REMEMBERING THE DEAD OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE: A REVIEW OF COMMEMORATIVE ACTIVITY DURING AND AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR

COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES

MAIDENHEAD
ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED BY THE COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES COMMISSION, 2025.

First published in Great Britain in 2025 by
The Commonwealth War Graves Commission
2 Marlow Road,
Maidenhead, SL6 7DX

www.cwgc.org

PREFACE

In April 2021, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) published a report produced by a Special Committee that explored historical inequalities in its commemorations following the First World War. The first of ten recommendations made in that report was for the CWGC to continue this research, expanding its reach and scope. The authors submit this report as a new phase of this work, exploring the commemorative activities of the Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC) and other organisations during and after the Second World War.

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ABSTRACT

Following the Report of the Special Committee to Review Historical Inequalities in Commemoration (2021), the Commonwealth War Graves Commission has expanded this research to assess commemorative activities following the Second World War. In contrast to the First World War, this report finds no evidence that individuals or groups were systematically excluded from named commemoration. Instead, over 650,000 casualties from across the British Empire are commemorated by name in cemeteries and on memorials. The IWGC made a case for equality in death with the military and colonial authorities and challenged policies it thought would upset its delivery. At the same time, however, in instances where those challenges failed, it continued to pursue its own policies, even when it knew they would exacerbate differences in treatment. This report provides evidence of the IWGC's limited authority and influence within the British imperial system as well as its willingness to defer to different parts of that system on aspects of commemoration.

In total, the report identifies five areas in which the dead were treated or commemorated differently following the Second World War. Even though the IWGC delivered against its promise of named commemoration and the fact the five identified issues differ in type, scale and impact from those seen following the First World War, there are still continuities to be found here. The first and second issues concern the fate of African (§5.1) and Indian (§5.2) bodies, which were again more readily left behind during 'concentration' efforts than their European counterparts, with the IWGC shifting their commemoration from their graves to memorials. Thirdly, the families of these same casualty cohorts were again excluded from confirming the details of their dead and playing a role in the commemorative process (§5.3). Fourthly, in India, those dying away from operational theatres were once more not afforded full war graves status, with their names recorded in books instead of metal or stone (§5.4). And finally, the underreporting of civilian war dead is known to be a significant issue across the British Empire, particularly outside the UK and Dominions, and especially in those territories fought over or occupied (§5.5).

Although some of these outcomes were clearly discriminatory, none appear to have been the product of an intention to deliver unequal treatment. They were, nonetheless, made possible by a fundamentally unequal British imperial system, of which the IWGC was a part. Although discussions around these issues were punctuated by the language of equality and an acknowledgement of a moral imperative to provide like treatment for all the dead of empire, that system still accepted and normalised the inequalities recorded here.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors of this report once more owe a debt of gratitude to Sir Tim Hitchens for his continued support and advice. They would also like to thank the following for reviewing various iterations of the manuscript. Their critical feedback, and suggestions and guidance, were gratefully received. Naturally, they bear no responsibility for the conclusions ultimately drawn here.

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1. List of abbreviations

AAG	Assistant Adjutant General
ADGRE	Assistant Director of Graves Registration and Enquires
AFHQ	Allied Forces Headquarters
AMF	Australian Military Forces
ANGAU	Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit
C-in-C	Commander in Chief
CWD	Civilian War Dead
CWGC	Commonwealth War Graves Commission
DADGR	Deputy Assistant Director of Grave Registration
DADGRE	Deputy Assistant Director of Grave Registration and Enquiries
DDGRE	Deputy Director of Graves Registration and Enquires
DG	Director-General
DGRE	Directorate of Graves Registration and Enquiries
EA	East Africa
EACG	East Africa Conference of Governors
EAMLS	East Africa Military Labour Service
FARELF	Far East Land Forces
GCU	Grave Concentration Unit
GRU	Grave Registration Unit
HCT	High Commission Territories
IWGC	Imperial War Graves Commission
KAR	King's African Rifles
KNA	Kenya National Archives
MED	Mediterranean
MEF	Middle East Forces
NAM	National Archives of Malawi
PAS	Principal Assistant Secretary
POW	Prisoner of War
PRAAD	Public Records and Archives Administration Department (Ghana)
RWAAF	Royal West African Frontier Force
SDF	Sudan Defence Force
SEAC	South East Asia Command
TNA	The National Archives (UK)
UDF	Union Defence Force

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1. Continuing research and expanding its scope

In April 2021, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) published a report on historical inequalities in the commemoration of the dead of the First World War. Written in collaboration with a committee of experts and community representatives, this report probed the early history of what was the Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC) to identify differences in treatment and understand the reasons for their existence. Alongside the report, the Committee also made ten recommendations to the CWGC, the first of which was to continue this research on the grounds that comprehensive answers were yet to be provided for all the questions raised, and in acknowledgement of the fact that other questions were yet to be asked. In accepting these recommendations, the CWGC committed to a continuation of this research and an expansion of its scope. This report explores the commemorative activities of the IWGC and other organisations during and following the Second World War. While it will explore the interplay between imperial ideology and commemoration within the British Empire, its focus will remain on the decisions made by the IWGC and other authorities and the outcomes this delivered.

2.2. Objectives

As with all the research connected to this programme, the objectives of this report are threefold:

1. To discover, document and publicly share any commemorative inequalities or irregularities that took place during or in the aftermath of the Second World War.
2. To understand and frame those inequalities or irregularities in the context in which they happened.
3. To source and provide information that might enable the reversal of any flawed historical decisions.

2.3. Terminology and language

When writing about any institution founded at the height of empire, it is important to acknowledge that some contemporary terminology and language needs to be repeated in the text, typically as direct quotes. Some of this terminology and language will now be considered negative, derogatory or discriminatory. Its use here is not to endorse or excuse it, but to help illustrate the thinking and attitudes of some of those involved in the events, despite how flawed or objectionable that thinking and those attitudes might be today.

In particular, the authors have repeated some terms used by the IWGC and other officials to group casualties before the development and application of policies and other decisions. For example, when referring to Africa, the term ‘native’ (only used in quotations) denotes potentially

all 'non-white' Africans. Reflecting IWGC usage, the same meaning is applied to collective terms, such as African soldiers and African dead.[1] This often included the full gamut of African ethnic groups, whatever their origins, except those of white European ancestry. This latter group is typically labelled as 'European' in this document, as they were by the IWGC. Racialised language, constructed terms associated with British 'martial race' theory and other descriptive terms that were a product of empire are also reproduced when necessary.

On the subject of faith, this report frequently references contemporary theory and understanding. In its correspondence, the IWGC and other authorities rarely differentiated between the different sects or denominations of the major religions, despite the complexities that have always existed there. As a result, followers of different branches of Christianity and Islam were typically grouped together, with archaic and now potentially derogatory terms such as 'Mohammedan' used frequently in the latter case. Those adhering to indigenous belief systems – of which there were many across the diverse communities of the African continent – were often treated as a homogenous group, typically because they did not practise one of the major religions rather than due to any perceived similarities between what they did believe. The pejorative term 'pagan' was sometimes used to describe these casualties. All these terms appear in this text, typically within quotes. When setting out the consequences of policies and decisions, the authors have endeavoured to use terminology that is more accurate and appropriate for those affected.

Of particular significance amongst the contemporary language repeated in this report is the verb 'obliterate'. Following the Second World War, this became the standard term to describe the removal of the surface evidence of a grave when policies or circumstances prevented it from being marked or the body from being exhumed and moved. The reasons for this taking place, its consequences and the potentially unequal treatment it led to are all explored in detail elsewhere in this report, but it is important from the outset that this term is appropriately defined and understood as it was by those who used it. This means reading it with the now antiquated meaning to 'cause to disappear, to efface (something visible or perceived by the senses)' rather than the common modern definition to 'destroy completely; to devastate, demolish, or lay waste; to eradicate, annihilate'.[2] As defined by the IWGC at the time, this meant leaving bodies undisturbed but levelling the surface above so 'as not to reveal the presence of graves at all'.[3] In the context of this report, the differences between the dictionary definitions is critical, as the explicit objective of 'obliteration' was to prevent interference with mortal remains, not to do them harm or display disrespect. Following the First World War, similar activity had been described variously as 'abandonment' or as allowing graves to 'revert to nature'. All these terms are repeated throughout this text.

[1] To demonstrate how language was evolving even during the war, in February 1944, Colonel S.J. Cole of the Colonial Office suggested the IWGC stop using the phrase 'native graves' and instead use 'African graves'. See CWGC/2/2/1/256, Commission Meeting No. 256, 16 February 1944.

[2] *Oxford English Dictionary,* s.v. "obliterate (v.), sense 2.b', June 2024, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/5729370227; *Oxford English Dictionary,* s.v. "obliterate (v.), sense 4', June 2024, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/8328514727.

[3] CWGC/2/2/1/288, Commission Meeting No. 288, 16 January 1947.

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

2.4. A complex picture

Early research outputs from this programme described a number of contradictions in policy and practice overseen by the IWGC following the First World War. While equality and diversity largely co-existed on the former battlefields of Europe, elsewhere a complex legacy of poor record keeping, flawed wartime burial practice and imperial or racialised thinking played a significant role in bringing about differences and inequalities in commemoration. The origins of most of these issues were outside the control of the IWGC, but it went on to actively participate in decisions that led to a divergence from its policies and principles. One of the conclusions drawn in the 2021 Special Committee report into historical inequalities in commemoration was that the pioneering nature of the Commission's work and its formation at the height of one of the bloodiest wars the world had ever seen had a bearing on some of these outcomes. The organisation was writing the rulebook on commemoration as it went along and was unable to influence in retrospect the burial or record-keeping practices of British imperial forces in the field. This observation, however, emphasises the importance of an assessment of the IWGC's operations during and after the Second World War. Rulebook in hand and wise from the lessons of more than two decades of work, the IWGC could not blame a lack of preparedness for any subsequent similar problems. Nonetheless, even with that knowledge and experience, aspects of this work remained complicated by the nature of fighting in some theatres and the colonial spaces in which commemoration was to take place. This has left a different but no less complex legacy in terms of the treatment of the dead.

The outcomes of the IWGC's work were influenced not just by the nature of the war or the experiences of the organisation, but also by important socio-cultural developments across the British Empire. This meant those mobilised for war after 1939 lived and saw the world quite differently to the generations that came before them – something just as applicable to the populations of the United Kingdom and Dominions as it was for those across Sub-Saharan Africa or the Indian Subcontinent.[4] In many ways this ought to have simplified the work of the IWGC by stripping away some of the layers of complexity previously experienced, usually introduced by distance or ignorance of other people's ways of life. However, as had happened following the First World War, outside of Europe the Commission's work was often undertaken within colonial settings, and it once again looked to colonial authorities – rather than affected communities – to learn about those it was to commemorate. Those same authorities also sometimes acted

[4] By way of example, it has been noted that British soldiers mobilised during the Second World War exhibited more prosaic attitudes than the previous generation, many of whom eagerly went to war in 1914. Rather than enthusiasm, there was a desire to get on and move on. J. A. Crang, *The British Army and the People's War, 1939-1945* (Manchester: MUP, 2000), p. 115. Within the Indian Army, a more transactional relationship existed between soldier and state, ultimately seeing increasing numbers of 'economic conscripts' as the war progressed. Jonathan Fennell, *Fighting the People's War: The British and Commonwealth Armies and the Second World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 66-8, 448.

as agents for the Commission, doing its work on the ground. Although there is evidence of the pursuit of understanding by the IWGC, as well as a desire to see full equality realised, there is no question that the way it worked through existing colonial structures led to some of the differences of treatment outlined in this report.

The IWGC worked through these imperial channels because it was part of the British imperial system. Fundamentally, it asked its questions in the spirit of seeing casualties treated in accordance with their faiths and traditions, and in its search for appropriate and acceptable approaches to the handling of mortal remains and the commemoration of the dead. However, in the British imperial context, this work took on a particular form and was shaped by the outlooks and attitudes of the administrators who provided the answers. Although the decision-making process was not overtly discriminatory – in fact, the deliberate avoidance of discrimination was frequently mentioned – it was, nonetheless, paternalistic and exclusionary, and took place in a system that was profoundly unequal, hierarchical and racialised. Some of the resulting decisions and policies have left a legacy of different treatment that needs to be more widely understood.

2.5. The Second World War: an operational and geographical primer

Popular understandings and narratives of the Second World War, especially in Britain and the Global North, are centred on the war in Europe against Nazi Germany. This has historically been seen as the epicentre of the conflict and the theatre in which the war would be won or lost. While this might be natural given the proximity of the battlefields and the fact that the enemy could and did bring the war to British shores, it downplays the enormous reach of the fighting and the existence of a second, powerful adversary in the Far East. Those who served in more distant theatres during the war, particularly those who fought the Japanese in Burma and elsewhere, felt at the time that their experience had been marginalised and forgotten. This was more keenly felt once that war ended several months after victory was realised in Europe; by the time veterans of the Far East arrived home in Britain and elsewhere, many found the public had already welcomed the end of war and were moving on with their lives. In much the same way, this focus on Europe has downplayed the significance of contributions that came from the forces of the wider British Empire, with the most diverse theatres being elsewhere. If anything, wider public understanding of these distant and diverse theatres has been further eroded.

As with the CWGC's 2021 Special Committee report, this publication principally focuses on the commemoration of personnel raised in British colonies in East and West Africa and British India who died in theatres outside Europe. Although there is not space here to provide a meaningful operational narrative for each of those theatres, it is helpful to draw some geographical boundaries to comprehend the spatial aspects of the commemorative efforts that followed the war.[5] As well

[5] For more information on the theatres and people that served see for example David Killingray, *Fighting for Britain: African soldiers in the Second World War,* (Woodbridge: James Currey, 2010); Oliver Coates, 'New Perspectives on West Africa and World War Two', *Journal of African Military History,* Vol. 4 (2020), pp. 5-39; Fennell, *Fighting the People's War*; Kaushik Roy, *India and World War II: War, Armed Forces, and Society, 1939-45* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2016).

as contributions to the better-known theatres in Europe, many of those who lost their lives who are referred to in this report died in the following campaigns:

- The North Africa Campaign of 1940-43 fought against Italian and then German forces, centred on present day Egypt, Libya and Tunisia;
- The East Africa Campaign of 1940-41 fought against Italian forces, centred on present day Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia;
- The Anglo-Iraq War and Syria–Lebanon Campaign of 1941;
- The invasion of Madagascar in 1941;
- The South and South-East Asia theatres, including the Burma Campaign, centred on present day Myanmar, the India subcontinent, the Malay Peninsula, Singapore, Hong Kong and Borneo.

3. CARING FOR THE DEAD

3.1. The IWGC and the return of conflict

It is important to note that the IWGC had only just completed its work from the First World War when it took on the task of commemorating the dead of the next great conflict. With tensions increasing across Europe in the 1930s, the IWGC had attempted to draw attention to the common sacrifices of the First World War to bring the nations of Europe together. However, whilst Fabian Ware, the Commission's Vice Chairman and effective founder, believed progress was being made through these endeavours, a return to war began to look inevitable. In the closing months of 1938, Ware informed the IWGC that the War Office had requested he reorganise the Directorate of Graves Registration and Enquiries (DGRE), a branch of the War Office charged with recording and relocating wartime burials to permanent cemeteries. This military organisation, which had its origins in 1915, was also the brainchild of Fabian Ware but, unlike the IWGC, had been wound up in the early 1920s without a peacetime establishment. Nonetheless, back under his leadership, it was running by April 1939, and whilst the DGRE would operate as 'a new department, financially and administratively independent of the Commission', it would work collaboratively in the development of policy and procedure. What this meant was that burials and grave registrations would remain under the remit of the armed forces, with the relevant records later being passed to the IWGC should its responsibilities be expanded into this war.[6] The requirement for this separation – or 'dual control' – came from the understanding that 'only a branch of the Army can operate in the battle areas and only a civilian organisation can have the permanence and the political nature necessary for the continuation of the work, much of it lying in foreign countries after hostilities have ceased'.[7]

With the outbreak of war in September 1939, the Army Council requested that new burials be allowed to take place in, or adjacent to, existing IWGC cemeteries.[8] On 5 March 1940, formal approval was given to a Supplemental Charter, extending the IWGC's remit to the present war and adopting the same principles laid down in the previous war. This was then extended further by a second Supplemental Charter, approved in February 1941, to commemorate civilians – by registering their names, rather than marking their graves – who died due to enemy action during the war.[9]

[6] CWGC/2/2/1/219, Commission Meeting No. 219, 28 September 1938; CWGC/2/2/1/226, Commission Meeting No. 226, 19 April 1939.
[7] CWGC/1/2/D/3/10, Report by IWGC Controller of Administration, Sir Herbert Ellissen, 2 August 1943.
[8] Although this request was linked to France, this also occurred in other countries where the Commission had existing cemeteries. See CWGC/2/2/1/230, Commission Meeting No. 230, 25 September 1939; CWGC/1/2/D/7/1, Extract from General Routine Orders – Issue No. 18, 21 October 1939; CWGC/1/2/I/16, Report on the Middle East, 29 April 1941.
[9] CWGC/2/2/1/235, Commission Meeting No. 235, 8 January 1941; CWGC/2/2/1/236, Commission Meeting No. 236, 30 April 1941.

