, when the British part of Brookwood Military Cemetery was visited by the Australian Coronation Contingent on 26th April 1937, prior to attending the coronation of the future King George VI, Captain Murphy was present at the site to welcome the group on behalf of the Commission.[534] The fact that this group of people, and many others like them, included a pilgrimage to visit their war dead as part of an overseas trip emphasises that, even decades after the casualties had made the ultimate sacrifice, remembering them was a fundamental part of the grief culture of each nation within the British Empire.

While the Commission may not have always actively interacted with those visiting their local graves, it appears that the organisation had an interest in who was visiting these sites. Indeed, the Commission kept records relating to other organisations who visited local graves as part of its working documents, perhaps to see if particular groups were more ardent supporters of the organisation's work than others. Most notably, the Commission often notes that members of the British Legion regularly visited sites near to them to remember the war dead; for example, local branches of the British Legion met at

531 American Battle Monuments Commission, 'Cemeteries and Memorials,' *American Battle Monuments Commission*, 2021. Available at: https://www.abmc.gov/cemeteries-memorials [Accessed 23rd February 2021].
532 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/195 (WG1831/137), 195th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 10th June 1936, p. 4.
533 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/205 (WG1831/147), 205th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 9th June 1937, p. 6.
534 Ibid.

Kensal Green Roman Catholic Cemetery, Greenwich Cemetery, Morton Cemetery and Hendon Park Cemetery in March 1939 as part of a widespread commemorative event organised by the group.[535] The fact that the British Legion opted to visit these localised graves, in lieu of or in addition to visiting Commission sites close to the former battlefields, emphasises that at least some sections of the local community wanted to remember all of their war dead. This also suggests that casualties buried in the United Kingdom were not forgotten in the immediate aftermath of the two World Wars, as had previously been presumed.

Although research into the legacy of the centenary is still ongoing, and somewhat outside of the scope of this thesis, media reportage suggests that there was an increased interest in the First World War during this period. Similarly to the 1929 *The Times* report about Hampstead Cemetery, in November 2013 the *Daily Mail* included a significant article about the legacy of war graves in the United Kingdom. Provocatively, and misleadingly, entitled 'Britain's Forgotten Fallen' the article has significant parallels with the 1929 *The Times* article in how it expresses anxieties about the lack of care shown towards the war graves in the United Kingdom. Comparing larger, more typical, war graves plots in the United Kingdom to those found overseas the article expresses a fear that the public is 'diverting attention' away from the 'sacred' locations closer to home and 'neglecting' to honour the memory of those buried on British soil.[536]

However, the article does paint the Commission in a somewhat positive light including a quote from the then-Director General who acknowledges the worthiness of visiting the locations in the United Kingdom; it also announces the erection of a number of visitor information panels complete with QR codes at sites across the UK. The author is also sympathetic to the fact that there are difficulties erecting green Commission sites at locations across the country; indeed, out of the planned 13,000 signs to be in place in time for the centenary, permission had been granted for fewer than 900 locations.[537] This emphasises the difficulties the Commission had to consider in the United Kingdom almost a century on from its formation; as has been highlighted throughout this thesis, the continued bureaucratic barriers and other legalities to consider significantly extended the time frames that the Commission had to work within at home.

As has been shown in this section, the use of printed Press in particular has always been a prominent feature that the Commission has used to increase awareness of its work among the British public. While the Commission is not always mentioned by name in these articles, knowledge of its work in

535 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/226 (WG1831/168), 226th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 19th April 1939, pp. 2-3.
536 'Britain's Forgotten Fallen,' *Daily Mail*, 9th November 2013, p. 42.
537 Ibid.

Britain among local communities was not wholly uncommon. It appears that the peak of newspaper articles about the Commission's work corresponds with Ware's time as Vice Chairman. Indeed, as presented in *The Northern Daily Mail*'s newspaper article, Ware himself was a prominent user of the Press to highlight the work of the Commission, and it is clear that during his lifetime he used his connections to portray the Commission in a certain way. Ware often served as the mouthpiece for the Commission's views, particularly in relation to caring for the graves of former enemies, and his words often gave the Commission the legitimacy it was looking for among the British public. Ware's importance in this task cannot be overstated, and as will be shown in the next section of this chapter, he was instrumental in bringing the Commission's work to the public consciousness in the aftermath of the First World War.

Community-Based Work and its Impact on the Commission's Image

The work that is in modern times referred to as "community engagement," whereby organisations try to share information about themselves with the local public in the hope of gaining and maintaining their support, is something that is arguably at the forefront of any act of remembrance as it enables collective memory to be undertaken. However, while there has been much discussion about remembering the war dead in this context, there has been little conversation around the smaller, localised activities that groups participated in during the aftermath of the First World War at home in Britain. Indeed, having guest speakers present to a group of likeminded people as part of a club were just as popular a century ago as they are now. Veterans' groups, local history societies and other institutions formed by people with similar interests all appear to have been fascinated by the work of Commission from the outset; there are many references to such requests in the Commission's Archives. In most cases, the group hoped that the Commission representative would provide information to them about the ongoing work it was doing, possibly in order to keep its work relevant to the audience. An example of a request of this nature was discussed at the 175th Meeting of the Commission in July 1934, where it was mentioned that Captain Murphy, at the time the Area Superintendent for the United Kingdom, had recently visited the Rotary Club in Pontefract and delivered an address on the Commission's work to the Club's members. It was reported to the Commissioners that the Rotary Club had expressed a 'great interest' in the information Captain Murphy had given them,[538] and this reaction by local societies can be seen to be replicated across numerous similar organisations. While the exact content included in Captain Murphy's talk is not recorded, the fact that members would have likely had both a personal and community-based interest in the Commission's ongoing work may explain why the talk was so well-received. In particular, it is unclear whether the talk consisted of specifically highlighting localised work as opposed to an

538 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/175 (WG1831/117), 175th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 25th July 1934, p. 3.

emphasis on sites abroad; nevertheless, the fact that there was curiosity from the public towards the Commission's work shows that it was never truly ignored by local communities. Captain Murphy's personal connections and professional background may have provided a unique insight into the Commission's work, thus making it more relatable to an audience where many were grieving the loss of loved ones in the Great War; it could be argued that, by hearing about this work from a veteran, the positive impact of the talk was added to. Furthermore, the Rotary Club may have felt that Captain Murphy's war service best placed him to talk on this subject, and to keep the memories of their lost loved ones alive in perpetuity through his new role.

Moreover, it appears that local communities often took immense pride in their local war graves and would regularly discuss the organisation in regional newspapers, which is something that is sometimes seen in anecdotal conversations today. For example, the *Bath Chronicle* published an article in 1929 which included details of a compliment that was paid to their Parks Committee regarding their local war graves. It was reported that one of their Aldermen had had a discussion with an unnamed member of the Commission who had recently come to visit the war graves in the city; this was presumably the Regional Area Director who had visited to conduct a site visit to assess the cemetery's maintenance needs. The Commission employee had told the Alderman, the *Bath Chronicle* recounted, that 'they were kept in better condition than almost any others in the country.'[539] In this newspaper article, it was added that the Cemeteries Sub-Committee had reported at one of their local Council meetings that they had received a letter from the Commission, once again stating its satisfaction at how the war graves were tended to in cemeteries across the city. This was a great compliment to the Sub-Committee, who were often empowered to do maintenance work on the war graves as part of agreements with the Commission. It appears that this letter was so well-received by the Sub-Committee that they were encouraged to support the Commission's work further on a local level, as it was reported that the they had agreed to undertake the upkeep of five additional graves at Bath (St James) Cemetery as a consequence of this praise.[540] Correspondence and informal conversations like the ones identified in this newspaper article highlights just how paramount a positive working relationship between the Commission and the relevant local authorities was in order to ensure the successful maintenance of the local graves in the United Kingdom. Although many of the records outlined in such reports do not appear to have been saved, or are often unavailable for viewing in the local archives, it can be hypothesised that letters such as the ones received by the Council at Bath encouraged authorities to be supportive of the Commission's work and take on additional responsibilities within their local cemeteries.