3.2. Responsibilities for the dead during and after the war

Instructions for the burial and registration of military casualties in the field had long been laid down in Field Service Regulations, which at first glance look comprehensive. In the revised 1939 edition it states that, 'so far as possible burials of our own dead should be carried out by the deceased soldiers' own units'. In support, army Grave Registration Units (GRUs) of the DGRE were responsible for 'arranging for the provision of suitable cemeteries, for ensuring the preservation of the records of all burials, and for providing means of identification of graves'. Burials in civil cemeteries, as well as in isolated or scattered groups, were to be avoided whenever possible, whilst the provision of separate cemeteries, or sites in a cemetery, were to be given for different nationalities and religious denominations to avoid causing friction or offence.[10] Where burials had to take place on or near the battlefield, military protocols stated that the selected site should interfere as little as possible with the land around it and, wherever possible, be located in an area where burials could be concentrated if required.[11] In short, pre-war plans stipulated that the military authorities were to carefully handle and manage the dead, appropriately constructing, controlling and maintaining cemeteries during wartime. The IWGC, with its remit and responsibilities solely connected to the First World War until its charter was revised in early 1940, was not mentioned, and nor was there any other reference to the future preservation of new graves.

While long-term protection of graves had quite naturally not been written into these instructions, they nonetheless appear well-established and part of codified practice. However, outside of war, they existed largely as theory, as the DGRE had no permanent peacetime establishment.[12] Once war returned, the re-established DGRE reminded serving units of their responsibilities as laid down in Field Service Regulations and instructed them in particular to avoid isolated burials.[13] However, battlefield realities and the general turmoil of conflict immediately showed such orderly practice was not always possible. In one example from the campaign in North Africa, it was noted in March 1942 that 'Armoured Units sustain casualties and bury their dead in places far off the main tracks and in featureless country'.[14] Reflecting on events later on, one commentator observed that most military units failed to adhere to the directions, in some cases amounting to 'complete ignorance of the procedure for dealing with the dead'. Far from being an issue with small elements of the army at the beginning of the conflict, this was levelled at formations and chaplains of all services and denominations in March 1944.[15] In an attempt to mitigate some of these problems, the DGRE was compelled to issue seemingly elementary instructions through

[10] *Field Service Regulations Volume 1: Organization and Administration 1930, Reprinted with amendments (Nos. 1-11) 1939* (London: HMSO, 13 December 1939), pp. 115, 191.
[11] CWGC/1/2/I/15, Notes for Graves Services Officers with Home Commands, 2 July 1940.
[12] TNA, WO 165/36, General Report on Tour of Mediterranean Area, Col. S. Fraser, March 1944.
[13] CWGC/1/2/I/14, Letter: Major C.K. Phillips DADGRE, to DGRE (A.G.13), 2 December 1939; Letter: Major C.K. Phillips, DADGRE, to Colonel MacAllan, 10 December 1939; Letter: Major C.K. Phillips, DADGRE, to DGRE. (A.G.13), 8 December 1939.
[14] CWGC/1/2/I/17, Letter: ADGRE Middle East to Director-General DGRE London, March 1942.
[15] TNA, WO 165/36, General Report on Tour of Mediterranean Area.

the Army Council at the beginning of that year, reminding service personnel they must wear their identity discs and that burial parties must leave one disc with the dead when they were interred.[16] Despite the best efforts of pre-war theory and guidance, the rapidly expanded army and the nature of its operations meant practices were not as embedded as they should have been and in some situations simply could not be adhered to. As a result, the work of grave registration proved to be nearly as complicated as it had been in the previous war.[17]

On top of procedural failures, climatic conditions and terrain added further complications to the recovery of the dead and grave marking, especially in territories like Burma (Myanmar), where early fighting was punctuated by significant reverses. Recording his experiences following a tour of the jungle in July–August 1945, H.M. Cuttle of No.1 West African GRU, noted that:

> The terrain in parts was exceedingly difficult … Even graves reported as abutting … [a given] track, where map ref fixation was easy, were frequently not found after the most thorough search. Many others in dense jungle will never be found because the small tracks cut in the bamboo and undergrowth have already disappeared or are rapidly doing so after two and a half months of monsoon.[18]

On another occasion, Cuttle reported that the marking of graves on the route taken by 22nd (East African) Infantry Brigade often 'appeared to be very indifferent. Many of their burial returns showed "grave marked by bamboo stake with pencil inscription", or similar action. Detection of these on bamboo covered slopes is improbable at least'.[19] With such observations, it becomes easier to understand how the dead could still be lost despite what might have been learned from the previous war.

The hardest trials were no doubt faced by the GRUs, but once their work finished, responsibility for the graves they registered passed to the DGRE's Grave Concentration Units (GCUs). Where required, the GCUs exhumed and concentrated isolated or potentially vulnerable graves into larger cemeteries, primarily to help with their long-term maintenance and protection – something that had been secured by the extension of the IWGC's remit. In undertaking this work, guidelines stated that 'common sense' would dictate when concentration was necessary, whilst it was also made clear that no matter how large a cemetery may be, 'it must NEVER be assumed' that it would become a permanent war cemetery, as that decision rested with the Deputy Director Grave Registration and Enquiries, 'who takes into consideration the requirements of the IWGC'.[20] As such, the work of the GCUs would continue until the IWGC could take over – 'this usually being at a time when practically all graves are concentrated in cemeteries, the danger of further operations in the area is passed and when the country has been sufficiently pacified for unarmed civilians

[16] ACI 44, Battle Casualties – Identification of the Dead. TNA, WO 293/31, War Office, Army Council Instructions, January-June 1944.
[17] For further analysis on this see Lucy Noakes, *Dying for the Nation: Death, grief and bereavement in Second World War Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), pp. 161-73.
[18] TNA, WO 172/9714, Report on Expedition July 23 – August 7 1945 by H.M Cuttle, 19 August 1945.
[19] TNA, WO 172/9714, Report on Graves Registration – Tanlwe Chaung Area, 18 September 1945.
[20] CWGC/1/2/I/12, Manual of Instructions for Officers employed in a GRU, 10 November 1943.

to move freely about'.[21] Whilst there was clearly a considerable degree of co-operation and co-ordination between the IWGC and DGRE, especially in relation to the selection of permanent cemeteries, it was the armed forces that remained responsible for the immediate handling of the dead during wartime. The DGRE supported by securing cemeteries and later providing the grave registration and concentration service. These steps should be kept in mind when considering the potential complications encountered between the point a serviceperson became a casualty and how they were ultimately commemorated.

In one example of how the final phase of this work was undertaken, the Assistant Director of Grave Registration and Enquiries for Middle East Forces suggested at the beginning of 1943 that a large-scale scheme of concentration should take place in his area. The suggested concentrations would be housed in 10 cemeteries in North Africa, with no fewer than 2,000 graves in each, located at sites of historical significance selected by an architect appointed by the IWGC.[22] The size of these cemeteries would justify the appointment of a full-time caretaker and the cost of construction would be reduced.[23] This push for fewer, larger cemeteries pre-dated the war, and was exactly what the instructions in Field Service Regulations were aimed at achieving. Nonetheless, it also became a feature of Commission policy once the war began, where normal practice became permanently marking graves in situ only where they numbered 40 or more and were deemed to be in a maintainable space. While there could be exceptions to this cutoff, such as fewer graves in a plot in an established civil cemetery, any number beneath this would normally trigger concentration work.[24] In an IWGC memorandum, likely from 1944, it was noted with some satisfaction that, 'the fact that the policy of numerous and small cemeteries has been abandoned by the Army shows that someone in authority appreciates that war cemeteries must be sited with due regard to their permanent care and maintenance'.[25] Such an arrangement favoured ongoing efficiency in maintenance and preservation and limited the initial outlay in building costs, all of which appealed to the IWGC given its recent interwar financial struggles. However, this financial and operational efficiency came with other, largely unforeseen consequences.

While a permanent cemetery scheme was falling into place as the war was approaching its end, it had taken several years to come about, and some remedial concentration work to bring things into line. A late 1944 DGRE memorandum noted that, 'it should always be a guiding principle that bodies once buried are regarded by the next-of-kin as occupying sacred ground and the graves should not be disturbed unnecessarily'.[26] Whilst avoided wherever possible, concentration was not exclusively connected to efficiency or convenience but was often essential for the future preservation of many graves. Whatever the reasoning, however, this tidying up could have significant implications for groups of casualties whose mortal remains were protected by separate

[21] CWGC/1/2/I/18, Annexure B in Minute to Director-General, 2 August 1943.
[22] CWGC/1/2/I/18, Draft – Notes on taking over cemeteries in part of Africa, by Lieutenant-Colonel R.H. Hoffman, Assistant Director of Grave Registration and Enquiries, MEF, 16 February 1943.
[23] CWGC/1/2/I/19, Letter: F. Higginson to Fabian Ware, 13 April 1944.
[24] CWGC/1/2/I/19, Draft Memorandum by DDGRE, MED Pool, annexed to Letter dated 30 November 1944.
[25] CWGC/1/2/I/19, Annex D, reference to Commission in Colonel Fraser's report, undated.
[26] CWGC/1/2/I/19, Draft Memorandum by DDGRE, MED Pool.

policies. In the late stages of the war and in its aftermath, the DGRE and IWGC became tangled in these somewhat contradictory policies, placing emphasis on fewer, larger sites, while also wishing to respect the dead and their beliefs and the wishes of their families. It was this that led to the most significant issue within this report.

4. VARIATIONS IN TREATMENT

4.1. Differences and divergences

Before entering into the details of this report, it is important to stress that the issues discussed here differ from those featured in the CWGC's 2021 report. They were born out of different circumstances and do not compare in scale in their impact on commemoration. Nonetheless, any divergence from what we understand and expect of CWGC commemorative practice, whatever the reasoning, needs to be scrutinised, described and understood. It is only through this process that we can hope to put right the faults of the past.

The most impactful issue identified in this report comes from the treatment afforded to the mortal remains of African and Indian service personnel during concentration work. Under specific circumstances or during particular periods, rather than exhume and move them into permanent cemeteries, the mortal remains of some casualties were left on former battlefields and at sites not selected for preservation. Other issues include differences in the form of commemoration, specifically in India, limited communication with next of kin in certain regions, and a long-understood problem in the underreporting of civilian war dead across the British Empire. Each of these issues is explained under its own heading in the next section, but can be summarised by the following five categories:

1. Graves of African personnel allowed to 'revert to nature' at sites not selected for permanent preservation.
2. Graves of pre-partition Indian Army Muslim personnel allowed to 'revert to nature' at sites not selected for permanent preservation.
3. 'Final Verification' forms not issued to families of pre-partition Indian and African casualties.
4. Non-standard paper-based commemoration for all domestic pre-partition Indian casualties, including those buried in the country.
5. Underreporting of civilian war dead from the majority of the British Empire.

4.2. Quantifying the problem[27]

It is impossible to conclusively disaggregate those casualties commemorated by memorials because of deliberate policies (such as the obliteration of graves) from those casualties commemorated by memorials due to the absence of a body (such as those who died at sea). The figures that follow provide an informed estimate based on available evidence and deliberately lean towards the worst possible case. Other issues are easier to quantify and are clearly marked as such.

[27] See Appendix I for a full breakdown and explanation of these figures.

1. The mortal remains of between 5,000 to 7,500 service personnel from East and West Africa and from the High Commission Territories were not concentrated into permanent cemeteries but were left unmarked in battlefield graves or at sites not selected for permanent preservation.
2. The mortal remains of potentially up to 1,200 casualties, predominately Muslims of the Indian Army, may not have been concentrated into permanent cemeteries but were left unmarked in battlefield graves because of a short-lived General Headquarters (GHQ) India policy prohibiting exhumation.
3. Final Verification Forms were not sent to the next of kin of as many as 87,000 Indian and 18,700 African casualties, denying them a role in the confirmation process and withholding from those with a known burial the opportunity to have a personal inscription.
4. The names of 25,866 casualties on the Delhi/Karachi 1939-1945 War Memorials and 6,463 casualties on the Bombay/Chittagong 1939-1945 War Memorials are recorded in paper 'Rolls of Honour' rather than in stone or bronze. Approximately 8,600 to 10,000 of those commemorated by the Delhi/Karachi 1939-1945 War Memorials are likely to have been buried in Muslim cemeteries in non-operational zones of pre-partition India, none of which were used as places of commemoration.
5. An unknown number of civilian subjects of the British Empire who died as a result of enemy action during the Second World War are believed to have gone unreported to the Commission and are not included in the Civilian Roll of Honour.

5. CATEGORISED COMMEMORATIVE ANOMALIES

5.1. Graves of African personnel allowed to 'revert to nature' at sites not selected for permanent preservation

Amongst the most significant findings of the CWGC's 2021 Special Committee report was that failures in burial marking and grave registration by the service branches, military medical facilities and the DGRE denied the majority of African carriers and soldiers a marked grave following the First World War. The IWGC subsequently allowed to 'revert to nature' the limited number of graves it knew to exist outside the permanent cemeteries. It justified its decision by stating it either did not know who occupied the graves or where they were at a given site, but also that its actions were due to policies that claimed that even enclosing 'pagan' burials would cause discontent. Whatever the conditions on the ground, the policies that led to these outcomes were ultimately informed by sweeping interpretations of indigenous religious beliefs and practices; interpretations that were underpinned by racialised imperial attitudes that stripped away the intricacies of faith, culture and customs that existed within the myriad ethnic groups of Sub-Saharan Africa. Influencing all this activity was an overarching narrative – again, drawn largely from the distant observations of colonial administrators and military officers – that the communities from which these casualties came did not follow European grave marking traditions, making such an effort wasted at best and, at worst, likely to arouse superstition.[28] Finally, compounding these issues was a claimed dearth of records about those who served and died, which went beyond denying these casualties a marked burial and saw most excluded from named commemoration altogether. While it is important to note that these policies and activities did not exclude all African casualties in British service in that war from full IWGC commemoration, the vast majority are still commemorated namelessly by memorials in East Africa. There is no question that this has had a substantial impact on the way this campaign of the First World War is understood and remembered.

Given the origins of these issues, most ought to have been avoidable when it came to delivering equality in commemoration following the Second World War. The IWGC could articulate what had prevented this previously, from the point of initial burial through to record keeping, thereby ensuring better outcomes for all. Beautifully constructed Second World War sites like Nairobi War Cemetery in Kenya with its predominantly African burials suggest there were substantial differences in the way in which these casualties were treated. Nonetheless, as will be demonstrated, there is extensive evidence that, under specific conditions, exhumation policies enacted during the Second World War did lead to the bodies of some African personnel being left behind during concentration efforts. An important difference between this and the previous war was how this came to pass, which was less the product of policies that actively downplayed the importance and value of African graves. Instead, it was born out of conflicting policies that, on the one hand,

[28] CWGC/1/1/7/E/56, 'Recommendations on African native burials', c.1921–2.

pursued exhumation and concentration of those not already in selected permanent cemeteries, but on the other, prevented interference with the mortal remains of specific casualty groups once buried. Conceived independently and for different reasons, when these policies interacted, the outcome dramatically altered the nature of commemoration for some of the dead. The details of why these policies were enacted, as well as the generally flawed methods used to inform them, are explored at length in this section. Coverage is also given to the IWGC's readiness to declare a grave or cemetery unmaintainable in perpetuity, particularly when it came to African servicemen buried in their country of origin, away from the fighting fronts. The legacy of these policies is potentially as many as 7,500 East and West African soldiers commemorated by name on memorials rather than at marked graves in cemeteries alongside more than 8,300 of their East and West African comrades.[29]

5.1.1. Formation of policy 1941-47

Despite the directions written into Field Service Regulations following the First World War and the obvious benefits they promised, conflict and its consequences could never be regulated or made predictable. A rapid advance or a chaotic retreat could dictate different priorities for the handling of the dead, which could see immediate safety and convenience take precedence over any ideas about permanent commemoration in the future. British imperial forces experienced both scenarios during the Second Word War, and operations still saw the dead left in isolated or otherwise undesirable locations. Added to this were thousands of others who were laid to rest in civil cemeteries or in their own plots in their countries of origin following accident, disease, or wounds received overseas. Whatever neat outcome may have been envisioned, the reality presented far more disorder and dispersion.

After the First World War, for the purposes of permanent commemoration, outlying burials had typically been brought together – or 'concentrated' – into purpose-built sites. As well as practicality for visitors and staff, this work was driven by issues of safety (for the graves as well as the staff who tended them), access and land ownership. A significant difference following the Second World War was the desire of the IWGC to see concentration as a default policy, not just for those in outlying graves but for any casualty not already buried in a major cemetery selected for preservation. As well as moving those graves that were deemed vulnerable or otherwise unmaintainable where they were, this meant dramatically reducing the number of smaller sites generally. This was driven by the IWGC's desire to avoid the awkward legacy left by graves in civil cemeteries and other minor sites following the First World War, particularly beyond the Western Front. Site design was either limited or impossible – especially at municipal sites with graves scattered amongst unmaintained civilian burials – and maintenance and access could be similarly difficult. No doubt layered on top of this was the memory of the financial pressures the organisation had endured in the inter-war period. Reflecting on these issues, it is hardly surprising the IWGC sought to limit the spread of its commitment by favouring larger military

[29] See Appendix I, 7.2.1.

cemeteries that it could build, manage and maintain more efficiently and effectively. Apart from the loss of character seen in the multitude of First World War cemeteries across the globe, on the surface this policy presented few downsides to the act of permanent commemoration. What complicated the matter, however, were policies concerning exhumation.

While the IWGC's desire for concentration is easily explained, the policies that ultimately prevented some casualties being moved as part of this process are more complicated, were subject to change and were never universal across some ethnic or religious groups. While the long heritage of the British Indian Army provided some cultural understanding and experience of handling the dead, the situation was different in East Africa. Returning to the First World War, Britain's locally raised military forces there were still in their infancy and this almost certainly played a part in the commemorative failures that followed that conflict. In part, this was due to claimed administrative limitations, but it was also because these forces had not been raised or designed for such a war. The casualties experienced within the officer corps of units largely designed for internal policing would have quickly stripped these forces of any special knowledge of appropriate treatment of the dead as well as any local arrangements for handling the bodies, leaving few to advocate for them. The void this left in understanding amongst colonial officials was backfilled with the essentialising policies that paid little heed to the desires of communities and next of kin, the consequences of which have already been noted. Early in the deployment of African forces in the Second World War there appears to have been a realisation that not only was this outcome undesirable but that these problems might reoccur. Any effort to prevent this situation, however, had to start with an understanding of what appropriate treatment looked like.[30]

For East Africa Command, the origins of this work dated back at least as far as a conference of military and administrative personnel in Nairobi on 17 October 1941, no doubt in anticipation of the imminent end of the campaign against Italian forces in East Africa. In a meeting made up entirely of British officials, a decision reminiscent of the previous war divided graves in theatres with blended forces into three categories: Europeans and 'Cape Coloureds'; Indians; and East and West Africans. Only the first of these groups would be subject to exhumation and concentration on the grounds that interfering with the buried remains of those occupying the other groups was declared to be 'repugnant to many of them'.[31]

Prior to this ruling, it is evident that views on this subject were far from unified, as an internal memo from Tanganyika on 1 October 1941 noted that opinions from Kenya seemed to be dominating the agenda and questioned whether officials there were 'competent to advise on native opinion in Tanganyika'. It then went on to state that 'as far as my knowledge goes repugnance to interference with a grave in most pagan tribes only exists when that grave has begun to be the subject of propitiation ceremonies by other members of the clan. This can hardly have happened yet to

[30] For an analysis into different approaches to burials across Africa see Michael Jindra and Joel Noret (eds.), *Funerals in Africa: Explorations of a Social Phenomenon* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2011).
[31] TNA, WO 230/55, Notes on Conference to discuss the policy for war cemeteries, 17 October 1941; Letter: Acting Chief Political Officer East Africa Command to Military Administrator Eritrea, 17 October 1941; Malawi National Archives, S41/1/21/1, Letter: Chief Secretary Governors' Conference to Chief Secretary Zomba, 22 October 1941.

African soldiers buried on the scenes of battle'. The note ended with a suggestion that the editors of *Mambo Leo* and *Harbari za Vira* could be asked to insert in their papers a request for opinion on this subject.[32] Another, from the following day, reinforced the point that burial practices and customs varied widely, before adding that:

> had those responsible just proceeded with their proposals it is doubtful whether the relatives, being later informed that a deceased was buried at such and such a place, would have given any thought to the possibility that the body had been moved and interred a second time, but for one possibility. If any of our E.A.M.L.S. [East African Military Labour Service] or recruits for other forms of active service are employed on this task they will doubtless mention the fact when they come home again.

The memo ended by stating this subject should not be raised publicly, as the military was best placed to know whether any tribes from which recruits were drawn maintained enough repugnance to concentration to mean it should not be undertaken.[33] On this, in a separate note dating back to July that year and reflecting on his understanding that exhumation was objectionable to many within his command, Major-General Godwin-Austen of 12th (African) Division suggested instead that, in these circumstances, 'earth from the actual graves should be brought to the central cemetery'.[34]

At this stage, these decisions should not actually have altered the treatment of the dead, as these policies would only be enforced if and when the concentration effort began. However, clearly anticipating this eventuality more than a year and a half later, the IWGC queried East Africa Command on the steps it had taken to register, mark or concentrate the graves of East and West Africans on the battlefields of Ethiopia. In response, it was told the standing policies concerning the graves of King's African Riflemen (KAR) killed in the field was 'not to concentrate them, not to bring them into cemeteries, not necessarily even to register them, and very definitely not to photograph them'. Cemeteries behind the battlefronts were said to contain 'native plots' and A.G.13 (the War Office branch code for the DGRE) had:

> particulars of some hundreds of native burials in Ethiopia, mostly furnished by G.H.Q. 2nd Echelon, but they state that these have not been registered and included in the Reports received from the Graves Registration Services.[35]

Reflecting on this state of affairs, an IWGC memo claimed the situation appeared 'much the same as it was after the late war', where commemorative efforts had showed how 'varied and imperfect was the treatment by the Armies of native soldiers' graves'.[36]

[32] Tanzania National Archives, 30010, Memo by G. Kiel to A.S., 1 October 1941.
[33] Tanzania National Archives, 30010, Handwritten Note, 2 October 1941.
[34] CWGC/1/2/A/409, Letter: C-in-C GHQ Middle East Forces to Under-Secretary of State War Office, 31 August 1943; Ibid., Letter: Maj-Gen. Godwin-Austen to AAG(1), 12 July 1941.
[35] CWGC/1/2/A/409, Internal Memo, 15 April 1943.
[36] Ibid.

Clearly concerned by the risk of history repeating itself, Fabian Ware wrote to Colonel S.J. Cole at the Colonial Office 'as a matter of urgency':

> The Commission have been considering the commemoration of the East and West African native soldiers who fell in the East African Campaigns. They understand that the graves of these men have not been completely registered, and have not been concentrated from battlefields into permanent cemeteries. They would be grateful for the opinion of the Colonial Office as to whether the military authorities should be asked to endeavour to complete the registration of these graves and to concentrate them into central cemeteries with a view to their eventual marking and maintenance by the Commission on the same footing as the graves of British soldiers.

Following this enquiry, Ware went on:

> The Commission's duty under their Charters is to care for the graves of officers and men of His Majesty's forces raised in all parts of the Empire. Their view is, therefore, that they should accord the same treatment in all respects – allowing for differences dictated by creed – to the native soldier as to the British; and they would be glad to know whether this is the view of the Colonial Office.[37]

Although hinting at the limits of the organisation's authority to enforce any decision, as well as its potential willingness to show deference to the wider imperial project, these statements also clearly set out the position of the organisation when it came to equality of treatment and its vision for commemoration following the war.

Despite the apparent urgency, it was not until September that year that the IWGC received an answer to this query when the Colonial Office recounted discussions held on the matter with the Chief Secretary of the East Africa Conference of Governors (EACG). Here it was stated that 'this matter was given particular consideration in consultation with the military authorities in East Africa … [and] it is considered that the graves should not be concentrated'. It was the overwhelming opinion of the Governors that this was not a question of 'colour discrimination' but the fact that 'Africans attached the greatest importance to the non-interference with a body once it was buried'. In comments that continued to echo discussions from the previous war, the point was concluded by stating that East African communities 'did not attach so much importance to commemoration of graves as we did but they did attach the greatest importance to leaving the bodies alone'. A key difference, however, was the statement that, where possible, any commemoration should be maintained over the graves where they were.[38] Although this was a vast improvement to the position outlined in April, the IWGC's commitment to concentration obviously meant this would lead to the abandonment of outlying graves when that process began.

[37] In July 1942, Colonel S.J. Cole was added to the IWGC Committee, representing the Secretary of State for the Colonies, as a means of providing direct Colonial Office representation into IWGC discussions. CWGC/1/2/A/409, Letter: Fabian Ware to Lt-Col. S.J. Cole, 8 May 1943; For representation see correspondence in TNA, CO 323/1842/5, Imperial War Graves Commission, 1942.
[38] CWGC/1/2/A/409, Letter: S.J. Cole to Colonel H.F. Chettle, 19 September 1943.

The practical significance of these statements, and the first clear admission that formal policies did not exist, came from an urgent enquiry from the Commander-in-Chief Middle East Forces (MEF), General Sir Harold Alexander, in the summer of 1943. Asking the War Office to lay down a policy for the concentration of non-Europeans that should have 'universal application', he noted the 'subject is one of far reaching importance and I realise that you may find it necessary to consult other Government Departments'. Alexander was concerned that any policy that demanded different treatment for different graves would lead to additional burdens on concentration units and slow the whole process, but he also gave real examples of where the brutality of war could make differentiation impossible. The nature of 'dilution employment' in MEF, which saw African and other personnel serving in the same units as their European counterparts, meant there were occasions when the cause and mechanism of death saw the remains of casualties intermingled and buried in communal graves. With the impossibility of individual identification, there was a risk that graves of African casualties would be moved accidentally, potentially to the objection of the communities from which they came.[39]

Having seen this correspondence and the issues it presented, Ware tracked down in the UK a prominent officer within East Africa Command, Lieutenant Colonel Arthur Knott. Knott had, by this point, extensive experience of service in East Africa, having held staff posts at HQ Troops Sudan, where he was commended for his administrative efforts during operations in Eritrea and Northern Abyssinia.[40] During their conversation, Ware appears to have pressed the issue of the future of African graves within the Command and his desire for a more favourable answer to concentration, something Knott clearly promised to take up on his return. In a letter on the matter, Knott stated:

> You ask about African graves. We have located and marked all that we could find and there are very few that were untraceable. No Africans have been concentrated but the graves are left in situ and marked. This policy was decided upon before I came here but I understand that it was in accordance with the views of the civil and Native authorities.[41]

Knott was also keen to point out that the Command had been careful to avoid 'racial or colour discrimination' in this work, which was likely to be true for the simple fact that no bodies had needed to be moved yet.[42] Even as these discussions were taking place, however, new layers of complexity were building, with two African divisions destined for India and Ceylon (Sri Lanka). This prompted further correspondence about whether decisions made for home theatres would also stand for graves of the expeditionary forces.[43]

[39] The example given was the bombing of a mixed dock unit whose intermingled remains were subsequently buried together in a communal grave. CWGC/1/2/A/409, Letter: C-in-C GHQ Middle East Forces to Under-Secretary of State War Office, 31 August 1943.
[40] WO 373/79/43, A.J. Knott, recommendation for OBE, August 1941.
[41] CWGC/1/2/A/409, Letter: A.J. Knott HQ East Africa Command to Fabian Ware, 5 November 1943.
[42] Ibid.
[43] CWGC/1/2/A/409, Letter: Chettle to Cole, 23 November 1943.

As this back and forth between the Commission and other authorities continued, it was General Alexander's correspondence that spurred meaningful action when it came to policy. On 5 February 1944, the Army Council finally took steps to answer his request by circulating an A.G.13 memorandum to affected departments of state with suggested policies for the treatment of the dead. Seeking agreement, it effectively reiterated the position of East Africa Command from 1941 and added a lengthy and unusual definition of what a European was 'for the purpose of graves concentration only'. In a separate paragraph, it also noted that the IWGC had received a request from the Government of India to concentrate Indian Muslim and Christian soldiers. As before, all those not falling within this definition or the Indian categories, and not already being buried in a recognised cemetery, would not be concentrated and would instead be commemorated on 'suitable memorials in the nearest cemetery'.[44]

While this proposal was circulating government departments for their approval and comments, the IWGC was dealing with the first example of what East Africa Command's position would mean for isolated burials. At the IWGC's 256th Meeting on 16 February 1944, a report from the Secretary of the IWGC's South African Agency, Captain Scholtz, noted that there were 294 war graves in Madagascar – 164 European and 130 African – spread out across 17 cemeteries or burial locations. He proposed to concentrate this dispersed commitment, noting there was ample space at Diego Suarez and Tananarive for all the African graves.[45] In a report from the preceding month, Scholtz had recorded an approach made to Island Area Command to communicate with East Africa Command on the issue of concentration. This had, of course, been met with the already established answer that Africans were not to be moved, but Scholtz remained concerned that not only could the French authorities not be relied upon to maintain any outlying graves for the IWGC, but that local opinion was supportive of exhumation. On his return journey from Madagascar, Scholtz had visited East Africa Command in the hope of changing opinions, which he was unable to do, again being referred back to the 1941 decision that was said to speak for 'native opinion'. Unperturbed, he 'strongly recommend[ed] that the E.A. Command be approached anew with the suggestion that all African graves on the Island be concentrated'. He finished his case stating:

> We would, I feel sure, later have much cause to regret not having taken this step while we could, and established cemeteries whose construction and subsequent care would be worthy of the Institution responsible for the work.[46]

Colonel S.J. Cole, representing the Secretary of State for the Colonies at the Commission meeting, requested a copy of the report so it could be sent to the Chief Secretary of the EACG to revive the question once more.[47]

[44] TNA, CO 980/211, War Office Circular, addressed Secretary of State for the Colonies, 5 February 1944.
[45] CWGC/2/2/1/256, Commission Meeting No. 256, 16 February 1944.
[46] TNA, CO 980/211, extracts from Captain Scholtz's report, 11 January 1944.
[47] See CWGC/2/2/1/256, Commission Meeting No. 256, 16 February 1944; the report was shared by Chettle on 23 February 1944. TNA, CO 980/211, Letter: Chettle to Cole, 23 February 1944.