539 'Letter from FWG Gilby, Chaplain to the Deaf and Dumb,' *Bath Chronicle and Herald,* 21st September 1929, p. 12.
540 Ibid.

The Annual Reports were also a regular feature in national newspapers, with each one throughout the 1920s and 1930s being included in *The Times*, *The Manchester Guardian* and the *Daily Mail*. Although the reports tended to focus on the progress of work at sites overseas, there was always a reference to the work being conducted in the United Kingdom. The coverage of the Annual Reports are often more fact-based than emotive news pieces, focusing on the statistics of the locations and graves maintained by the Commission but there are regular mentions of the difficulties faced within the United Kingdom. For example, in 1927 *The Times* noted that the 80,000 graves known to be found within the UK presented 'special difficulties' due to the fact they were scattered across 10,000 cemeteries. The article further highlights that there is no opportunity to administratively group these locations as was undertaken overseas in order to save time and labour; thus, it was unclear when the final headstone would be erected here.[541] This final comment is particularly significant, particularly as a number of the key locations found overseas such as the Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial was unveiled later that year. Again, reportage such as this highlighted the severe delays to the work in the United Kingdom due to the unique situations found at home, while reassuring the public that their loved ones buried nearby would not be forgotten.

The following year, *The Times* highlighted that tenders across the United Kingdom were being called by the Commission for local firms to support the organisations' work. However, the complications surrounding this work are noted; although 157 firms had been employed, output of headstone installations had rarely exceeded 2,000 per week.[542] Comparatively, a report relating to the Second World War dead from 1946 highlighted that contracts of similar numbers were already being explored, with the war dead from this conflict being largely well cared for in dedicated plots.[543] Through studying these two articles concurrently, it is clear that the Commission largely learned from their efforts to commemorate the First World War dead by pre-arranging specific plots and ensuring that maintenance plans were created from the outset. By 1959, it was widely known by the public that it was near-impossible to achieve a satisfactory standard of maintenance of war graves in the UK due to site upkeep varying greatly from cemetery to cemetery; this was again always reported pragmatically and without criticism of the Commission.[544] Therefore, it can be surmised that the relationship between the Commission and the mainstream media was largely a sympathetic and positive one.

As this section has shown, the Commission has been a fundamental part of remembrance in Britain since the interwar period, and it has often had an authority that was respected at differing levels of

541 'Imperial War Graves,' *The Times*, 22nd March 1927, p. 9.
542 'The Imperial War Graves Commission,' *The Times*, 10th November 1928, p. 31.
543 'Care of War Graves,' *The Times*, 11th November 1946, p. 7.
544 'Differing Standards of War Graves,' *The Times*, 3rd February 1959, p. 8.

society. However, while its work in the United Kingdom may have been given attention on an administrative level, it was often misunderstood by the media and the public. This is due to the fact that many media outlets chose to focus on sites of memory abroad rather than the graves found within local sites. Indeed, whilst in the articles and meeting minutes discussed it is not clear what was included in talks by the Commission, it can be presumed that the work of the Commission abroad generally dominated the public's understanding of its work. Furthermore, with the exception of the examples where nearby sites received praise from the Commission, the organisation's impact upon the local community is largely omitted from the newspaper reports about the Commission's work. This will be explored further in the next section, which will look at the wider spatial influence of remembrance rites and rituals in Britain and how sites within the Commission's care were integrated.

How the Media was Utilised by the Commission

The Commission has always maintained a longstanding professional relationship with media outlets, which had been utilised by the organisation since its origins. Sir Fabian Ware himself was from a media background, having previously worked as an editor of *The Morning Post*, and therefore understood the importance of having the support of the Press. Indeed, it could be argued that the relationship that the Commission and the British media have today can be attributed to Ware's own connections and understanding of the Press. The Commission has always acted in a way that resembles the procedures enforced by the British Civil Service, which includes being apolitical but ensuring the media are always aware of the information that a department may wish to share. In this section, using the newspaper articles held within the collection of the British Newspaper Archives, there will be a discussion surrounding some of the articles about the Commission during its first four decades that are likely to have been sent to the Press by the Commission itself in order to raise its profile. This will be divided into three key areas: events, productions by the Commission and announcements.

As highlighted in earlier sections of this chapter, there were often reports in local media outlets regarding plans for the erection of headstones in local sites, with a view to encourage people to interact with these sites and see the completed work for themselves. One such example of this can be found in the *Burnley News* in June 1923, in which work at a local cemetery was reported. The newspaper stated that the Commission had proposed to the local Cemetery Committee that it would erect headstones over the graves of men who had died as a consequence of service in the Great War, as per its dates of responsibility, who were buried at Burnley Cemetery. This appears to have been a relatively large undertaking for the Commission in the United Kingdom, as there were an estimated 150 war graves at the site, many of whom already had private memorials chosen by loved ones on

them.[545] Furthermore, it was reported that the Commission had arranged to undertake the upkeep of such graves and erect a Cross of Sacrifice near to the gates at the entrance of the cemetery.[546] The proposal appears to have been accepted by the Cemetery Committee, a decision that was widely supported by the author of the article. Indeed, the newspaper noted that the Cross of Sacrifice would be used as 'a memorial to Burnley men who had made the great sacrifice' for their country,[547] which suggests that the Cross of Sacrifice would also serve as the town's war memorial for all who had served from Burnley, at least until a separate permanent monument was constructed. A similar article can be found the *Warwick and Warwickshire Advertiser and Leamington Gazette* from June 1929, in which the plan to place more than 23 Commission headstones in Warwick Cemetery by the IWGC was announced, with the article including that this work had been approved by the Town Council.[548] Given that local newspapers often report on regional stories that are of interest to their readership, these articles show that there was clearly an interest in the work of the Commission within local communities, and this work was deemed to be an important part of British remembrance identity in the immediate aftermath of the First World War.

Furthermore, the use of local tradespeople and materials by the Commission generated numerous articles in local newspapers, with many reports emphasising the pride felt by these communities at being involved in the Commission's monumental task. For example, the *Eastbourne Chronicle* ran a significant article in February 1930 to highlight the town's involvement in the Commission's work. When discussing the ongoing work of the Commission, who were reported as being 'constantly asked' if its work had been completed, the newspaper emphasised the involvement of a local company called Monumental Masons. It was stated that the firm had first-hand experience of contracts being 'constantly' placed by the Commission, which caused 'enormous' orders and workloads and thus supported the local economy.[549] While the focus of this particular article is clearly on the role of Monumental Masons, rather than the widespread work of the Commission, the fact that the article shows how the Commission were providing work for local communities highlights the organisation's involvement in these areas and portrays it as helping local businesses during the immediate aftermath of the First World War.

Sir Fabian Ware's involvement in early media representations was paramount, as he utilised his connections to gain significant coverage of the Commission's work and share up-to-date information

545 '"Cross of Sacrifice": War Graves Commission and Burnley Heroes,' *Burnley News*, 22nd December 1923, p. 16.
546 Ibid.
547 Ibid.
548 'War Graves in Warwick Cemetery: The Erection of Headstones,' *Warwick and Warwickshire Advertiser and Leamington Gazette*, 15th June 1929, p. 8
549 'Imperial War Graves Commission: Big Contracts for an Eastbourne Firm,' *Eastbourne Chronicle*, 1st February 1930, p. 9.

about its task. Moreover, Ware inserted the Commission firmly into remembrance practices by broadcasting on the radio each year around Armistice Day. One of these broadcasts received coverage in the *Lancashire Daily Post* in November 1942, in which it was stated that the programme was aired 'after the chimes of Big Ben' at 11am on 11th November. This particular broadcast was focused on more recent casualties of the Second World War, thus making the work of the Commission more relevant to a wartime audience, as Ware read the names over 50,000 civilians who had been killed in the United kingdom, Malta and elsewhere in the current conflict.[550] Ware was able to connect these deaths to those experienced during the First World War by stating that there was 'a ray of hope' in spite of these losses. Perhaps in a way to ensure the public their sacrifice would not be forgotten, and to further legitimise the Commission's work in the British public's consciousness, Ware announced that the Commission would ensure the names of these casualties were remembered in perpetuity.[551] Indeed, Ware cited the 'respect' shown in the Commission's work to care for those who had died in the previous war as evidence of the organisation's suitability for the task and emphasised that the Great War cemeteries in current war zones were safe and had 'suffered no wanton desecration' by the enemy. [552] The fact that this was transmitted to homes across the country on a day synonymous with remembering war dead in Britain shows the importance of such a speech; in spite of the horrors being faced once again in these communities, Ware's speech was designed to reassure the public that their loved ones would be remembered in perpetuity if they died during the Second World War, while those who had died in the previous conflict continued to rest in peace.

The radio was not the only way in which Ware and the Commission shared details of its work, as it also employed individuals to write histories and general information books about its ongoing task. The first of these texts was called *The Silent Cities*, and was released in 1929 just over a decade after the Commission had begun its work. Written by Sidney Hurst, when the book was published it was widely advertised in local newspapers to encourage members of the public to purchase and read the manuscript. Among the newspapers that picked up this announcement was the *Yorkshire Post*, which incorporated it into an issue from July 1929. There also appears to have been a film-lecture produced by the Commission in the late 1930s to illustrate its role as custodians of the war dead. Viewings of this film-lecture were reported both in the *Hampshire Advertiser* and *Hastings and St Leonard's Observer*, albeit a decade apart so they may be two separate films.[553] The *Hampshire Advertiser and Southampton Times* noted that the film-lecture was shown under the auspices of the Lymington Branch of the British Legion at the local Masonic Hall in April 1939, with two representatives of the Commission in attendance, which emphasises its importance to both the Commission and the wider

550 'Civilian Roll of Honour,' *Lancashire Daily Post*, 11th November 1942, p. 4
551 Ibid.
552 Ibid.
553 Unfortunately, it appears that any record of these films, or their contents in the forms of scripts and other ephemera, have been lost over the last century as they do not feature in the Commission's archives.

community. Both Captain Vesper and Mr FC Sillars from the Commission were welcomed by Field Marshal Sir Cyril Deverell,[554] who had served as Chief of the Imperial General Staff previously. The fact that the film was attended by such dignitaries shows the interest in the film-lecture, and thus the ongoing fascination in the work of the Commission by the general public.

Similarly, the *Hastings and St Leonard's Observer* advertised the film-lecture showing that took place in their region. The event was held at the White Rock Pavilion's main hall in January 1949, with the event being presided over the local Mayor. Although the film itself does not appear to survive in records available for public viewing, the film was reported in the newspaper to be 'a colour film' about the work of the Commission, which had been produced by 'officers of the Imperial War Graves Commission,' who had wanted to give the public the opportunity to see the 'care and attention' undertaken in its work.[555] Once again, this film showing appears to have been of great importance to the local community, as the film was seen to 'bring comfort and solace to the bereaved' of both wars by the newspaper. [556] Thus, it was clear that there was a continued interest in the work of the Commission. While this may have increased as a result of the Second World War, as evidenced by the proximity of these showings to the conflict, the fact that the films were designed to highlight the continued work of the Commission meant that it could provide individuals with the opportunity to experience the sites in which their loved ones were remembered. However, the focus on sites abroad means that there was a shift away from visiting local war graves. It is natural that sites in foreign fields would receive more attention, due to the difficulties of regularly making a pilgrimage to these locations, but the emphasis on them in such productions inadvertently ignores the sites that could be found at home. Perhaps it was felt that smaller, scattered graves that did not live up to the public's expectations of the Commission and therefore would not have the same poignant effect.

Regular updates regarding the Commission's global work can be found during the interwar period, emphasising the interest among local communities into its work. This included relatively minor details about decisions made by the Commission, which a modern audience may take for granted but would have been ground-breaking at the time. For example, it was reported in the *Birmingham Gazette* in November 1918 that 'Their Name Liveth For Evermore' had been approved by the Commission to appear on the Stone of Remembrance. [557] The famous phrase from Ecclesiasticus, chosen by Rudyard Kipling in his role as the Commission's Literary Advisor, is something that is synonymous with the work of the Commission today. The reportage of this detail in a local

554 'War Graves: Lecture to Lymington Legion Members,' *Hampshire Advertiser and Southampton Times*, 8th April 1939, p. 4.
555 'British War Graves,' *Hastings and St Leonards Observer*, 8th January 1949, p. 4.
556 Ibid.
557 '"Their Name Liveth": Inscription for the Great War Stone,' *Birmingham Gazette*, 28th November 1918, p. 5.

newspaper, particularly as it was announced close to the Armistice, highlights the fact that the care of the war dead was of great importance to the public. Indeed, at the time of the article's publication it was still unclear whether individuals could bring their loved ones home after the cessation of hostilities and how the war dead would be remembered in Britain. By sharing the details of design features regarding the cemeteries abroad, the newspapers and the Commission were making it clear that the organisation's work had just begun, and such permanent details were already being considered. This also suggests that the Commission's primary focus was on ensuring the graves overseas were appropriately marked and maintained. While there seems to be no suggestion that such a task would be replicated, the implication of the newspaper article and its focus on the work taking place overseas makes it clear that the public were perceived to be more concerned with the graves of their loved ones buried far from home.

Furthermore, amended regulations and other updates surrounding the temporary grave markers were also reported. The *Leeds Mercury* ran an article in December 1920 informing their readership of the plans by the Commission to erect temporary wooden crosses over all war graves, if desired by the next of kin, whilst a permanent headstone was being designed.[558] By 1923, the temporary grave markers made the news again, this time in the *Hampshire Advertiser County Newspaper*, in which the particulars relating to receiving the markers were reported. The *Hampshire Advertiser County Newspaper* noted the importance of these markers to the bereaved, stating that there was 'no doubt' that the possession of these crosses appealed strongly to those mourning the loss of a loved one.[559] As highlighted in a previous chapter, the scheme by the Commission to return these temporary markers to the bereaved was hugely popular, with examples of these being present at sites across the country.