Not letting the matter lie, on 7 April 1944 Chettle met with General Sice, former High Commissar of Free French Africa, to ask questions about Free French practice when dealing with French African dead. Here Sice was 'very clear and emphatic' that:

> we should concentrate all alike to the same cemetery – the French here, with crosses over their graves, the Africans there, with appropriate emblems over their graves. I have never heard of any difficulties; if there were, we should simply say that these were all French soldiers and were treated as such.[48]

Chettle used this interview to chase Cole on the matter a few weeks later, stating the Commission 'cannot make any progress until it is settled'. To add weight to the IWGC position, he referenced the supposed French practice, stating they:

> concentrate to permanent cemeteries the graves of all their soldiers, of whatever race or creed. The fact is not, perhaps, irrelevant to the case of battlefields in a French possession.[49]

In an apologetic response the following month, Cole reassured Chettle that he understood the gravity of the decision and the fact that the 'question has an important political aspect not only now but in the future'. He stated that the matter had been taken up by the geographic departments and he repeated the content of a telegram circulated to the relevant East and West African colonial governments. This drew attention to the Commission's normal approach to concentration as well as the current policy of non-interference. This circular sought further confirmation from the governments, specifically asking them to consider 'the possibility of [the] allegation of colour discrimination' but adding 'if [the] policy of leaving bodies in original graves is in deference to African repugnance to disturbing bodies that should provide adequate answer'. Urging patience while he waited for replies, Cole recounted the opinions of those he had already spoken with, including the ex-Governor of Somaliland and the Chief Secretary of the East Africa Conference of Governors, who remained 'quite definite in their opinion that the bodies of Africans should not be moved'.[50]

In a short note some 10 days later, Chettle made a significant observation that had, until that point, seemingly been absent from the discussion. While he thanked Cole for his efforts, he stated:

> Your telegrams do not seem to us to bring out sufficiently clearly the alternative to concentration: that is to say, obliteration of the actual graves and commemoration on central memorials. Ought you to send supplementary telegrams in that sense?[51]

[48] CWGC/1/2/A/409, Memo: Graves of African Natives, produced by Henry Chettle after meeting with General Sice, 7 April 1944 (emphasis in original document). This viewpoint was repeated in CWGC/2/2/1/258, Commission Meeting No. 258.
[49] TNA, CO 980/211, Letter: Chettle to Cole, 24 April 1944.
[50] TNA, CO 980/211, Letter: S.J. Cole, Colonial Office, to Lt-Col. Henry Chettle, IWGC, 5 May 1944.
[51] TNA, CO 980/211, Letter: Chettle to Cole, 15 May 1944.

The importance of this point becomes much clearer when considering the way in which the question of concentration was handled and, in some cases, relayed to communities by organisations like the EACG. However, from Cole's narrow perspective, thinking entirely about what he understood for the East African theatre and the limited number of isolated graves there, Chettle's point was of little consequence: the policy would serve the majority and there was no need to alter it. Responding nearly a full year later, while simultaneously finally submitting the Colonial Office's response to the War Office's policy proposal, Cole shut down the opportunity to explore the issue again.[52]

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the Colonial Office's opinion on the policy proposal – and by extension, the opinions of the governments and organisations that answered to it – had been given the most weight by the War Office. Nonetheless, like the IWGC, the War Office had had to wait more than a year for that response, which did not move from the position occupied at the outset.[53] Despite its importance in this process, the Colonial Office was not the only department to offer a response. In a timelier reply, the Foreign Office had suggested that the question was largely outside its remit, but did offer up one significant observation that:

> It would be unfortunate from the point of view of British prestige in foreign countries if arrangements were made under which any British war dead were left in isolated and untended graves in foreign countries and that this would be particularly the case if there were discrimination against the graves of "non-Europeans". It is not clear why, in cases where the graves can be traced, it should be more difficult to concentrate those of non-Europeans.[54]

On receipt of this note, the War Office quickly reached out to the IWGC to state that the Foreign Office:

> have not understood our motive. The main reasons for not including the bulk of non-Europeans in the concentration policy is the fact that they themselves do not wish the bodies moved, and are not extremely particular about preservation of graves. In all cases where the preservation is not reasonable, the graves would be obliterated to prevent desecration.[55]

Somewhat calling into question the purpose of the whole exercise and whether alteration was ever on the table, Chettle seems to have been mobilised to visit the Head of the Consular Department at the Foreign Office, Geoffrey Allchin, to explain how the position had been reached. Reporting the interview from his perspective, Allchin recorded:

[52] TNA, CO 980/211, Letter: Cole to Chettle, 17 March 1945; Letter: Cole to Director-General, DGRE, 17 March 1945.
[53] TNA, CO 980/211, Letter: AAG to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 2 March 1945; and Letter: Cole to Director-General, DGRE, 17 March 1945.
[54] TNA, FO 369/2981, Letter: G.C. Allchin to Under-Secretary of State, War Office, 13 March 1944.
[55] CWGC/1/2/A/409, Letter: AAG, War Office to IWGC, 1 April 1944.

> Whereas the Commission would normally have welcomed the terms of our letter they found them rather embarrassing in view of the line which it seemed likely that the Colonial Office would take. This was that it would be a mistake to concentrate the graves of soldiers from the East African colonies since the natives there considered that once buried a man must be left undisturbed.[56]

From his isolated position, Allchin accepted that it was better to be seen to have respected the beliefs of the people concerned, a position that would also be easier to defend from criticism. He subsequently agreed to write again clarifying the Foreign Office position. Stating that he wished to refine Winston Churchill's interjection on the matter, in which he had expressed his views in favour of concentration of all graves, Allchin noted that Mr Churchill:

> had not in mind the possibility that, in light of the beliefs of some of the peoples to whom the war dead might belong, such concentration would in itself be considered as an act of desecration.[57]

Nonetheless, continuing to warn of the potential optics of selectively concentrating graves, especially in the wording of policies that dictated how this was decided, Allchin added that Churchill's opinion was that 'the question of concentrating graves should not depend on whether or not the war dead were "European"'.[58] It had taken a year to collate these responses from the different government departments, and this pedestrian progress was chiefly due to the Colonial Office. At least in part, this was because it had reached out to colonial governments and other organisations. Either way, it was not until 30 March 1945 that the DGRE finally circulated a memorandum to the various military commands providing instructions for the concentration of the dead.[59] Even this, however, was not to be the last word on the matter.

In June 1945, not two months ahead of the end of the war in the Far East, Brigadier John McNair – Director of the DGRE based within the War Office – wrote to Cole to provide some observations from a recent visit to Burma. Here he had been informed that African personnel – particularly West African personnel – believed their dead were being treated incorrectly. On discussing the matter with their officers, he concluded that:

> The policy was probably right in that it conformed to tribal beliefs and customs in the home countries, yet the African soldiers when they saw what was being done for the European graves … were thinking that they would like their graves similarly treated.[60]

Having considered this within the War Office on his return, there was a concern that such a 'feeling' would be transported home with demobilised soldiers, which could in turn lead to disaffection

[56] TNA, FO 369/2981, Minutes following a meeting between Allchin and Chettle, 24 March 1944.
[57] TNA, FO 369/2981, Letter: G.C. Allchin to Under-Secretary of State, War Office, 14 April 1944.
[58] Ibid.
[59] TNA, CO 980/211, Memorandum: War Office instructions for the concentration of isolated graves, Col. S. Fraser on behalf of Director DGRE, 30 March 1945.
[60] TNA, CO 980/211, Letter: John McNair to S.J. Cole, 25 June 1945.

within the colonies. Assuming that this would be undesirable from the perspective of the Colonial Office, he urged them to reopen the issue.[61]

Commenting internally on a separate interaction with McNair on the same subject following an IWGC meeting in September, Colonel Cole reported having told him that the East and West African governments had been 'emphatic' on the point that bodies should not be moved after burial. He believed the issue should not be raised with them again, unless the military authorities in the respective commands pushed for the change. On this, Cole had suggested McNair raise it with them in the first instance if he felt sufficiently strongly on the issue. His feeling was that this question was:

> more than a matter of the views of a few officers or of a few of the Africans themselves. It involved religious principles and tribal customs in which the whole community was concerned, not only the individuals serving in the forces. We could not offend religious scruples or tribal customs without some strong grounds in which the … people themselves acquiesced.[62]

Although McNair had not intimated that he would write to the commands, Cole stood by his position that the policy remain unaltered because of the strong views of the civil governments, which had been, in his eyes, properly consulted. Cole concluded his note: 'he asked for my personal opinion. No action is needed unless the matter is brought up officially. I doubt if it will be'.[63]

Reflecting on this exchange the following year, McNair vented in an internal IWGC memo about what he saw as indifference or even obfuscation on the part of the Colonial Office. In his opinion, the issue of African graves had 'been a muddle from start to finish, very largely due to the apathetical handling of the question by the Colonial Office'. Following his interaction with Cole, McNair had failed to get the Colonial Office to re-engage on the subject, claiming that they had even ceased to answer his letters, at which point he 'finally took the law into… [his] own hands'. As Cole had carelessly suggested, McNair circumvented London and asked the military authorities in the respective commands to query the position of the governments concerned, which set in chain yet another round of enquiries.[64]

In East Africa, while the Secretary of State for the Colonies' May 1944 telegrams brought no change of opinion from the EACG, McNair's request from the War Office made via the military commands was not dismissed in the same way.[65] In a December 1945 circular cascaded to the relevant colonial governments in which the EACG relayed the emerging reports from South East

[61] Ibid.
[62] TNA, CO 980/211, internal memo, S.J. Cole, 30 September 1945.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Brigadier John McNair left the War Office as Director of DGRE to be Senior Administrative Officer at the IWGC from 20 May 1946. CWGC/1/2/A/409, IWGC internal memo, Brigadier John McNair, 4 June 1946.
[65] National Archives of Malawi (NAM), S41/1/21/2, Circular memo to administering officers from Secretary of State for the Colonies, 24 November 1944.

Asia Command (SEAC) that 'African personnel have noted that European graves are concentrated into cemeteries while their own are not and they are conscious of a difference in treatment'. They asked the governments to consider whether the policy of obliteration should be modified.[66] Happening without the input of the Colonial Office, the way this consultation process worked can be seen in a few examples where documents have survived.[67]

In Nyanza Province in Kenya, the Provincial Commissioner circulated the statement and questions posed by the EACG to District Commissioners of 'native Reserves', asking them to review the standing policies that had been formed following previous consultations.[68] Summarising the responses from his District Commissioners in North, Central and South Kavirondo as well as Kericho, the Provincial Commissioner of Nyanza concluded that bodies should still not be moved but that they should be protected on their original sites wherever possible. What makes this conclusion interesting is that half the responses he received – specifically those from North Kavirondo and Kericho – expressed the opinion that local sentiment was not against the concept of concentration.[69]

The very same EACG memo was circulated to local officials via the Chief Secretaries in Dar es Salaam, Entebbe, Zanzibar, Lusaka and Zomba. A similar exercise to that seen in Kenya was conducted in Nyasaland (Malawi), which produced a comparable mix of opinions. The Konde and Henga people of Karonga had no objection to the moving of bodies after burial and did not favour leaving the graves unmarked on the grounds that relatives should have the opportunity to visit the graves. In Mzimba, it was reported that local chiefs and ex-soldiers considered the disturbance of the dead repugnant. Chintheche provided a mix of opinion, resting largely on the nature of burial: if it had been done properly, then there should be no need to move them, but they should not be buried communally. On the other hand, retired Regimental Sergeant-Major Akwanjana of the same district replied, 'there is no point in moving them: they are now only dust and bones and should be left undisturbed'. On collating these responses, the Commissioner of the Northern Province observed that not all those consulted were made aware of the fact that many of the dead they were discussing were in foreign countries and were often buried where they fell. He went on to state that if this had been understood, and if they were aware that European dead in the same circumstances were being concentrated, they would likely wish the

[66] Kenya National Archives (KNA), PC/NZA/3/4/61, Circular memo from Chief Secretary, East African Governors' Conference, 10 December 1945.
[67] The Colonial Office was only made aware of these efforts and the subsequent change in policy in September 1946. They then sent a circular memo to the EACG requesting views on the proposals in October 1946. See TNA, CO 980/211, Letter: Director DGRE to G Savage, Colonial Office, 20 September 1946; Tanzania National Archives, 30010, Memo: Secretary of State for the Colonies to Chairman of East African Governors' Conference, 5 October 1946.
[68] KNA, PC/NZA/3/4/61, Circular memo from Provincial Commissioner, Nyanza, 21 December 1945.
[69] KNA, PC/NZA/3/4/61, Letter: Provincial Commissioner, Nyanza, to Chief Secretary, East African Governors' Conference, 3 January 1946; For more views see Meshack Owino, *'Vifo na mazishi:* the impact of war on Kenya African soldiers' beliefs and attitudes towards death and burials in colonial Kenya', in Beatrice Nicolini (ed.), *Studies in witchcraft, magic, war and peace in Africa: Nineteenth and twentieth centuries* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 2006), pp. 155-9.

remains of their own dead to be similarly treated.[70]

These limited examples emphasise the breadth and diversity of attitudes held by different ethnic and religious groups across the vast expanse of East Africa. Ignoring the flaws in the methodology used to gather these opinions, the apparently diametrically opposed views that existed in these responses demonstrate the near impossibility of securing a universal exhumation policy that would meet the needs of all those concerned. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that non-interference won out. Once a man was buried, his grave should be marked where it was, and his mortal remains left undisturbed. This only became problematic if the long-term maintenance of the site in which a grave resided was called into question. This was the critical detail lacking from these interactions and seemingly from the Colonial Office's and EACG's understanding of the IWGC's intentions, particularly when it came to those buried at home in civil cemeteries or on their own land – the latter being more common than might be expected.[71]

Despite the seemingly unified front presented by the EACG, individually some of the colonial governments of East Africa had uncertainties. In Tanganyika, a memo from 10 January 1946 noted that while some soldiers may desire concentration, this 'was not vital to Africans in Tanganyika'. It was also felt the policy of obliteration went 'too far the other way' before stating that the 'graves of fallen soldiers should only be "obliterated" as a last resort when no other alternative is available'.[72] A series of other memos noted that any such policy should be confined to operational areas and, post-war, 'there can be no longer any question of a "policy" of obliteration'.[73] Another from 30 October 1946 noted in relation to obliteration that:

> it is presumed that the suggestion … refers to graves no matter where they are – in Burma, India, Ceylon, M.E., and Ethiopia. The question appears to me only important in those places where it was not possible to bury the dead in cemeteries or in ground set apart, and this condition would naturally be in places where there was action; as far as other areas are concerned, it may be taken that the graves should be marked with headstones because they would be in places set apart.

In effect, if a grave was within a cemetery, it should be marked with a headstone. If graves were 'scattered about', they should not be disturbed but should still receive headstones, and if needed, the names could be commemorated on a suitable memorial in the nearest suitable cemetery.[74] Responding to these internal musings, one final memo by a Mr Montague offered an alternative viewpoint, suggesting 'with some trepidation' that:

[70] National Archives of Malawi (NAM), S41/1/21/2, Letter: Provincial Commissioner, Northern Province to Chief Secretary, Zomba, 5 March 1946.
[71] See, for example, death notices issued in Kisumu District, 1942-3 in KNA, DC/KSM/1/22/72.
[72] Tanzania National Archives, 30010, Handwritten memo, 10 January 1946.
[73] Tanzania National Archives, 30010, Memo by P.C.D.O. to C.S., 12 January 1946; Handwritten memo, 30 January 1946.
[74] Tanzania National Archives, 30010, Memo to A.C.S., 30 October 1946.

> if we are not going to concentrate graves it is surely better to obliterate them and record centrally, than have them mouldering and half-maintained, scattered about the jungles of Burma. Sentiment apart, is it practical to maintain them all in situ ...? I doubt it.