Moreover, the Commission sought to legitimise itself through announcing appointments of people who were already well-known in society to Commission positions, and these were often reported in newspapers. Indeed, the appointments of Henry Maddocks MP in 1921 and Stanley Baldwin in 1936 to roles within the Commission were reported in the *Tamworth Herald* and the *Hull Daily Mail* respectively, suggesting that the additional responsibilities of these political figures were of great interest to the public.[560] Moreover, Sir Fabian Ware's role was not ignored by regional newspapers, with updates about him and his work often being included in reports. For example, when Ware died in 1949 obituaries for him appeared in some newspapers. Indeed, in the *Gloucester Citizen*, one of the regional newspapers based close to where Ware lived, lauded him as an 'outstanding personality' for his involvement in creating the Commission, and highlighted the fact he had broadcasted a talk about

558 'Soldiers' Graves: Wooden Crosses Available for English Cemeteries,' *Leeds Mercury*, 30th December 1920, p. 2.
559 'Ashes of the Crosses,' *Hampshire Advertiser County Newspaper*, 17th March 1923, p. 5
560 'Announcements,' *Tamworth Herald*, 15th October 1921, p. 4; 'Announcements,' *Hull Daily Mail*, 2nd March 1936, p. 6.

the graves of the war dead each year around Armistice for over 20 years.[561] The reportage of such details, particularly the death of the founder of the Commission, emphasises that there was a continued interest in the work of the Commission decades after its creation and indicates that its work was deemed a fundamental part of the commemorative rituals of the First World War.

Once again, the interest in the day-to-day work of the Commission highlights the fact that its work has often been a source of interest to those with loved ones commemorated by the organisation. However, there has often been a preference within such reporting towards focusing on the sites abroad. There is, of course, a reasonable set of possible explanations for this – the fact that land upon which cemeteries and memorials overseas were built were often gifted in perpetuity to and directly maintained by the Commission, in addition to the difficulties regarding mourners being able to regularly visit such sites. Nonetheless, the reportage found in these newspaper articles often ignores a large proportion of the Commission's work. Perhaps this was an intentional move by the Commission, in order to ensure the public's support for its work by ignoring the nuances found in the United Kingdom; nevertheless, it means that the public's understanding of the Commission's task is largely focused on the Western Front and other key theatres of the two World Wars.

It is important to acknowledge the cyclical nature of the Commission's interaction with the Press, as in recent years, its engagement with the public has begun to shift. Whilst it has always received details of casualties not previously commemorated by the organisation and the state of certain graves, the Commission have begun to directly engage in conversations with the public about its work more generally. This occurs both through social media and more traditional forms of interaction, such as providing talks and tours to groups interested in the work it does.

When looking at Mass Observation reports from the start of the centenary, it is clear that the Commission was not as well-known as it had been in the immediate aftermath of the First World War. Indeed, in a directive from 2014 there are only five instances of responses stating that they were aware of or had visited their local war graves.[562] This suggests that, due to the passage of time and a lack of connection with familial war dead past two generations, created a gap between the understanding of the British public of its war dead and therefore regular visitation to these locations.

As part of the centenary celebrations, and in a move to emphasise its work closer to home, in 2014 the Commission began to erect green signs similar to those found abroad across Britain. These signs were

561 'Death of Sir Fabian Ware at Amberley,' *Gloucester Citizen*, 28th April 1949, p. 7. It should be noted that the recordings made by Sir Fabian Ware appear to have been lost, thus the details covered by him in these announcements are not available.
562 Mass Observation Archives (Hereafter MO), sXmoa2/1/101/1/1/8 – GB181, Mass Observer B42, November 2014.

designed to signpost the public towards local war graves and highlight the individual's final resting place. The plaque was utilised at sites across the country, whether that location had a single war grave within its grounds or it was a large municipal cemetery with hundreds or thousands of war graves. The ongoing resource required for this project is not without its limitations: the Commission must get permission from the owners of a particular site prior to the installation of the sign, which may never occur, and thus causes discrepancies between sites. Furthermore, due to such a high number of signs that still need to be installed, it may take years for a particular location to receive a green sign. Finally, the fact that there are many private memorials and scattered graves means that, while the signs highlight the presence of war graves in a site, they do not give clear direction to all of the individuals commemorated there.

In addition, as a consequence of the increased interest in the battlefields over the First World War centenary, the Commission have continued to utilise this interest in its work by launched public engagement activities within the United Kingdom. Most recently, the Commission launched a campaign highlighting its commitment to graves within the United Kingdom, and thus encouraged people to engage with their local war dead more proactively. One example of this public engagement work has been the creation of volunteering opportunities, which has formalised much of the work being done within local communities organically. As has been shown throughout the Commission's meeting minutes, it has been a longstanding concern that the organisation were not able to maintain graves in the United Kingdom to the same standard as more popular cemeteries on the Western Front. In spite of this, an answer was never found and the matter was not fully resolved during the first century of the Commission's existence.

Moreover, the Commission have created departments and roles dedicated to external relations and media liaison in recent years. Whilst a dedicated team of media experts may be a relatively new element within the Commission's staff team, the importance of having the support of the media was not lost on Sir Fabian Ware. As shown in the previous section to this chapter, he was a regular fixture on the radio around the Armistice period, with references to him broadcasting an 'account on the work of the Commission' being included in a number of Imperial War Graves Commission meetings. Initially, he was asked to do this on the night of Armistice Day,[563] but by the late 1930s had begun to broadcast his message about war graves just after the formal two minutes' silence at 11.10am on 11th November.[564] This continued working relationship, with the acknowledgement of the Commission's

563 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/93 (WG1831/35), 93rd Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 10th November 1926, p. 3.
564 CWGC, CWGC/2/2/1/209 (WG1831/151), 209th Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission, 15th November 1937, p. 3.

role in the media, has cemented its place as a key part of remembrance practices in Britain, and has ensured that it has maintained its legitimacy as the First World War has drifted from public memory.

While there seems to have been respect of the Commission's work among the majority of the public, not everyone was fond of the Commission's work and there is evidence of this discontent in newspapers from the latter part of the twentieth century. A response to a letter in the *Aberdeen Evening Press* in 1984 is one such example. In the letters section of the newspaper, the Director of Information at the Commission at the time, Mr SG Campbell, wrote a reply to a letter from a Mr JM MacLennan dated 14th June. In his letter, the Director of Information stated that the accusation of 'more English bias' from Mr McLennan was unjust. He stated that the Commission is 'always at great pains to eschew any tendency to chauvinism from whatever direction.'[565] This shows that the Commission had a reputation among some members of the public of being Anglocentric, which may perhaps have caused interactions with the Commission to be somewhat difficult in certain regions of the United Kingdom. While this particular subject matter is outside of the scope of this thesis, it is important to acknowledge such viewpoints and begin conversations around this topic.

The Commission have also found controversy with some of the casualties it commemorates in recent years, as the interest in its work has increased once more. Many members of the public fascinated by the Commission's work have come across stories of casualties who did not die a "good" death and are still commemorated by the Commission, which may challenge individual perceptions of who deserves to be commemorated. This can include casualties who were executed for criminal activity still deemed illegal today, such as murder or treason.[566] The Commission's response to such articles in recent years has tended to emphasise that its remit is to commemorate all those who meet the organisation's criteria equally, regardless of the circumstances that surround an individual's death.[567]

Furthermore, tabloid newspapers often give extensive coverage to members of the local community who help to maintain their local war graves. Whilst often portrayed as a "good news" story, it does subtly highlight that the work of the Commission across the United Kingdom is not to the same standards expected of Commission-owned sites abroad. Many visitors to local sites with war graves expect them to follow the same standards as large Commission-owned sites along the former Western

565 'Sad Facts of Life,' *Aberdeen Evening Press*, 18th June 1984, p. 4.
566 When visiting a Commission site, it is unlikely that there will be anything that will distinguish someone who was executed from those who died in warfare or accidents. An example of three individuals executed for desertion, who come under the auspices of the "shot at dawn" reconciliation work, are from 3rd Battalion of the Worcestershire Regiment and are buried at Aeroplane Cemetery in Belgium. Commonwealth War Graves Commission, 'Aeroplane Cemetery,' *CWGC*, 2023. Available at: https://www.cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/51900/aeroplane-cemetery/ [Accessed 9th April 2023].
567 An example of this can be found on the Brookwood 1939-1945 Memorial, where Theodore Schurch is commemorated. 'Swiss Traitor Honoured at Brookwood Cemetery War Memorial,' *BBC News*, 2017. Available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-surrey-41947492 [Accessed 1st May 2021].