In a particularly telling comment, the memo also noted the views of Kenya, Zanzibar and Uganda, where obliteration was allegedly viewed as an 'inevitability', and it was accepted that whatever course was taken 'must be common to all the Territories'.[75] With that, no changes were suggested to the EACG's position. Ultimately, the Colonial Office's willingness to defer this decision to the EACG no doubt reflected that institution's growing influence and importance resulting from the war, but it also reflected the fact that, through representation, it was seen to speak for all the British colonies in the region. With all military forces in East Africa conveniently unified under a single command, this provided a similar solution for civil affairs and minimised the correspondence required to reach an answer. It also ensured that any answer was uniform, allowing the policies to be applied across the colonies of East Africa, treating its many peoples as a single entity. Being manned and administered entirely by the settler population and dominated by those in Kenya, it is perhaps unsurprising that its outlook was paternalistic and detached from the communities it appointed itself to speak for.[76]

The way in which these questions were handled in West Africa was very different. An early position regarding West African dead within Middle Eastern Forces had been forwarded by West Africa Command in October 1943. This drew attention to the religious mix of units and the fact the many 'Mohammedans and pagans' held 'a definite repugnance to the moving of any bodies after burial'. As a result of the inevitable problems this split of opinion might bring, West Africa Command initially urged – in line with East Africa – that no concentration of graves should take place but that commemoration should take the form of tablets or memorials in the permanent war cemeteries instead.[77] Following the Colonial Office's May telegram, the Secretariat in Sierra Leone corresponded directly with the IWGC to state that 'enquiries made from Representative Chiefs did not disclose any repugnance to the idea of reburials in central cemeteries but they did not consider any good purpose would be served thereby'.[78] Despite this hint at divergence, the delayed official report on these questions provided by the Colonial Office in March 1945 reiterated the existing position that both East and West African casualties buried in isolated graves should not be moved.[79] Nonetheless, a combination of McNair's interjection and an attempt to apply the policies on the ground brought about a different outcome.

In line with the March 1945 DGRE instructions, orders were issued on 3 May 1946 for the obliteration of the West African Cemetery at Dhond (now Daund in Maharashtra, India). These

[75] Tanzania National Archives, 30010, Memo by Mr. Montague to D.A.S., 31 October 1946.
[76] N. J. Westcott, 'Closer Union and the future of East Africa, 1939–1948: A case study in the "official mind of imperialism"', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History,* Vol. 10. No.1 (1981), pp. 69-70.
[77] CWGC/1/2/A/409, Letter: GHQ West Africa to Under-Secretary of State, War Office, 28 October 1943.
[78] CWGC/1/2/A/409, Letter: The Secretariat Sierra Leone to The Secretary IWGC, 28 August 1944.
[79] CWGC/1/2/A/409, Letter: S.J. Cole, Colonial Office, to Director-General, IWGC, 17 March 1945.

instructions, however, were quickly rescinded following strong objections from the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Southern Command (India). As a result of these representations, the West African Liaison Section at GHQ India sought advice from West Africa Command on how to proceed. This received in response renewed instructions for the treatment of the dead.[80]

For Gold Coast (Ghana), all Christian and 'pagan' soldiers (of 'Colony and Ashanti origin') would now be concentrated into the selected IWGC permanent sites, while the 'bodies of Moslems and Lheangs (mostly Pagans) from northern Territories should not be exhumed and graves should be obliterated after the site has been noted'. Recognising that those unfamiliar with the composition of Gold Coast units would be unable to identify religious beliefs from names, it was requested that a list of burials be forwarded to the authorities once decisions had been made about future cemeteries.[81] For Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Gambia, it was noted that 'the obliteration of West African cemeteries might be resented by relatives of the deceased', which in turn could produce 'unfortunate political repercussions'. As a result, it was recommended that the bodies of Christian and Muslim soldiers be exhumed and reburied in IWGC cemeteries, but only after the departure of West African forces from India – presumably to prevent any immediate objections from comrades and coreligionists. Pagans, they advised, should also be exhumed and reinterred, unless there had been specific representations to the contrary by the same parties.[82] To all intents and purposes, this was a complete reversal of the recently accepted policy, and it came years after the concentration process had begun, and in some cases been completed, in some theatres. This work had often started in the wake of the fighting, and it could not easily be revisited if 'obliteration' had been done effectively. Indeed, this problem had been highlighted as early as 1943, when it was noted that many 'non-European' graves of the East Africa campaigns were already 'irretrievably lost'.[83] Deciding that change could not be applied retrospectively, the War Office issued instructions for ongoing DGRE work only.[84]

In an undated draft letter, H.N. Obbard – the IWGC Deputy Director of Works in India – recalled the history of these decisions in the wake of fresh objections from African soldiers within SEAC about the proposed closure of Chas Road Cemetery and Manipur Road Cemetery. Here he stated the War Office instruction issued in March 1945 had been informed by discussions with the governments of British East and West African colonies but that enquiries in the field showed that 'African Units and formations were not in all cases pleased with these instructions'. From Obbard's practical perspective, the updated policies that followed the renewed consultation meant he had authority to move West African Christians in Chas Road and Manipur Road to Ranchi SPG

[80] This was likely Lieutenant-General Sir Rob McGregor MacDonald Lockhart. CWGC/1/2/A/409, Letter: GHQ India to DGRE, War Office, 23 December 1946.
[81] See CWGC/1/2/A/409, Letter: GHQ India to War Office, 23 December 1946; For approval of concentration see Cape Coast Regional Archive, PRAAD, Cape Coast, ADM 23/1/2719, Telegram: Magnus Sampson Secretary's Office Joint Provincial Council Cape Coast to Secretary Joint Council, 14 November 1945.
[82] See CWGC/1/2/A/409, Letter: GHQ India to War Office, 23 December 1946.
[83] CWGC/1/2/A/409, Graves of African Natives: Memo on Graves Registration from GHQ Middle East Forces to Under-Secretary of State, War Office, 31 August 1943.
[84] CWGC/1/2/A/409, Draft letter: H.N. Obbard, IWGC, New Delhi, India, undated (likely late 1946).

Cemetery and Kohima War Cemetery respectively. However, it still meant the remaining East African graves would be left behind. In his rather understated words, this position was 'not very satisfactory'.[85]

Despite repeated efforts to revisit the question of concentration, by late 1946 there was substantial pressure to have a policy that could be enacted so the work of permanent commemoration could begin. With some slight adjustments – namely that all West African casualties could now be exhumed, while all East Africans remained unmoveable – the policy as it stood at the end of this protracted episode was put in front of a meeting of the IWGC in January 1947. Before reaching that point, however, the history of the question of African graves dating back as far as the First World War was recorded, including the imperfect commemorative outcomes of that conflict. Although the situation could not at that time be comprehensively calculated for the Second World War, it was reported to the meeting that 'the number of graves capable of permanent marking would have been considerably greater if it had been permissible to concentrate isolated graves, or very small groups, into permanent cemeteries'. Although the IWGC clearly remained disappointed on this issue, the difficulties in producing an appropriate answer for the handling of African bodies was also recorded, recognising the supposed divergence of opinion between serving soldiers and the families of the dead. Concluding the point, the Commission continued to throw its weight behind the pursuit of equal treatment where it was possible:

> It appears that there is a tendency among these troops – contrary in some cases to Mohammedan or tribal custom but based no doubt on their achievements in two major campaigns and on increasing political consciousness – to expect, so far as tribal customs allow, equal treatment after death on active service, with European soldiers; and there is no obvious reason why that expectation shall be denied. The reports and recommendations of the Commission's Superintendent in East Africa, after his visit to the cemeteries concerned, support this view.[86]

Nonetheless, after making these statements, the paper cited the Colonial Office's consultations with the 'Governments concerned' and the fact that the resolution that followed accorded with their wishes. The minutes from the meeting itself offer little additional insight, although Chettle introduced the discussion by saying the issue had been far more significant in the recent war because:

[85] Ibid.; for the initial suggestion to obliterate the African graves at Chas Road, owing to the difficulties of maintenance, see CWGC/1/2/I/25, Tour of IWGC representatives in India, Burma & the Far East, Annexure 3, 15 February 1946.
[86] TNA, CO 980/211, Paper on African graves, circulated ahead of Commission Meeting No. 288, 16 January 1947.

> the Askari seemed to have acquired a new self-consciousness and in some cases, perhaps in advance of home sentiment in Africa, to have demanded equality of treatment with the white man. The extent to which that demand should be met had been agreed with the East and West African Governments: in effect, those who were buried in cemeteries would have headstones and those not buried in cemeteries would be commemorated centrally.[87]

This simplification of the proposal and unusual choice of words skipped over the differences as they would affect East and West African dead and framed the issue of concentration as one of equality of treatment. While West African casualties were, by the words of the proposal, subject to exhumation, what was said to be preventing the same treatment of East Africans were religious and 'tribal' customs. It is not clear whether Chettle used the word 'equality' to mean 'the same' or if he meant to suggest the outcome of this exercise was tantamount to unequal treatment. Either way, he made it clear that it was the Colonial Office and the colonial governments who had determined what appropriate treatment would be.

The extended time it took to get to this set of agreed policies can at least to some extent be explained by the nature and reach of the war and the slow pace of communications. To that can be added McNair's complaints about the sluggishness of Colonial Office administration and its apathetic handling of this issue, but perhaps most significant was the fact that these policies had to be built from the ground up. This was largely in recognition of the fact that earlier policies – or the lack of them – had led to the loss of tens of thousands of burials following the previous war. To avoid the same outcome, the starting point had to be an understanding of what was appropriate and acceptable for the dead. The way that question was asked, as well as the identity of those who were asked, had a substantial bearing on the answers received, which in turn begs important questions about who this work was for and whose voices carried the most weight. This latter point is of particular significance when it comes to the comparison of responses from next of kin and fellow soldiers, something clear in the evidence provided by the EACG and SEAC. The delays – and just as importantly, full understanding of the policies – had a very real impact on commemoration. As already stated, the decision came too late for some graves in the relevant theatres in which the war had already concluded, most notably in East Africa.[88] In 1948, the headquarters of the IWGC, too, was concerned about the understanding and implementation of these policies by its own teams in East Africa Area. In letters concerning commemorations in 'the Belgian Congo, Uganda, Tanganyika, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland', it was said that obliteration of all the graves appeared to be under consideration and steps were put in place to check this.[89] Such confusion appears to have existed into the following decade, and as late as 1954 the IWGC informed the War Office that its Area Superintendent in Burma had reported that the Officer Commanding the Grave Registration and Enquiries Unit had received orders

[87] CWGC/2/2/1/288, Commission Meeting No. 288, 16 January 1947.
[88] CWGC/1/2/A/411, Memo: H.G. Maybury, Records Officer, to P. N. Dolan, Director of External Relations and Records, 14 September 1960.
[89] CWGC/1/2/A/571, Letter: Anonymous to Colonel Edgar Griffin, IWGC Controller, Eastern District, 18 August 1948.

from Far East Land Forces (FARELF) that all African graves were to be left in situ, regardless of origin or religious beliefs. The Commission urgently requested that HQ FARELF be made aware of the policies that had been in place since the beginning of 1947.[90] There is no question that the complexity of these evolving and changing policies, as well as occasional ignorance of them, saw some graves needlessly left behind in some theatres.

5.1.2. High Commission Territories and Sudan

Within this complicated story sat the question of how to treat the dead of High Commission Territories (HCT). In the immediate aftermath of the war, the IWGC had planned to erect headstones over all HCT graves in maintainable locations.[91] In total, 631 graves were so marked, mostly in Italy and South Africa. For those buried in what were deemed to be unmaintainable locations, the colonial authorities of Basutoland (Lesotho), Bechuanaland (Botswana) and Swaziland (Eswatini) pushed for a policy to remove grave markers, with commemoration to instead take place on central memorials at home.[92] Unusually, this policy also extended into the territories themselves, where IWGC attempts to erect headstones well into the mid-1950s failed when the governments concerned declared all in-country graves unmaintainable.[93] Here, the IWGC was consistently told that local sentiment was that the names of all those who died, regardless of whether this occurred at home or abroad, should be visible on either a central memorial or memorial scroll.[94] As a consequence, there are no permanently marked war graves in these countries, with the names of those casualties joining those of the missing on three memorials in Botswana (162), Eswatini (77) and Lesotho (957).[95] As each HCT authority also desired them to act as 'national' memorials, these structures include the names of all servicemen who died, irrespective of where, or indeed if, the Commission had marked their graves in other theatres. Not only does this mean these men are commemorated outside the theatres of war in which they died, for some it also means a form of dual commemoration, with their names on marked graves as well as on the memorials. These are pronounced divergences from standard IWGC practice, accommodated to satisfy local sentiment, but they also again demonstrate the limits of the IWGC's authority to enforce its vision of commemoration in colonial spaces.[96]

[90] CWGC/1/2/A/411, Memo: Brigadier Frank Higginson, IWGC Secretary, to Under-Secretary of State, War Office, 23 September 1954.
[91] See, for example, CWGC/1/2/A/412, Letter: E.J. Scholz, Secretary to IWGC South Africa Agency, to Officer-in-Charge, UDF War Records Pretoria, 27 February 1947.
CWGC/1/2/A/412, Letter: E.J. King to E.J. Scholz, 24 April 1947.
[92] CWGC/1/2/A/412, Letter: E.J. King to E.J. Scholz, 24 April 1947.
[93] In February 1956, the total recorded burials were: Basutoland 214 (144 in 16 cemeteries, 70 unknown); Bechuanaland 116 (101 in 40 cemeteries, 5 unknown); Swaziland 44 (23 in 10 cemeteries, 21 unknown). See CWGC/1/2/A/412, Memo on War dead of High Commission Territories, 7 February 1956; For IWGC continually seeking permission to erect headstones see, for example, CWGC/1/2/A/412, Letter: Holt to A.R. Swinnerton, Commonwealth Relations Office London, 12 March 1956.
[94] In May 1956, for example, the IWGC were informed in relation to Basutoland that marking graves with a headstone 'is a custom not usually observed by the Basuto', and instead, commemoration on a central memorial was deemed more appropriate. See CWGC/1/2/A/412: Letter: H.P. Ritchie, High Commissioner's Office Cape Town, to A.R. Swinnerton, Commonwealth Relations Office London, 30 May 1956.
[95] These figures include those buried at sea, those with unlocatable graves and those with unmaintainable graves.
[96] CWGC/1/2/A/412, Letter to J.P. Gibson, Commonwealth Relations Office, 18 April 1950.

The treatment of Sudanese casualties provides a final noteworthy example of just how complicated the commemorative landscape had become. During and immediately after the war, communication with the authorities in Sudan had proven difficult, and it was not until September 1949 that the Commission received correspondence from the Kaid – the Commandant of the Sudan Defence Force (SDF) – General Sir Lashmer Gordon Whistler. Whistler stated there was no objection to the graves of SDF soldiers 'being treated in the same way as those of East and West African soldiers' provided that:

1. the headstone bore no cross or sign of any other religion,
2. they should only be concentrated into Muslim cemeteries,
3. if any graves were obliterated and a special memorial was erected as the point of commemoration, no Sudanese names would be inscribed onto the memorial unless it was within a Muslim cemetery.