Front and other battlefield locations. While sites abroad have been criticised as being 'too pretty, too peaceful' and 'distant from the chaos and violence that puts these men in the ground,' sites in the United Kingdom are often critiqued for not being maintained to such a "pretty" standard. [568] With more education about the nuances found in the United Kingdom, and the challenges that are UK-specific, perhaps the majority of the public will begin to understand the work of the Commission at home and thus be able to support all facets of the Commission's work.

To conclude this chapter, it appears that the media's reaction to the Commission's work has largely been supportive, although they have generally been focused on presenting the organisation's work through the lens of sites abroad and particularly the cemeteries along the former Western Front. This focus highlights that the graveyards across Britain often do not have the same positive impact on the public's understanding of the Commission's work, which may explain why these locations do not make up a fundamental part of the memory of the conflict among the British public. Commemorative spaces tend to have a set design in order to elicit a particular response, and the scatter graves or private memorials that dominate the landscape in Britain do not fulfil the image expected by the public when considering the work of the Commission.

This chapter has focused on the impact of the Commission and its connections to wider commemorative practices across Britain. Whilst it is clear that much of the Commission's work takes place on British soil, it has tended to be presented as a secondary aspect of wider commemorative practices, particularly after Sir Fabian Ware retired from his role as the IWGC's Vice Chairman. It can be seen that the Commission's work is fundamental to our understanding of the First World War in terms of battlefield fronts. However, due to the complicated nature of the home fronts and unique situations occurring across Britain there is much work to do in order to understand the impact and scale of the Commission's operations within the United Kingdom.

568 Ross, *A Tomb with a View*, p. 186.

Conclusion

Throughout the process of researching this thesis, an overarching theme that can be found is that the discussion in this dissertation is merely the beginning of a broader debate that challenges the current historiography and popular perception of the commemoration of First World War dead. Indeed, in the previous chapters that have illustrated the ways in which the Commission commemorated First World War dead in the United Kingdom it is apparent that almost every accepted element of academic and public understanding of memorialisation is challenged, from the design and administrative elements to the media's representation of its work and reactions from the public. One of the core elements of the findings of this research has been that the Commission were often required to take on a more pragmatic approach to its work in Britain when compared to its task overseas; this was due to the increased limitations it experienced here. This conclusion will be broken down into different parts, in order to provide appropriate space to debate and reflect on some of the key findings of the research and suggest areas of further study as part of future projects.

Pragmatism, Exceptions to the Rules and Limitations Placed Upon the Commission

A clear finding of research into the topic of this thesis has been the continued pragmatism that the Commission showed when considering its work in the United Kingdom. While this pragmatism was largely due to the limitations felt by the organisation rather than necessarily a choice it actively made, it is apparent that the Commission recognised from the start that its work in Britain was going to be significantly different from its task overseas. Indeed, the involvement of bereaved families in the funerals and monuments for their loved ones meant that an element of discretion had to be undertaken in order to enable the Commission to fulfil its role as outlined in their Charter. In this section of the conclusion, the exceptionalism permitted by the Commission in the United Kingdom will be explored and explained, with discussion about scope for future research opportunities.

This research furthers the work previously undertaken by David Cannadine and Jay Winter, among others, who have found that commemoration is driven by the needs of the bereaved and thus their presence at these events gave meaning to the ceremonies and rituals associated with Remembrance practices. While this could be achieved on a smaller scale at overseas events, for the most part it was often outside of the spatial and financial control of the families to attend them; although they may have attended unveiling ceremonies, the numbers of next of kin at these events would have been much smaller in comparison to the sites at home, and the number of ceremonies at sites nearer to the bereaved may have occurred with a higher frequency. This gave the bereaved a greater control over the memorialisation of their loved ones, cemented further by the fact that many of the funerals and burials in the United Kingdom were private events financed by the families themselves.

The Commission's work in the United Kingdom ultimately provides an alternative history, both in the sense of challenging current historiography and in the hypothetical "what ifs" that often occur when considering how the First World War dead of the British Empire would have been commemorated had families been allowed to have more autonomy over their loved one's memory and grave. Indeed, the scattered graves and varying headstone designs enable modern visitors to these sites of memory to consider this as an example of the possible reality of First World War commemoration as a whole, had there not been a ban on repatriations and the Commission had not largely enforced a policy of uniform headstones overseas. This opportunity for a near-accurate representation of alternative histories is a rarity, and the fact that it exists in this case makes the topic all the more important thanks to its uniqueness.

When considering the cemeteries and churchyards in the United Kingdom, individuals visiting today may often highlight their disappointment that these sites do not match those found in France and Flanders; however, this attitude has not consistently been the general consensus among the population throughout history. Indeed it must be remembered that, at the time the sites overseas were being constructed along the former battlefields, there was no precedent set for how these locations were going to look once completed; thus, there were significant anxieties voiced at the time to challenge its existence which has been covered in the introduction. Moreover, the fact that those who were killed overseas were seen firstly as a member of the Armed Forces and secondly as an individual meant that much of the personal features that would have been expected at this time could not be created. Whilst it was incredibly modern of the Commission to make this decision based on practical reasons and concerns over inequal treatment of the dead, the impact that this had for those bereaved at home can largely be seen by the significant numbers of war casualties who were buried overseas but listed on family memorials back at home. It must be noted that more research into this particular phenomena is required, but it nevertheless poses an interesting question about how families with loved ones buried far from home adapted traditional mourning rituals to suit their own situation.

This directly contrasts the possibilities that could open up at home. Families were given a degree of choice about where their loved one was buried if they died on British soil and were able to decide how they would like the grave marked, if at all. Once the Commission had been established as the organisation formally charged with looking after all war dead of the British Empire, many of the families' wishes had already been fulfilled. Moreover, in many cases the next of kin had received the rights of ownership over the grave; consequently, the Commission could not make any decisions regarding these graves without the consent of the family. This created significant difficulty for the Commission to manage its work in the United Kingdom, as highlighted in Chapter One of this thesis.

From the Commission's meeting minutes, it is apparent that the Commission had hoped to some extent to enforce a similar style of working practice to its procedures overseas in the United Kingdom, and had believed that it would be able to persuade the families in Britain to support its endeavours through showing the organisation's care and maintenance of the Dominion war dead here. Whilst ultimately this plan was unsuccessful, it emphasises the fact that the Commission was hopeful of receiving more autonomy over the graves found in the United Kingdom. Moreover, the fact that the Dominion authorities had been the driving force behind the formalisation of the Commission's work is important in itself and more research into this area would provide a fascinating topic of study.

As a consequence of the reticence by families and local authorities to support this option, the Commission thus had to reformulate the plan and provide logical responses to issues that existed in Britain, such as the difficulties with maintenance. Indeed, the Commission had to be significantly more flexible with its policies than it had with its overseas sites, particularly regarding the marking of graves, as ultimately the families had more influence over these issues than the Commission. The Commission did not have much of a choice but to accept the fact that, in this unique circumstance, the families held more power over how their loved ones were remembered. This often meant that, when families requested certain alterations to commemorations, the Commission had to thoroughly consider its limitations and potentially make exceptions to the organisation's policies to ensure the family's wishes were granted. While this did not always happen, and was very much treated on a case by case basis, the fact that these requests were even explored shows the stark differences to its approach with overseas war dead; it could easily refuse many alterations at sites abroad, but the families with loved ones buried near to home had significantly more power.

In addition to the delicate nature of the ownership of family graves, the Commission had to consider the proximity of the graves to the families themselves. As highlighted throughout the thesis, many of the war dead commemorated in Britain were brought to locations near to their family home so that those grieving them could regularly visit and pay their respects. Through this demonstration of the traditional Western bereavement process at the time, which included a funeral service and opportunity to regularly visit the deceased's grave, any potential attempts to bypass the system would easily be discovered by those who visited the grave. Whilst this is not to suggest that the Commission would be persuaded to undertake such illicit activities, this potential additional factor may have influenced how it dealt with the war graves in the United Kingdom and allowed the degree of exceptionalism found in the United Kingdom.

Again, this may have changed over time and the Commission may have perhaps been able to have a higher degree of influence over the passage of time, particularly after the next of kin had died and the grave was no longer regularly visited by those who knew the individual. Indeed, it is apparent that

many of the war graves found in the United Kingdom have experienced a similar interaction from the public as non-war graves more generally: at most, grandchildren or people born two generations after the deceased may choose to visit the grave, but beyond this in many cases the individual shifts out of memory and their grave is largely left unvisited. Whilst it is apparent that the Commission did not use this phenomena as an excuse to put new policies into action, it perhaps explains why the war graves in the United Kingdom significantly challenge the public's understanding of the Commission's work and questions the current historiography on the topic.

When considering areas of further study that relate to this section of the conclusion, there are innumerable opportunities for wider research connected to it but were outside of the scope of this thesis. Whilst this will be covered in a later section in more detail, from a specific consideration of this finding it is clear that the provision of a direct comparison to the work in Britain with the sites overseas would be of immense importance. Through highlighting the key differences in this direct way as well as emphasising where there are overlaps, this topic could challenge the current narrative around memorialisation further and perhaps fill some of the gaps in the historiography. Moreover, without a study of this nature the public's understanding of the Commission's work can be further enhanced and enable significant discussions about the various challenges it faced and continue to experience in its work. In particular, it would be fascinating to look at these case studies through a comparison of the administrative and organisational burdens both areas placed upon the Commission, in order to consider the ways in which they overlap and how they are distinct in their own right.

These summations can begin to provide an explanation as to why the Commission chose to work in the way it does in Britain, and provide some unique and interesting debates that are near-impossible without these nuances. The importance of the next of kin in the case study of the United Kingdom cannot be overstated, and the bereaved's role in the formulation of commemoration practices and cemeteries in Britain cannot be fully explained without considering how they interacted with their local war dead. In the next section, some of the conclusions surrounding specifically how the public perception of the Commission's work differed from the reality and the influence of the next of kin's autonomy will be explained, in order to emphasise its importance to the broader study of the First World War and its impact.

Challenges to Public Perception and the Autonomy of Next of Kin

As highlighted in the previous section, and indeed throughout this thesis, the public's perception of the Commission's work was of the utmost importance to the organisation, and it often shared stories to the media about its core work overseas. However, from the viewpoint of its work in the United Kingdom it had a much more complex relationship. The fact that the families had significantly more autonomy over their loved ones killed in the First World War when they were buried nearby meant that the relationship the Commission had to maintain was significantly different. While this was further influenced by the fact that many of the families had legal responsibility, and thus their needs took precedence over the plans of the Commission, the Commission were aware that these families would be able to view changes quickly and interrupt them if appropriate. In this section, a conclusion surrounding the impact of this on the work taking place in the United Kingdom will be explained.

The case studies that were highlighted in Chapter Two largely support these conclusions, as they enabled an opportunity for the research to clearly display the concerns that were specific to the dead commemorated in the United Kingdom, and how their families chose to interact with the Commission. Whilst these individual stories cannot be expected to represent all cases, they provide an insight into some of the key issues that concerned families in Britain that were unique to the commemorations here. Indeed, it is clear that they often were aware of their power over the Commission and utilised correspondence with the organisation to effectively tell them what they wanted to do. Although a comparison of the enquiries for those with loved ones buried overseas was deemed to be outside of the remit of this thesis, based on the discussions of these within current historiography suggests that the needs of those at home versus overseas were distinct. The bereaved who mourned those buried overseas often wanted to have their loved one brought home, or to mark their grave with a private memorial; in contrast, many of the families with their war dead buried nearby did not need to request these items, as they already had them at home.

Conversely, family ownership of war graves in the United Kingdom often caused difficulties for the Commission, as it was limited in what it could do. Much of its work relied on the family's consent, as the grave owners, which meant that it was very rare that it would be able to design a cemetery in the same way it would overseas. Therefore, the visual representations associated with the cemeteries cared for by the Commission were increasingly limited in what it could achieve at sites across Britain, which impacts heavily on the public perception of the work undertaken in Britain today. In the cases whereby the Commission could have some control over the construction of sites, it was often in cases where war graves plots had been established by the local authorities, and thus the families often had limited control over the graves anyway.

A key factor of the family ownership meant that it could make significant decisions about the graves of their loved ones. This caused further delay and issues for the Commission, particularly when considering the scattered graves that would be difficult to connect with its work. From contemplating its role of marking known graves with a uniform headstone, to making decisions about how to commemorate those buried at a site where markers were not allowed, the Commission had to be considerably more adaptable than it was for individual graves at sites overseas. The result of the families having more autonomy was that there was an opportunity to highlight the importance of the Commission's work, but arguably from a modern perspective it has exacerbated the fact that the war graves found in the United Kingdom have largely been ignored in Remembrance rhetoric. Once again, this thesis is merely a starting point from which to springboard further research into this area.

Moreover, the underrepresentation of war graves in the United Kingdom has ignored their significance in explaining private versus public mourning in the aftermath of the First World War. In previous conversations regarding the mourning experience in Britain after the conflict, debates have exclusively focused on comparisons between the public mourning expressed at war memorials and commemorative services versus the private grief experienced in the home. For those with loved ones remembered in Britain, and particularly those buried within family plots or near to their home the experiences of the bereaved differ somewhat from the individuals remembering war dead buried overseas. Indeed, it can be argued that by exploring the experiences of the families discussed in this thesis we are able to see a unique experience of grief relating to the conflict, and possibly an example of civilian and military rites and rituals being utilised in tandem. Regardless of what it can tell individuals about the past, it provides the perfect example of Victorian rituals connected with death being used in a military setting, which is arguably unique from a British perspective. When writing this thesis, it almost felt as though these stories could provide an alternative history had families been able to have more autonomy over the final resting places of their loved ones in the aftermath of the First World War.

As has been highlighted in previous research, the physical grave was often the most important feature of Victorian attitudes towards death in this period. Consequently, those who were able to visit their loved one's grave on a more regular basis would have been able to adhere to these traditional rituals, and perhaps would not have needed to attend Remembrance events or participate in public acts of mourning that may be seen by others as a public duty in order to work through their grief privately. However, it may have been that they continued to attend these events in order to support friends and neighbours who were unable to do the same, and thus further emphasises the complexities of bereavement practices. Furthermore, the connection to more civilian rites when war graves in the United Kingdom were visited means that more often than not civilian approaches more generally can explain why these war graves have not been explored in the same degree of detail as their overseas

counterparts. Families would have tended to only visit those two generations apart from them in cemeteries, and therefore may have lost connections to long-lost relatives who are the generations beyond their grandparents' and therefore living memory. In contrast, pilgrimages to find personal connections to the First World War along the former battlefields continue to provide a popular way of connecting with the conflict; by being able to place the individual in an exclusively military sphere, perhaps it is easier to find that commonality.