If none of these conditions could be fulfilled, he stated it was 'better to leave the graves as and where they are with the marking stone', although further agreement from the Mufti was required to confirm this.[97] In reviewing these suggestions, the IWGC noted that whilst the 'diametrically opposed' views of the East and West African governments appeared to be unknown to the Kaid, it did appear that concentration would be allowed, if such action was found to be necessary. Nonetheless, in November 1949 they sought guidance from the British representative in Sudan as to whether the SDF contained any non-Muslims and whether the names of SDF servicemen could be inscribed onto any future memorial. The latter point was of particular interest as the Kaid's third condition had 'perturbed' the Commission, which saw its work as non-denominational.[98]

In December 1949 the Mufti of Sudan gave his opinion that Muslim soldiers of the SDF should 'be treated on precisely the same lines' as Muslim soldiers from Pakistan, which by this time meant allowing concentration.[99] While the majority of Sudanese burials in need of concentration appear to have been treated in line with the Mufti's advice, the largest proportion of SDF casualties, some 77 per cent, are, nonetheless, commemorated on the Sudan Defence Force and Sudanese Police Memorial, which itself has a complicated history. The Khartoum Memorial was originally planned and designed to operate as the main point of commemoration for all those British, South African, pre-partition Indian and Sudanese casualties classified as missing from the 1940-41 campaign in Eritrea, Northern Ethiopia and Sudan.[100] However, whilst the names of the 590 British, South African and pre-partition Indian dead were included on this memorial, in December 1957 the Sudanese government refused an IWGC request, submitted via the British Embassy, to

[97] CWGC/1/2/A/571, Letter from General Sir Lashmer Gordon Whistler, Kaid, SDF, 28 September 1949.
[98] CWGC/1/2/A/571, Letter to E.W. Thomas, Civil Secretary's Office, Sudan Government, 12 November 1949.
[99] CWGC/1/2/A/572, Letter: Hashim Abul Gasim, Mufti of the Sudan, to the Kaid, 17 December 1949; In turn, the Kaid clarified that the IWGC should assume that all members of the SDF were Muslim, unless there was direct evidence to the contrary, although this would not be easy to find, as this fact was not recorded on 'a man's documents'. See CWGC/1/2/A/572, Letter: The Kaid to Deputy Civil Secretary E.W. Thomas, 18 December 1949.
[100] Khartoum Memorial, https://www.cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/2054000/khartoum-memorial/Khartoum Memorial

add the 756 Sudanese names. The official reason offered was that they already had a suitable non-Commission memorial – an obelisk in Khartoum, without names, dedicated to both world wars – 'which they looked upon as theirs'.[101]

This reaction clearly surprised the IWGC, despite the Kaid's warning about memorials almost a decade earlier, and in January 1958 W. Wynne Mason, the IWGC Assistant Secretary (External Relations), visited Sudan to pursue the point. Here he learnt from the British Embassy that whilst the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had no objection to the inclusion of the names, the Sudanese Army was strongly opposed. The reason, according to the British military attaché, Colonel Willoughby, was down to 'the unwillingness of the Muslim element to be associated with an otherwise (mainly) Christian memorial'. On the other hand, the British Counsellor, R.W. Bailey, suggested this decision was most likely 'a manifestation of a political feeling that the Sudanese did not wish so soon after achieving independence to be reminded of their recent government by a British Administration'.[102] In response, Wynne Mason pointed out that their proposed memorial was non-denominational and that the Commission commemorated others who had recently attained independence, such as Burmese forces in Rangoon, as well as Sudanese forces on memorials in Egypt and elsewhere. In turn, the Commission made clear to the Foreign Office that:

> While they [the IWGC] would not wish ever to cause offence to the nationals of the country concerned, they find it difficult to think that the Sudanese could reasonably object to the inscription of the names of Sudanese soldiers alongside those of their British, South African, Indian and Pakistani comrades in arms, or that they would not react favourably to the desire of the Commonwealth to pay tribute in this way to Sudanese who fought and died in the Allied cause. The fact that the Memorial will be in a plot available for burials of servicemen of any religious faith or denomination should overcome whatever religious objections might have been in their minds.[103]

Despite appealing for the issue to be raised again, the British Embassy in Khartoum refused on the grounds that the Sudanese had made their feelings clear, and 'nothing was to be gained by pursuing the matter further'.[104] Consequently, 'owing to present day political causes', the IWGC was forced to accept that it could neither inscribe these names onto the memorial nor produce a register naming them until the Sudanese government was satisfied.[105] The result was that these 756 names remained on file with no form of physical commemoration, although a note to this effect was added to the published register of the Khartoum Memorial. The Commission acknowledged

[101] The request was put in via the British embassy based on the guidance of the Foreign Office. See CWGC/7/4/2/21237-1, fl.47, Memo: P.N. Dolan to IWGC Secretary, 18 September 1957; fl.49, Letter: R.W. Bailey British Embassy Khartoum, to A.H.B. Hermann Foreign Office, 14 January 1958; Copy of telegram from Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Sudan, to British Embassy in Khartoum, 11 December 1957.
[102] CWGC/7/4/2/2137-1, fl.52, Letter: W. Wynne Mason Assistant Secretary (External Relations) to IWGC Secretary, 9 April 1958. Sudan attained independence on 1 January 1956; prior to this it had been ruled by the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium since 1899.
[103] CWGC/7/4/2/2137-1, fl.55, Letter: W. Wynne Mason, to Foreign Office, 20 May 1958.
[104] CWGC/7/4/2/2137-1, fl.48, Letter: R.W. Bailey British Embassy Khartoum, to W. Wynne Mason, 31 January 1958.
[105] CWGC/7/4/2/2137-1, fl.57, Memo: W. Wynne Mason to Director of Works, 1 August 1958.

these 756 casualties within their total number commemorated within Sudan, as set out within their Annual Reports, commencing in 1960-61.[106] Furthermore, at the turn of the century, during a wider review of its historical estate, the CWGC created a 'paper memorial' in which to temporarily house these names – the Sudan Defence Force and Sudanese Police Memorial.[107] Discussions around how to physically commemorate these men have occurred periodically, although politics, internal security and other concerns have repeatedly stalled progress.

5.1.3. Policies in practice

All these policies had coalesced and developed at the insistence of the IWGC, but the organisation had very little control over their direction. While its officials repeatedly pushed for alterations where decisions conflicted with Commission objectives, the organisation was unwilling to act in opposition to these policies without the authority offered by the wider imperial system. Indeed, to have done so would have meant infringing the beliefs and desires of the dead and their families, at least as they had been reported to the Commission. Practical examples help to demonstrate exactly how difficult the real-world application of these policies could be.

At Ilala Manyema Cemetery, Dar es Salaam, regional staff inspecting the site in 1948 came to the 'reluctant conclusion' that 71 graves belonging predominantly to Tanzanian King's African Riflemen could not be maintained where they were. In line with standing policy, this meant removing their temporary grave markers and commemorating their names on a memorial for those with 'unmaintainable graves'.[108] Observing from the UK, however, the IWGC's Principal Assistant Secretary, Frederick Sillar, felt this was a departure from the organisation's principles and, in January 1949, made this clear to the IWGC Secretary, Frank Higginson:

> The graves seem to be quite definite and many of the names are known. If we are to treat African soldiers on the same level as English I cannot see how we can accept obliteration. If they were English we would not possibly obliterate.[109]

Sillar's objection to potential inequality was enough to stop any further work taking place until Higginson himself had viewed the site as part of a larger tour of East Africa in April-May 1949. However, once the latter saw how civilian burials continued to be made across the cemetery, 'with yawning graves … [being dug in preparation] … for the next batch of deaths', he concluded the IWGC could not control the space or ensure the safety and upkeep of the graves. With standing policy preventing the exhumation and removal of the bodies to another location and having declined to maintain the graves where they were, the only option was named commemoration

[106] For an unknown reason, this figure was removed in 1994, although it was re-added in 2000-1 with an explanatory note. See CWGC/2/1/Add 6.2.42, *Forty-second Annual Report of the CWGC, 1960-1*, (London: HMSO, 1961); CWGC/2/1/Add 6.2.75, *Seventy-fifth Annual Report of the CWGC, 1993-4*, (Maidenhead: CWGC, 1994); CWGC/2/1/Add 6.2.82, *Eighty-second Annual Report of the CWGC, 2000-1*, (Maidenhead: CWGC, 2001), p. 43.
[107] See Sudan Defence Force And Sudanese Police Memorial | Cemetery Details | CWGC.
[108] CWGC/7/4/1/RA 41962.1, Letters: F.E. Buller Superintendent East Africa Area, to IWGC Secretary, 13 October 1948 and 11 February 1948; CWGC/7/4/1/RA 41962.1, Extract from Report by Colonel E.A. Griffin, 23 October 1948.
[109] CWGC/7/4/1/RA 41962.1, Handwritten note: F.C. Sillar to IWGC Secretary, 15 January 1949.

elsewhere.[110] As such, the recommendation for 'obliteration' was agreed at the 315th IWGC Committee Meeting in May 1949, and the commemoration of the 71 casualties was moved to the Tanganyika Memorial erected at the nearby Dar es Salaam (Upanga Road) Cemetery.[111]

The same policies produced even more challenging circumstances elsewhere, especially when they split the dead within a site and treated them differently. At Qassasin African Cemetery in Egypt there were 429 burials in a plot that was 7 miles from the nearest road and 'beyond sight and sound of any authority'.[112] Following the policy agreed in 1947, the mortal remains of those buried were to be either exhumed and reburied in Fayid War Cemetery or the graves were to be left in situ, unmarked.[113] In practice, this meant two Indian burials were approved for concentration under the rules accepted by the 258th Commission Meeting of April 1944, while applying the rules accepted by the 288th meeting of January 1947 meant they would be joined by 89 West Africans and 27 South Africans.[114] A separate ruling was sought on how to approach the burials of allied Africans, Palestinians, Cypriots and Egyptians. On 24 November 1948, the IWGC Secretary confirmed that any burial not explicitly covered by the standing policies of the military or other authorities must be exhumed and concentrated.[115] Nonetheless, those standing policies would leave behind 115 East Africans, alongside 121 men of the High Commission Territories, 3 Eritreans and 1 Sudanese.

Despite all these policies having been established for a number of years, Herbert Maybury, the IWGC Records Officer for the South West District Branch, found the different treatment hard to reconcile. Writing to the Chief Records Officer on 8 February 1949, Maybury feared that:

> when the question of the disposal of the graves of East and Central African Natives was considered by the respective Colonial Governments, these Governments had in mind isolated graves and not graves in recognised War Cemeteries.

Marginalia on the letter added after receipt simply states, 'No', alluding to the fact that the issue was solely connected to interference with bodies once buried, regardless of their setting. Objecting to what he considered a nonsensical act, however, Maybury continued by stating that many of the Qassasin burials had already been concentrated once, either before these rulings or in

[110] CWGC/1/2/I/22, Note on Secretary's tour of East Africa, April-May 1949, 13 May 1949.
[111] Also at this meeting it was agreed to 'abandon' markings on African graves at six other sites located in Kisumu, two others in Dar es Salaam, at Mandera and Berbera African cemeteries, and at Dire Dawa (Hara Road) African cemetery. CWGC/2/2/1/315, Commission Meeting No. 315, May 1949; Grave markings at Ilala were not formally removed until 1955, see CWGC/7/4/1/RA 41962.1, Extract from the tour report of Wynne Mason, February-March 1955.
[112] Its isolation was further reinforced when the military decided to abandon and demolish their nearby facilities. See CWGC/7/4/1/RA 41265, Letter: Chief Administrative Officer Eastern District, to IWGC Secretary, 1 November 1948; This view was reinforced in a further letter on 16 December 1948 and in Extract from Report on tour of Egypt and Sicily by Vice-Chairman and Assistant Secretary, 17-31 March 1949.
[113] CWGC/7/4/1/RA 41265, Letter: Chief Records Officer to Chief Administrative Officer, 26 February 1949.
[114] The Indian burials had previously been concentrated into Qassasin in November 1945 from El Tahag Libyan POW Cemetery.
[115] CWGC/7/4/1/RA 41265, Memo on Qassasin African Cemetery, 11 November 1948; CWGC/7/4/1/RA 41265, Memo: A.S. Laing to Chief Records Officer, 24 November 1948.

ignorance of them, and that 'to obliterate them now is almost inexcusable'.[116] He cautioned that, based on various evidence, 'there is considerably more interest in the fate of the African Native soldier than was displayed during and after the Great War 1914/18'.[117] Whilst he acknowledged the Commission would be safeguarded in its actions by the advice and approvals of the various governments concerned, he felt this was a 'special case demanding special consideration'. Concluding his argument, Maybury made one final attempt to bypass policy, stating:

> from the records in our possession, the burials in Qassasin are trench-burials and … the exhumation party will find it extremely difficult to segregate the remains of one burial from another in view of the absence of surface markings. This alone may persuade the Commission to concentrate all the remains to the new place of burial on the score that differentiation of policy was rendered impossible owing to the absence of the necessary means of identification of individual bodies. Any complaints which the Commission may receive concerning the interference with a grave can also be met by the same answer.[118]

As the cemetery plan suggested sufficient space between the graves, Maybury's intervention was overruled and the partial scheme of exhumation was approved in April 1949.[119] Ultimately, the concentrations were made into Fayid War Cemetery in September 1950, while the names of the East Africans left at Qassasin were commemorated on the Fayid Memorial. The HCT dead were referenced numerically at Fayid, with their names being inscribed on memorials erected in Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland, in accordance with the desires of their governments.[120]

One final example worth noting is the short history of Amiriya Military Cemetery in Egypt. It has been referenced elsewhere in this report that, in late 1945, SEAC communicated concerns raised by African soldiers that their dead were being treated differently in the concentration process. There is no question that these men felt they were witnessing inequality and therefore expressed their objections, but those feelings likely also came from their evolving relationship with death, burial and the handling of mortal remains. Others have shown how exposure to the violence and horrors of war more closely bonded soldiers to their comrades and altered entrenched community beliefs, which were often adapted and changed to fit their circumstances.[121] Amiriya Military Cemetery – or, more precisely, the cemetery of Abu Haggag that was concentrated into Amiriya – shows just how significantly the opinions of soldiers could differ to communities at home.

[116] CWGC/7/4/1/RA 41265, Letter: Records Officer S.W.D. Branch, to Major Kinnear, 8 February 1949.
[117] Ibid.; he based this argument off the following letters, included in the same file - Letter: I.T. Meyer, Office of the High Commissioner for the Union of South Africa, to Colonel Chettle, 12 July 1943; Letter: E.W.S. Curtis, DAAG HQ 2nd Echelon East Africa Command, to IWGC, 12 January 1949.
[118] Ibid.
[119] See CWGC/7/4/1/RA 41265, WGR1, Request for authority to exhume, 1 April 1949; Letter: Chief Administrative Officer to The Secretary, 1 April 1949; Letter: Assistant Secretary to Chief Administrative Officer, 25 April 1949.
[120] See CWGC/7/4/2/16424/1, Memo: Chief Records Officer to Director of Works, 30 April 1954.
[121] Owino, '*Vifo na mazishi*: the impact of war on Kenya African soldiers' beliefs and attitudes towards death and burials in colonial Kenya', pp. 151–70.

On 28 June 1942, four East African companies of the African Pioneer Corps (APC) were resting at Abu Haggag station in Egypt while they waited for a delayed train. As they relaxed and slept, the station was bombed by the Luftwaffe, leaving 42 men dead and many more seriously injured. In the aftermath, the bodies of those killed were collected and buried in a shared grave, in part because of the manner in which they had been killed – at least one being interred as 'ashes'. A service was held by the officers and men of the companies involved, and the site was enclosed with barbed wire to protect it. Soon after, Major M.E. Humphrey-Moore of 1808 Company, proposed that a cross should be erected to mark the grave; however, his soldiers made 39 – one for each man believed to be buried there, signifying their adherence to the Christian faith. While even the act of communal burial was said to be abhorrent or at least against the customs and practices of many of those involved, the sudden and appalling outcome of the attack encouraged them to suspend or change their beliefs.[122]

Being actively involved in the collection and burial of the mortal remains of their dead comrades was significant to these men, but so was their continued access to the burial site. Stationed with British Middle East Forces throughout the conflict, Moore's company made multiple pilgrimages to the gravesite where they paid their respects and tended to its upkeep, at least until 1944. While they appear to have understood that the dead would not be repatriated alongside the living to Nyanza, Kenya, where the unit was raised, something more symbolic was brought home in the form of the station bell. The transfer of this bell was as an act of remembrance and, in the years that followed, it continued to symbolise the passing of those who did not return.[123] This example clearly contradicts some of the findings confidently reported by the EACG about communities in East Africa. While those communities are known to have had mixed feelings regarding the handling of the dead, like West African soldiers serving in SEAC, soldiers drawn from the same East African populations valued uniformity of treatment over anything else. This was perhaps because they could see the consequences of the alternative first hand.[124]

What confuses the Abu Haggag case, however, is the fact that the army did concentrate these graves into Amiriya Military Cemetery in January 1945, even though this technically contravened the policy of non-exhumation. While nothing seems to have survived to explain how or why this happened, it is likely to be akin to the African concentrations known to have been made into Qassasin, which were believed to have been done in ignorance of the policies preventing it. Either way, when Amiriya was handed over to the IWGC in February 1946, it was said to house 269 Commonwealth and Allied graves, the majority African, as well as 66 German and Italian prisoners of war. Of the Commonwealth graves, 196 were concentrated into the cemetery from

[122] Ibid., pp. 164–5. Note that only 39 dead are mentioned, while the burial return shows 42.
[123] Ibid., pp. 165–6.
[124] Ibid., pp. 151–70.

elsewhere, including the 42 at Abu Haggag.[125] By 1949, however, the IWGC's Eastern District office in Cairo questioned the future viability of Amiriya Military Cemetery, it being 20 miles from Alexandria, isolated 'in a desert area', and lacking a water supply. It was suggested that no horticulture scheme could be commenced without considerable expense and that the site was 'almost certainly liable to be desecrated'. Suggesting a suitable area for concentration within Alexandria (Hadra) War Memorial Cemetery, they requested authority to close Amiriya. In so doing, however, they acknowledged the impact this work was going to have on those buried there, stating they sought 'to exhume and re-bury … certain African natives, obliterate other East Africans and cremate Hindus'.[126]

The request to close Amiriya was granted and the work completed during December 1950 and January 1951. Of the 269 burials it contained, 119 were exhumed and concentrated to Alexandria (Hadra) War Memorial Cemetery, including 35 West African casualties of a variety of units and religious beliefs. Of the Indian casualties buried there, Muslim burials were moved while 15 Hindus were exhumed and cremated. The 135 graves that remained, predominantly of East African and High Commission Territory casualties, were left in situ. Amongst them were Christians of all denominations, Muslims and 'pagans', and they included the 42 men of the African Pioneer Corps who had originally been buried at Abu Haggag. The names and formal commemorations for all these men were transferred to the Fayid Memorial, while 'the whole area … [was] ploughed over and all signs of the site as a cemetery removed'.[127]

5.1.4. A second chance at 'equality'

Despite the fact that the IWGC had ultimately accepted and implemented the policies laid down by the War Office in 1947, from the outbreak of war until that point was reached there was clearly a great deal of inconsistency in the way in which bodies had been handled by a variety of different authorities. For the most part, this was due not only to ignorance of the rules but also to the fact that they had changed more than once. Knowing this had caused some frustration within the IWGC when it was observed that some of those who would be left behind at sites had in fact already been moved to where they were. What is perhaps more interesting, however, is the fact that these questions – and the frustrations that went with them – did not end with the war. In the decades that followed, there are numerous examples where the question of moving East African burials again came to the fore.