What is clear from this thesis is the importance of the family's wishes, and how these were given greater consideration by the Commission in comparison to those with war dead overseas. Although the next of kin in Britain were able to exert greater power at home due to their ownership of the graves in many cases, their autonomy often went beyond ownership. The Commission's priority was often to ensure that its positive public image was upheld, and this often meant enabling the public to exert its control on war graves at home; this is, of course, largely unique to the United Kingdom. While this can be seen as largely a pragmatic approach by the Commission, it can also be seen from the broader perspective discussed in this section: that these war graves functioned arguably more similarly to civilian graves as opposed to military burials. As this was the reality in many cases in Britain, and the Commission and public often prioritised letting the dead "rest in peace" over concentrating them into cemeteries far from their families. This is a largely admirable approach by the Commission in order to minimise the impact of its work on the bereaved, but nevertheless provides circumstances that are much more complicated, or at the very least unique, to those found overseas.

To conclude this section, the next of kin were at the centre of all discussions relating to the work of the Commission, but its autonomy was felt in much greater detail than their friends and associates with war dead overseas. This was often due to their own legal rights being upheld, but also from a moral perspective that was upheld from the Commission: causing further upset when families had already financially and legally contributed to the burial would only lead to additional difficulties, and potential negative press that the Commission did not need. Therefore, the pragmatism shown by the Commission enables researchers interested in this topic with the opportunity to challenge current beliefs around its work through studying this in further detail, and can perhaps further the public's understanding of the complexities surrounding the work of the Commission more generally.

The Role of Veterans at Home Versus Overseas

Another finding of this thesis concerns the role of veterans in remembrance rituals, and how this often contradicts what is already believed about them. Indeed, much like the majority of this thesis, the role of veterans at ceremonies in the United Kingdom usually challenges previous historiography surrounding the topic. As has been shown in the press and Meeting Minutes highlighted in the core

chapters of this thesis, veterans were often provided the space within which to participate in public acts of grief. This further highlights the importance of further study into the commemoration and care of war dead in the United Kingdom in future research, as the mentions to veterans in this particular thesis are merely a beginning of this conversation.

Current historiography has extensively studied commemorative practices around the First World War, and have often highlighted that women, and in particular the mothers, of war dead were usually given pride of place within the ceremonies. This ceremonial hierarchy can be seen at many of the unveilings of major war memorials, and to some extent can be seen in stories relating to Britain. However, in newspaper articles relating to the unveiling of Crosses of Sacrifices or memorials to the missing maintained by the Commission in Britain, the placement of veterans within the ceremonial setting appears to differ. Indeed, rather than being placed in a corner and exclusively being used to provide music as part of the service, the local regiment and veterans appear to have been near the centre of the focal point of memorialisation.

These sources provide further opportunity for research into the veterans' experience of unveilings at larger events versus smaller, community-based ceremonies. It appears that veterans had more opportunity to participate in public grief at these localised events through the local regiment's military presence and identity. Moreover, these smaller sites at the centre of a town's centre enabled the local community to connect to its military identity, which further provided the veterans still living in that area with the option to participate as part of this history. This was not exclusively felt at historic garrison or military towns, such as Colchester in Essex or Aldershot in Hampshire, but rather at sites across the country. Indeed, the impact of military presences across the country left significant veteran numbers at places previously separated from the Armed Forces. This enabled the veteran community to explore their own grief and experiences within the confines of the community, and be further integrated in the local area's group mourning of their lost inhabitants.

To conclude this section, it is clear that some of the smaller findings of this thesis have provided challenges to existing viewpoints and historiography previously established. Rather than veterans being in the background, they were often given more prominent positions within the British ceremonies, particularly localised unveilings. Whilst additional research is required to see whether the case studies can accurately represent the full picture of veterans' experiences at such events, it is clear that the historiography into this topic is more nuanced than previously believed.

Utilisation of the Media and Manipulation of Narratives

Although the work of the Commission appears to have largely been referenced in relation to broader debates surrounding the memory of the Great War, its utilisation of the mainstream media has largely been overlooked in previous historiographies. Whilst it may initially appear that their recent interest in rebranding as a heritage organisation has meant that it is now more media-conscious, in reality this is not quite accurate. On the contrary, this longstanding viewpoint has meant that the significant work of the Commission over the years to ensure press coverage has been significantly ignored. Indeed, rather than being an incredibly passive, almost secretive organisation as it is often portrayed, the Commission and particularly Sir Fabian Ware knew how to utilise the media to the organisation's full advantage. Through having connections to the Press at its disposal, through Ware and other prominent figures in the organisation, the Commission were able to ensure that its work was well-publicised at all levels within the media hierarchy.

However, while the Commission did utilise local connections to share stories relating to the cemeteries, memorials and churchyards in the United Kingdom with regional media it was also tactical in its approach. The Commission often utilised the media to draw attention away from negative reactions to local cemeteries, or to distance the involvement of the Commission from this work where the interest was high; this was usually done through emphasising its core work taking place overseas. While this could also be seen as another way within which families could connect with their loved ones who were commemorated far away, the omission of the Commission's commitments in Britain in many major articles and Press coverage seems deliberate. The potential reasons behind this have been referenced in the chapters, and in this conclusion, but it is apparent that the Commission often relied on its core work to bolster support. As the work in the United Kingdom was incredibly complex and often challenged the values and policies it was presenting, perhaps it was deemed too complicated to mention in the media. Alternatively, it could be merely that concentration cemeteries, such as Tyne Cot, are more visually impressive than a scattered plot in a British churchyard and therefore are utilised more to highlight the scale of losses.

Much like the majority of the Commission's work, the organisation had somewhat lost its relationship with the media around the 50th anniversary commemorations. This was not necessarily due to Commission oversight, however, but more to do with where the interest of the public lay at this time; there was a clear shift into wanting to hear more about lived experiences and the battlefield landscapes as opposed to the dead and the realities of war that accompanied it. Due to the Commission being intrinsically linked with the experiences of death and bereavement, this was often seen as secondary to a story about the conflict. Moreover, due to the disconnect in this relationship inaccuracies began to appear in reportage of the Commission's work, which meant it was often not

mentioned at all in such articles. Perhaps it was these oversights that meant that the media lost almost all interest in war graves found in the United Kingdom, and perpetuated the myths surrounding the First World War that continue to be discussed today.

There has been some reconciliation between the Commission and the media in recent years, not least since the increase in interest in genealogy as a result of internet platforms such as Ancestry.com being created and TV programmes such as *Who Do You Think You Are* making this area more accessible. Through this rise in curiosity among the public about their ancestors, and the ease with which they can find out answers, the Commission has once again been discussed more in the media. The fact that the descendants of those in its care can find out where their ancestor is buried through its website means that they are able to reconnect with the past, and many of these stories create significant media interest. Moreover, broader local history projects during the centenary enabled many interest groups to be presented with the opportunity to share more about local war dead, which meant that the war dead in cemeteries and churchyards nearby were brought to the forefront of the community once more. Through the publication of local history books, pamphlets and blogs, individuals could learn more about the history on their doorstep and thus bring the work of the Commission, both at home and abroad, to their attention.

As the Commission has begun to redefine itself as a heritage organisation and has become more interpretative of the broader conflicts represented by those in its care, it will be interesting to explore how far it reverts back to its strong media relationships and how it tells the story of the organisation. Thus far, it has begun to alter its public image through being more open about its challenges, thus answering difficult questions and ensuring a range of people learn more about its work. However, it is clear that they are not yet willing to stray too far from the battlefields when discussing its work, with their focus remaining firmly on the core sites that it is known for in popular memory. Although this is not surprising, and to equally discuss all of its work would be near-impossible, it is clear that the strategy of the organisation when sharing information about its work has remained largely the same. Thus, the scope for further research into this area in order to see whether this is accurate across its entire history is needed in order to understand how the understand presents itself publicly, and why some of those decisions may have been made.

To conclude this section, the role of the media in the Commission's work has always been a complicated but important one, as the media have acted as a mouthpiece for the organisation in order to share its work more widely. However, its relationship has not been as broadly explored when compared to other aspects of the Commission's work. Perhaps comparisons between its interactions with local and national media, and between the media of different countries, would provide a better picture of this relationship and enable a broader discussion about the Commission's priorities. This

could then be considered in relation to its work in these relevant areas, and whether there is a noticeable difference in the level of control or involvement that the Commission had in creating sites of memory in these particular locales.

Next Steps and Potential Opportunities for Further Research

The points being raised and emphasised in this thesis are merely the beginning of a broader field of historiography emerging within the study of the First World War, and these debates bridge the gap between military histories of the conflict and studies of the social impact of the First World War and its commemoration. Indeed, as previous sections have shown, the subject of private grief and bereavement within the context of the First World War has been hugely under-researched and largely disregarded in current historiography and this has meant that there are extensive opportunities to further the findings of this research in future study. Although it is unlikely that a single factor can be acknowledged as the reason behind the current historiography avoiding, for the most part, discussing the topics covered in this research, one reason could simply be that there was a lack of knowledge in the existence of the significant numbers of war dead here and thus the area of study was sidelined. It is hoped that, by providing an introduction to the topic and suggesting avenues for further research throughout this thesis, scholars and the public in equal measure will be inspired to explore their own interests through the lens of war graves in the United Kingdom and expand the understanding of this topic further. In this section, some suggested areas of study will be highlighted in order to provide some areas that had enabled some fascinating comparisons, but did not fall into the remit of this thesis.

Firstly, and arguably most obviously, a potential additional area of study would be to compare how the Commission dealt with Second World War dead to the themes covered in this thesis. From a brief look at the commemoration of Second World War dead, it is apparent that Cemetery Authorities and local communities learned from the First World War which ensured the allocation of set areas of cemeteries at many locations for Second World War dead to be interred. Moreover, the Commission was a more established organisation at this stage so was not working on such an ad hoc basis. While this is not the case in every site, these two elements enabled a more formalised approach to remembering the Second World War dead. Indeed, this can often explain why First World War graves are scattered throughout a site while the Second World War dead are commemorated in regimented "war graves plots" or, in some cases, "war cemeteries;" this is largely due to the blurring of lines between civilian and military dead on a greater scale during this conflict, due to the number of civilian losses from air raids. Through creating further research that explores the commemoration and care of Second World War dead in Britain, this comparison could be enabled. This would then allow the historiography to better represent the complexities experienced here by the Commission, and allow

greater comparisons with its work overseas. Consequently, from a public history perspective, this would enable the public to better understand why they can see marked differences in how the two World Wars were commemorated in Britain, which will further the understanding among the general public about the work of the Commission.

Moreover, the differences found in the nations that make up the British Isles and, indeed, the distinctions found in regional commemorations by the Commission would provide a fascinating area of additional research. This thesis has primarily looked to commemoration in England to explain the work of the Commission here, but it is clear from preliminary research that differences can be felt across the United Kingdom. Indeed, from the uses of different types of stone to how individuals interacted with local war dead, there are marked discrepancies between how the public have interacted with their local war dead, and therefore case studies beyond England as well as further research into regional difficulties would provide a fascinating insight into the nuances found in the Commission's work. For example, comparisons between the impact of different uses of stone other than the traditional Portland stone could be considered, or whether communities who experienced significant losses versus those with large numbers of individuals in reserved occupations remembered their war dead differently.

Furthermore, the use of additional case studies could be utilised to connect the histories of local language and dialect into the work of the Commission. Indeed, through looking at how language differed between communities in relation to the personal inscriptions found or use of different languages spoken by the deceased to convey public versus private grief researchers are able to gain a better understanding into the grief and bereavement practices undertaken in Britain at this time. This could also be explored in tandem with, or separate from, the workers and materials chosen to mark these local sites of memory in order to highlight regional identities. For example, while Stancliffe stone is widely used at Commission sites across the Midlands as it is a local stone, the disconnect between this information and the public is greatly felt; there are numerous questions about why the stone is "dirty" that are regularly faced by the organisation. Through providing answers to these questions by exploring its historical significance, a greater understanding in both the public and academic world about the work of the Commission could be felt.

In addition, another significant area for future research could include a broader study of the enquiries files held by the Commission. While this could be extended into other areas of research already mentioned, building on the work of this thesis through creating a larger sample of information would be beneficial in order to see overall trends. At the time of this thesis being written, only the first in a series of releases was available publicly which meant that the sample was somewhat limited; whilst it could show some trends, it is unclear at this stage whether these records can accurately represent the

queries being received by the Commission by families with loved ones commemorated in Britain. This could also aid with understanding different regional needs and priorities, and enable trends between different regiments and elements of the Armed Forces to be considered.

This research could also enable a discussion regarding the Dominion versus British graves and how it was interacted with by the public, both by their families and the wider community. It would be interesting to see how these differed and overlapped, both in the literal sense of individuals serving with a nation different from their country of origin or naturalisation, in addition to how the public engaged with the dead perceived to have no one nearby to visit them. In this thesis, it has become clear that the Dominion governments were the driving force behind much of the Commission's work in Britain, and that much of the concern regarding the maintenance of graves here related firstly to the Dominion graves and secondly to those considered to be buried in the country of their birth. By adding these points through further research, a greater understanding of the difficulties of commemoration in Britain felt by the Commission can be explained and add to the historiography of the memory of the First World War in Britain more generally.

Finally, further research that compared the experience of mourning those on memorials to the missing versus those in graves known to belong to it would provide fascinating additional insights into how interactions made by the public differ. While this has been touched upon to some extent in the thesis, the area as a whole was outside of the thesis' scope and could thus not be given full attention. By comparing how these were perceived, and who was most likely to visit such sites, a broader understanding of memorialisation rites and rituals will be furthered and the nuances as well as similarities between the groups will be comprehended in the historiography. Indeed, when considering the research into war memorials versus war cemeteries in Britain the historiography of war memorials are mountainous in contrast, and it is only in recent years that interest in the Commission's history. This thesis has enabled the gap between these two areas of research to be bridged, and provided a distinction between the role of war memorials and war graves in the United Kingdom. Moreover, it has highlighted that there are differences in the local practices and global commemorative structures associated with Remembrance that need to be reconsidered and acknowledged by the historiography of the commemoration and memorialisation of the First World War.

To conclude the thesis as a whole, it is apparent that the subject matter being discussed is in the infancy of its exploration by researchers on both a micro and macro history level and there is consequently much scope for additional areas of research in order to fully comprehend the impact of this work. This thesis has been created in order the conversation into this topic, and thus encourage others interested in the history of the First World War and its legacy to search for similar nuances in their local areas. Moreover, from a public history perspective, it is hoped that the findings have

encouraged members of the public to begin to discover their own local histories. Consequently, more discrepancies can be explored and possibly explained, and a greater understanding of the wider topics that this thesis connects with will be made possible. Through connecting the work being done at a local or familial level to uncover these stories, greater debates can be had and the historiography as a whole can be more representative of the commemoration and care of war dead undertaken in the twentieth century as a whole.

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