[125] Note that the file has a series of conflicting numbers regarding the total number buried in the cemetery. This figure is from a table of burials in CWGC/7/4/1/RA 41274, Letter: IWGC Assistant Secretary to Chief Administrative Officer, 7 May 1949. The breakdown of burials was as follows: 95 East African, 52 South African, 35 West African, 15 HCT, 4 unclassified African, 1 Mauritian, 8 Palestinian, 34 Indian, 4 Sudanese, 4 Free French African, 2 Eritrean, 7 Libyan, and 8 Unknown. For total concentrated into Amiriya, see the taking over certificate, annexed to a letter dated 6 February 1946.
[126] Ibid., Letter: Chief Administrative Officer, IWGC Eastern District, to Secretary, IWGC, 23 May 1949.
[127] CWGC/7/4/1/RA 41274, Letter: Chief Administrative Officer, IWGC Eastern District, to Secretary IWGC, 9 February 1951.

The first challenge came in 1953 at Mogadishu African War Cemetery, Somalia, which housed 161 burials in four plots. The distribution and arrangement made the site difficult to maintain, something the IWGC wished to change by regrouping 39 of the graves, which it was said would halve the space required. Given that the majority of burials were East Africans, any change should have led to 'obliterations'. Nonetheless, the IWGC Chief Records Officer, Thomas Carless, felt compelled to seek permission to move the bodies. Although pessimistic that opinions would be different, he also likely hoped their position in an established war cemetery would change the outcome.[128] In July 1953, F.C. Sillar wrote to the Colonial Office to explain that:

> The question is, in view of the opinions expressed by the East African Governors' Conference, on which we have been founding policy for so long, whether an exception could be made in the case of Mogadishu cemetery. The Commission do not feel that they can depart from the policy they have been following, even in one case, without the specific consent of the Colonial Office.[129]

Noting the potential expense of alternative solutions – or, worse still, the potential obliteration of some or all of the graves – Sillar pushed for a favourable answer. The response came that the Colonial Office foresaw no issue with the regrouping so long as no publicity was given to the process, but they, too, felt compelled to return to the East African authorities.[130] On 30 November 1953, the East Africa High Commission responded to the Colonial Office stating that 'the East African Governments see no objection to the re-grouping of the graves as proposed'.[131] With their exception granted, the IWGC completed the internal concentration work in April 1955, and the cemetery was finally completed in 1957.

While at the time this change was entirely local, in little more than five years since the finalised policy agreement, something had been done that was previously impossible. An even more significant change, however, followed a re-examination in 1960 of outlying burials in Madagascar. As previously noted, in 1944 the Commission had outlined a plan to concentrate into a small number of cemeteries the dispersed graves on the island, including a sizeable number of East Africans, something that had caused a revival of the question of their treatment. Although this did not bring about change at the time, work on the island was ultimately delayed by political instability and a violent French anti-insurgency campaign. When the work was revived on the establishment of the Malagasy Republic, the now Commonwealth War Graves Commission returned to the issue

[128] CWGC/7/4/1/RA 41289, Extract from Note of Secretary's Conference, 1 July 1953; Handwritten note: Thomas Carless to F.C. Sillar, 9 June 1953.
[129] TNA, CO 1032/6, Letter: F.C. Sillar IWGC to E.B. David Colonial Office, 8 July 1953.
[130] TNA, CO 1032/6, Letter: D.K. Malone Colonial Office to Colonel E.A. Airy IWGC, 27 August 1953.
[131] TNA, CO 1032/6, Telegram: Chairman East Africa High Commission to The Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, 30 November 1953. The only individual response from a government within the file is from Northern Rhodesia, which gave no objection. See Telegram: Governor, Lusaka, Northern Rhodesia to Secretary of State for the Colonies London, 18 November 1953. For Nyasaland, the KAR were in 'full agreement', as 'leading AOR [African other ranks] of all denominations have agreed that there is no objection to disturbing the graves as they are old ones. The objection to disturbance only applies to newly buried corpses'. See Malawi National Archives, 18-4-7R 6937, Letter: Commander 1st (Nyasaland) Battalion KAR to Chief Secretary Zomba, 10 November 1953.

of outlying graves.[132] Soon after, P.N. Nolan, then Chief External Relations and Records Officer, began to question the still standing exhumation policies based on his own wartime experience, during which he became convinced that East African troops 'expected that their graves would be treated in exactly the same way as the graves of Europeans; indeed from time to time one had to give them that assurance'. He went on to state that, while it was 'clearly too late to alter the practice adopted after the 1914-1918 war', they could look once again to reinstate or move Second World War graves that had been left behind.[133] This marked a fundamental change in the way the CWGC approached this work. While it was ultimately accepted that it would be impossible to revisit graves that had already been 'obliterated', extant East African burials would now be incorporated into the planned concentration scheme into Diego Suarez Cemetery.[134] This seems to have set a precedent that finally allowed the Commission to move any burial as it wished, something soon after witnessed in Somalia, where the graves of 16 East African casualties were concentrated into Mogadishu African War Cemetery in 1966.[135]

It is critical to acknowledge that this final and effectively unilateral shift in policy must be seen to be as potentially divisive as leaving bodies behind. While ultimately beneficial to the statistics of marked East African burials, we must also assume these actions were, nonetheless, still objectionable to some of those affected. While the process of how those objections were identified and the policies created has been questioned here, without a further attempt to understand the wishes of next of kin and affected communities, we must accept that those objections had at least some grounding in truth. Reflecting on the issue in 1973 and justifying this earlier shift, the then Director-General William Chalmers noted:

> After the Second World War the Commission had been told that there would be religious objection to removal of remains in certain parts of Africa but it appeared that the objections were not so strong as had been represented.[136]

How this conclusion was reached does not appear to have been retained, unless it was simply born out of the Colonial Office's tacit approval of the rearrangement at Mogadishu two decades earlier and the fact that action there and in Madagascar had not been met with opposition. What

[132] The Imperial War Graves Commission had become the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in March 1960.
[133] CWGC/1/2/A/411, Letter: P.N. Nolan Chief External Relations and Records Officer to Director of External Relations and Records, 12 December 1960; within the same file, an internal memo to Nolan on 9 December 1960 noted that there were around 50,000 East and West African First World War casualties, 'and relatively few are recorded by name, or present identified graves'. It was also noted that there was only one cemetery in East or West Africa with over 100 graves for the First World War, Dar es Salaam Ocean Road Cemetery in Tanganyika (Tanzania).
[134] CWGC/1/2/A/411, Letter: W. Wynne Mason Director of External Relations and Records to Regional Director Southern Region, 21 December 1960. In May 1962, 69 graves across 10 burial grounds within Madagascar were concentrated into Diego Suarez cemetery. This included 5 East African graves at Ambrositra, which the military had previously 'obliterated' in the 1940s, but their DGRE headstones were still visible on the ground. See CWGC/2/2/1/460, Commission Meeting No. 460, 17 May 1962.
[135] These were from Isha Baidoa Civil Cemetery. Originally planned for 1962, political issues delayed the work. See CWGC/7/4/1/RA 41289, Letter: P.N. Nolan to Regional Director Southern Region, 28 March 1962; Exhumation Report Form A, 12 March 1966.
[136] CWGC/REC/9/4, Minutes of meeting to discuss rationalisation of maintenance in Tanzania, 4 May 1973.

this whole episode illustrates, however, was the near impossibility of meeting the needs and desires of all those affected by a death in service. Like memorials to the missing and the outright denial of repatriation, so much of what the IWGC did on behalf of the dead and those who mourned them was the result of compromise. Nonetheless, from the perspective of preserved graves of the Second World War, the impact of these compromises on African casualties were clearly clearly disproportionate.

5.1.5. Conclusion

In the aftermath of the First World War, the IWGC had exhumed and moved the bodies of tens of thousands of European casualties – some in recovery efforts and others through cemetery design – but none with the consent of next of kin. This enforced treatment did not go without challenge then and caused further controversy after the Second World War. In just one example, a father wrote to his MP to ask him to intervene in a concentration in India that would see his son exhumed and moved from an isolated grave. This followed a rejection by the IWGC of his request that his son's remains be cremated and returned home, something he saw as:

> just another example of the 'equality' which is being forced on all of us. They say the regulation was made to ensure 'equality of treatment'. I should not quarrel with such a decision if my boy had been allowed to remain where he was laid to rest. Since, however, he is to be disturbed in the interests of economy, I see no valid reason why he should not now be laid to rest amongst his own folk.[137]

Similarly, although less common in the first phase of this work, it is important to note that 'alternative commemoration' – a more general term used to describe the shifting of commemoration from a grave to a screen wall or memorial – did also affect British and other casualties, particularly those laid to rest at home by their families. Manchester Southern Cemetery is just one example of a large UK site that includes a screen wall to commemorate regional casualties in cemeteries deemed unmaintainable by the Commission, in this case with the names of more than 70 casualties with graves in 12 different locations.[138] If next of kin could be traced, they would be informed of the decision rather than consulted on its suitability. Perhaps more interestingly, in Australia, where the Commission's work was done through a government agency, the policy for domestic graves was to 'preserve the memory rather than the remains'. Outlying burials were the responsibility of families, while the agency erected a plaque for permanent commemoration in one of 10 'Gardens of Remembrance'.[139]

What separated African casualties of the Second World War from these examples was the fact that the IWGC had enquired about the appropriate handling of bodies and sought the consent

[137] CWGC/1/2/K/6, Letter: Donald Kaberry, MP to J Strachey, MP, 9 March 1951; for similar examples related to Australian casualties see Bruce Scates, *Anzac Journeys: Returning to the battlefields of World War Two* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 59-63.
[138] See Manchester Southern Cemetery, https://www.cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/40413/manchester-southern-cemetery
[139] Conference with Regional Directors, 22 May 1967.

of communities and next of kin to take a particular course of action. The answers it received had to shape its work if it was to do right by the dead and their families. This is exactly what the IWGC believed it was doing, even when allowing African graves to revert to nature at remote or isolated sites and at sites not selected for preservation. Nonetheless, it was also the IWGC that chose which sites would be maintained, thereby jeopardising the future of burials whose locations it chose not to maintain.

On exhumation policies, this analysis shows that the practice was prohibited for some African casualties following advice that claimed the dead or the communities from which they came would find this treatment objectionable. These findings, the result of a consultation exercise that took the duration of the war to conclude, were based on questions raised by the IWGC about the commemoration and handling of African dead. The organisation pursued this issue for two reasons. On the one hand, it wished to avoid the failures of the First World War, where the absence of African casualties commemorated by name at the grave or on memorials stood in stark contrast to what was delivered in Europe. On a more practical level, though, it simply required these policies to deliver a different outcome. They would inform what appropriate treatment looked like, and this was no different to the way in which special conditions were attached to casualties of the Indian Army. Both ambitions ought to have been commendable, and they were obviously directly linked, but realising them through a transactional process in which colonial authorities acted as a middleman presented serious challenges and ultimately produced imperfect results.

Relying on British imperial administrations to access community voices was likely the only way in which the answers to the IWGC's questions about the treatment of the dead could be gathered in the required timeframe. As might be expected, however, the views gathered by those administrations were refracted through a colonial prism that distorted and essentialised African views. In reality, the evidence of the opinions of Africans, though never consistently or comprehensively sought, was mixed. It suggested a diversity of views amongst communities on how to manage death, with yet more divergence of opinion between serving soldiers and those at home. Perhaps the biggest flaw in this exercise, though, was the fact that few of those consulted were ever in possession of the information they needed to make informed decisions. The IWGC certainly made attempts to alter the way in which these questions were posed by organisations like the East Africa Conference of Governors, but it never managed to communicate the significance of failing to do so. Because of this, and also because the colonial authorities seem to have misunderstood the extent of the IWGC's concentration plans, communities were never fully aware of what was at stake.

Ultimately, whether or not the opinions reported by colonial authorities reflected the true beliefs of the populations they appointed themselves to speak for matters less than the fact that those populations were given very few opportunities to speak for themselves. In colonial spaces, the imperial authorities dictated the extent to which next of kin and communities were engaged and

how they understood what was happening to their dead. While the next of kin of British and Dominion casualties were not given any more say in the way in which their dead were treated, the system had been designed to serve their needs and sensibilities. The dead of empire had to fit within this system, which frequently meant the adoption of different forms and approaches to commemoration, most of which were not of their own choosing.

Beyond flaws in the policies affecting the handling of the dead, the determination with which the IWGC strove to rationalise its international commitments through concentration also had a dramatic impact on the commemorative landscape. This is especially significant as evidence suggests colonial administrations and organisations like the EACG did not fully understand that burial in an established cemetery – civil or military, at home or abroad – would not on its own guarantee protection from obliteration. On the other hand, the IWGC continued to pursue the policy of concentration in the knowledge that it came at the expense of marked African graves. In one last example, when reporting on efforts in Addis Ababa to secure rights to cemeteries in Ethiopia in 1946, the British Ambassador, Harold Farquhar, referred to a meeting with an IWGC representative who had suggested the two sites at Dire Dawa need not be preserved. As the civil cemeteries contained 'no white British troops' and only small sections were occupied by African military graves, it was suggested they be handed over to the municipality and the African names should go on a memorial erected in Addis Ababa War Cemetery.[140] After the Foreign Office shared this correspondence with the IWGC, Henry Chettle wrote to the area Superintendent, Major D.C.S. Fisher, to question the proposed action, which he believed was 'based on a short view'. As Chettle put it:

> There are few enough African graves to be marked with headstones as it is; and there is something to be said for reminding the Ethiopians at Dire Dawa … that British African soldiers helped to liberate their country. Is it impracticable to mark these 36 graves and see whether increasing tranquillity in Ethiopia will allow adequate maintenance of the cemetery as a whole?[141]

Responding a few weeks later, Fisher provided an insightful reply that neatly encapsulates the way in which these policies could influence Commission thinking, and how easy it had become to revert to other forms of commemoration. Fisher conceded he had not looked at it from Chettle's perspective and confessed he had only considered the future of the sites 'in so far as the eventual upkeep of the graves and cemetery'.[142] In this instance, Chettle's input secured the future of these burials where they were, but such an outcome was far from universal. Although this evidence does not explicitly demonstrate a conscious disregard for the importance or value of African mortal remains, it does show that other policies, which placed emphasis on the future maintenance of sites, often took priority. If that maintenance was deemed impossible or unduly difficult or expensive, concentration to somewhere more favourable was the answer. In situations

[140] TNA, FO 369/3480, Letter: H. Farquhar to Ernest Bevan, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 7 August 1946.
[141] TNA, FO 369/3480, Letter: H.F. Chettle to D.C.S. Fisher, East Africa Area Superintendent, 1 October 1946.
[142] TNA, FO 369/3480, Letter: D.C.S. Fisher, East Africa Area Superintendent to H.F. Chettle, 15 October 1946.

like this, where concentration was prohibited, the IWGC often prioritised the ability to beautify or maintain a site over the preservation of African graves.

For the duration they were enforced, the policies protecting the mortal remains of some casualties from interference and perceived desecration were upheld in good faith in the same way as policies that protected the unique rites and customs of other groups. This appears to have been done without the intention of creating inequalities and with the acceptance that to have done otherwise would have dismissed the beliefs – at least as they were enshrined in those policies – of those being commemorated and their families. The fact that the IWGC repeatedly reraised these issues in search of more favourable outcomes demonstrates its hope that this might yet be realised. Whilst it did this, however, it was engaged in the concentration work that created the state of jeopardy many of these burials faced. In the end, consent to exhume all African casualties was assumed in 1960, by which time potentially as many as 7,500 casualties from East and West Africa had been denied a permanently marked grave.

5.2. Graves of pre-partition Indian Army Muslim personnel allowed to 'revert to nature' at sites not selected for permanent preservation

The significance of pre-partition India to the British war effort during the Second World War is beyond question – not only did it provide the largest volunteer army the world had ever seen, but India also acted as the base of British operations in South-East Asia. These commitments naturally came at a heavy price, with more than 87,000 personnel dying in service across Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. Of these, just over 51,000 died and are commemorated outside of India, with the majority (some 70 per cent) commemorated in the operational theatres centred on Burma (Myanmar, 22,644) and Singapore (13,493).[143]

As with East Africa, from the war's beginning the Commission actively sought to settle the question of how to treat Indian dead, fearing a repeat of the situation that had arisen in the aftermath of the previous war.[144] Indeed, there was a deep level of dissatisfaction, articulated repeatedly by Fabian Ware throughout the 1920s and 1930s, towards the unequal and 'inferior' commemorative treatment that was afforded to Indian soldiers who died outside of Europe. Whilst the IWGC had overseen much of this treatment, from the perspective of many within the organisation, this was not done through choice. Instead, it was primarily caused by the poor record keeping and the 'apparent lack of interest' shown by the Indian Army and British Indian administration towards 'commemorating the Indian Forces and followers with the same particularity as was shown to other Troops of the British Empire'.[145] The IWGC was intent on ensuring this did not happen again, something it made abundantly clear in November 1941 when Ware stated during a Commission Meeting that he had written to the Indian government to stress that 'Indian soldiers should be commemorated on a footing of equality with British soldiers'.[146] Prior to this interjection, the graves of Indian soldiers dying outside India were being recorded and marked by the DGRE, but their future was far from certain. In response to the IWGC's letter, in July 1942 the Indian government and the Secretary of State for India stated that any conclusions about future permanent treatment could 'best be assessed in the light of conditions prevailing at the end of the war'.[147] In reply, and no doubt framed by the memory of previous failures in record keeping, the IWGC stressed the need for accurate and complete data to be forwarded to them at the end of hostilities. The Indian government subsequently assured it of such.[148]

[143] These figures include British officers.
[144] For more information on this, see George Hay & John Burke, *Report of the Special Committee to Review Historical Inequalities in Commemoration* (Maidenhead: CWGC, 2021), Non-Commemoration Report: Commemoration Inequalities | CWGC.
[145] See the quote by Fabian Ware from February 1923 in CWGC CM 16 Pt.1. Report: Henry Chettle to Colonel Oswald, 2 February 1937.
[146] CWGC/2/2/1/239, Commission Meeting No. 239, 12 November 1941; CWGC/2/2/1/240, Commission Meeting No. 240, 14 January 1942.
[147] CWGC/1/2/A/420, Letter to IWGC Vice Chairman from Colonel Erskine, India Office, 31 July 1942.
[148] CWGC/1/2/A/420, Letter to India Office, 31 August 1942.

Despite these assurances, during a briefing at the IWGC's 248th Meeting in March 1943 it was reported by the ADGRE Middle East, Lieutenant Colonel R.H. Hoffman, that around six months earlier GHQ India had issued instructions to discontinue the concentration of scattered Indian graves into permanent cemeteries. Hoffman added that while these Indian graves were being properly registered and marked, the order against concentration meant that they were 'liable to complete obliteration'.[149] This concerned the IWGC because the DGRE's concentration work was almost complete in East Africa and was ongoing across the Middle East. Writing to Colonel Erskine at the India Office in April 1943, Chettle made it very clear that the IWGC opposed on both moral and political grounds this 'policy of deliberate discrimination'. In turn, he drew on the parallels of the First World War, where the Commission was, in his words, able to offer 'full equality of treatment' in Europe but not across the East owing 'to the formal advice of the Government of India and the India Office'. He added 'that there are no insuperable religious difficulties in equalising on every battlefield (as they did in France after 1919) the commemoration of Indian and British soldiers'. With that, Chettle requested the Secretary of State ask GHQ India to reverse their decision.[150] It was not until October 1943 that the IWGC became 'semi officially aware' that this policy had been reversed. It was observed at that time that this change, which was yet to be officially endorsed by the War Office, was 'far-reaching' but had probably come too late to be properly applied to the work in East Africa and, to an extent, the Middle East.[151] Thus, for a year or more, the isolated burials of Indian soldiers were left in situ while those of other Commonwealth forces were concentrated into permanent cemeteries.

The impact of these policies was quickly observed by Chettle in December 1943 when he got hold of the handover papers from the DGRE for East Africa, where he queried why the number of Indian graves and cremations was so low.[152] Two sites where some of those commemorated are likely to have been impacted by this short-lived Indian Army policy are the Khartoum Memorial in Sudan and the Alamein Memorial in Egypt, where there are 513 and 1,821 Indian commemorations respectively with dates of death prior to October 1943.[153] An unknown proportion of the men on these memorials to the missing will have been genuinely 'missing' as a result of the fighting, but it is also likely that the graves of others were left in situ as part of this policy. During the same period there was also heavy fighting involving Indian forces in Burma, Malaya, Singapore and Hong Kong.

[149] By this point, Hoffman detailed that registration work had been completed across the East African theatres around 4 months previously, and concentration work would be finished there in April. For the Middle East, concentration work had begun and was ongoing. See CWGC/2/2/1/248, Commission Meeting No. 248, 26 March 1943; CWGC/1/2/A/419, Letter to Colonel Erskine, India Office, 20 April 1943.
[150] Ibid.
[151] A letter from February 1944 noted that the reversal of policy by the Indian government had come too late for the East African theatre, as whilst attempts would be made to concentrate, 'it cannot in most areas be carried out with retrospective effect'. See CWGC/1/2/A/419, Memorandum on Indian burials and cremations by Henry Chettle, 11 October 1943; See also Letter: G.W. Lambert (Army Council), to the Secretaries of State for Dominions, Colonies, Foreign Affairs, India and Burma, Admiralty, Air and War Transport, 5 February 1944; CWGC/1/2/A/420, Letter: Under-Secretary to the Government of India to The Secretary, Military Department, India Office, 13 August 1943.
[152] CWGC/1/2/A/420, letter: H.F. Chettle to Major E.A. Friend, DADGR for GOC-in-C East Africa, 7 December 1943.
[153] The Khartoum Memorial commemorates those who died during the East African campaign of 1940-1941 in Sudan, or in the advance into Eritrea and Northern Ethiopia.

However, the rapid, intense and unsuccessful nature of that fighting left so many unaccounted for that it makes it impossible to draw any meaningful conclusions about the number of burials not concentrated.

Following the reversal of the Indian government's instructions, the DGRE remarked that the concentration and permanent marking of isolated Indian graves, as well as the marking of cremation grounds, would require an Indian Graves Registration Unit to be sent back to North Africa.[154] Only a month previously, the IWGC's Principal Architect for North Africa, J. Hubert Worthington, had also reported that the commemoration of the Indian dead would present him with 'special problems' if marking dispersed graves and cremation sites was going to be required.[155] However, although the IWGC had repeatedly attempted to influence and alter policies concerning grave registration and concentration, Ware ultimately made it clear these responsibilities were the army's concern and that the Commission's job was to take control of the cemeteries once they were completed. If the Indian Army declined to search for and recover these graves, it was the Commission's duty 'to agree to carry out the principles of commemoration laid down by the Indian government'.[156] Nonetheless, this did not stop Ware applying further indirect pressure and encouraging departments to think about future perceptions, enquiring once more whether the Colonial Office or any colonial government 'would be embarrassed in any way' should the Commission proceed in the manner desired by the Indian government. Speaking on behalf of the Colonial Office and African colonial governments, Colonel Cole replied stating there were no objections, and that those authorities stood by their policies.[157]

Despite concluding this point, ambiguities continued to plague the policies dictating the treatment of Indian casualties. In some circumstances there were still cases of confusion resulting from the social, ethnic and religious differences manifest in the British Indian Army, particularly in relation to Gurkhas. It was broadly understood that Sikh and Hindu practice was to cremate the dead, while Muslim practice was to bury. However, in April 1945, following a visit to Alexandroupolis (Dedeagatch) British Cemetery in Greece by Major Adamson of the 1st/2nd Gurkhas, it was explained 'that Hindu soldiers of his regiment preferred burial to cremation after death'.[158] With that, on 6 June the Commander in Chief India instructed all Regional Headquarters that, pending further instructions, 'bodies of Gurkha dead should not, repeat, not be exhumed and

[154] CWGC/2/2/1/253, Commission Meeting No. 253, 17 November 1943. The Graves Registration Services were informed of the new policy in October 1943. See CWGC/1/2/A/419, Memo: Indian Burials and Cremations, 18 October 1943.
[155] This directive was, in large part, developed owing to the difficulties of maintenance and access. This was especially so in Egypt and Libya, which are largely desert regions. Worthington's tour occurred from July to September 1943. See CWGC/2/2/1/252, Commission Meeting No. 252, 20 October 1943.
[156] In the final resolution adopted, the words 'welcoming the reconsidered policy of the Indian government' was omitted on the advice of Ware. Moreover, a concern was raised during this meeting, and during the 252nd Meeting in October 1943, regarding the Indian authorities constructing memorials to the missing across North Africa, as that was the remit of the IWGC. They were not, however, opposed to the construction of Battle Exploit memorials. See CWGC/2/2/1/253, Commission Meeting No. 253, 17 November 1943.
[157] Ibid.
[158] CWGC/1/2/A/420, Extract from Major Menzies Report, 28 May 1945.

cremated. If exhumed in error they should be re-buried'.[159] This was followed, just under a week later, by an Indian government ruling which stipulated that, 'owing to the fact that exhumation and cremation of Gurkha dead is very unpopular', the bodies of Gurkha dead should not be disturbed.[160] However, this ruling was again modified in August 1945 to allow for Gurkhas to be exhumed and reburied in military cemeteries if the original site of burial was unlikely to remain undisturbed in perpetuity.[161] Even this, though, was not the end of the story, as in January 1948 Major Padma Bahadur Khatri informed the Commission that:

> generally speaking, the Gurkhas follow the practice of cremation, only a few tribes having the custom of burial, but amongst these latter are some Gurungs, who form quite a big majority of those recruited in India … from whose practice of burial the uninformed are likely to gather the wrong impression that all deceased Gurkhas are always buried. Moreover, among the Gurungs there are four sub-clans or castes, i.e. Lama, Lamichhaney, Ghale and Ghotamey, who all differ in their customs for the disposal of the deceased.

As such, he recommended that the only method of ensuring that the proper procedure was carried out was to continue the general practice of making the Senior Gurkha Officer of the unit responsible for the disposal of the remains of the dead.[162]

Further difficulties were experienced in establishing a set procedure to deal with the remains of Hindu and Sikh soldiers who, due to circumstances, had been buried rather than cremated. Following a request for a ruling in January 1945, Allied HQ in the Mediterranean was told by the War Office that the graves of Hindus and Sikhs should be left unmarked, their burials carefully recorded and their commemoration moved to memorials to the missing.[163] However, the following month the Government of India issued a new directive stating that if cremation had not been possible, the body should be exhumed and cremated on the spot. If this was not possible, they should be discreetly 'exhumed and concentrated for immediate cremation', with commemoration occurring on central memorials.[164] Neither approach, however, sat well with the IWGC, which wished to commemorate cremations where they had taken place, at least in part because most Indian cemeteries contained Muslim burials alongside a cremation ground.

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[159] CWGC/1/2/A/420, Telegram C-in-C India to War Office and area commands, 6 June 1945.
[160] CWGC/1/2/A/420, Letter to Chettle from India House, 12 June 1945; CWGC/1/2/A/420, Letter to de Soissons from Chettle, 25 June 1945.
[161] This perhaps helps to explain why the 4 Gurkhas buried in Alexandroupolis were concentrated into Phaleron Cemetery in 1946, as their original burial plots were said to be on an access road. See CWGC/1/2/A/420, GHQ India directive for the Disposal of Hindu and Sikh Bodies after Burial, 14 August 1945.
[162] CWGC/1/2/A/578, Letter from Major Padma Bahadur Khatri, Military Attaché, 3 January 1948.
[163] CWGC/1/2/A/420, AFHQ communication to War Office, 18 January 1945; CWGC/1/2/A/420, War Office communication to AFHQ, 20 January 1945.
[164] CWGC/1/2/A/420, GHQ India directive for the Disposal of Hindu and Sikh Bodies after Burial, 17 February 1945. Special emphasis was placed on doing this discreetly given burial and exhumation were 'contrary to the religious tenets of the Hindu faith'.

In May 1945, Chettle wrote to the High Commissioner for India to raise some of these concerns, suggesting the Commission would like to erect screen walls or headstones for the cremated, with the latter featuring the superscription 'Here is honoured', thereby preventing any potential confusion about whether a casualty was actually buried. He further stated the IWGC's belief that if an Indian cemetery was to be concentrated, both the burials and the cremations should also be concentrated.[165] Following this intervention, in August 1945 the Government of India revised its policy to say that the bodies of Hindus and Sikhs should be left in situ if they lay in sites 'likely to remain undisturbed in perpetuity', whilst those bodies which did not should be exhumed and cremated.[166] In turn, GHQ India wrote to the Director of the DGRE in September 1945 to state that, for those Indians buried in permanent cemeteries in France and Germany for whom cremation was the custom, their bodies should be left undisturbed. While they were to be marked with headstones, the inscription would contain no reference to the fact of burial.[167]

Even after these policies were settled with the Indian authorities, there often remained difficulties in applying them on the ground – especially when they conflicted with local customs. Within Singapore, for example, in the aftermath of the war, the intention of the IWGC was to concentrate all outlying burials into Kranji War Cemetery.[168] For those buried in Muslim civil cemeteries, the Singapore government was required to consult with the Muslim Advisory Board before any work could be undertaken. However, following this consultation, in September 1951 the IWGC was informed that the majority of Muslims in Singapore were of the Shaafi Sect. Amongst this group, exhumation was forbidden except for very special circumstances, and the local Muslim Advisory Board had ruled that the circumstances were not 'sufficiently extraordinary' to permit the concentration of 149 burials from 5 Muslim civil cemeteries. This decision, it was noted, 'was made in the full understanding' that the IWGC would 'find it difficult, if not impossible' to maintain any graves not concentrated into Kranji.[169] The IWGC also faced similar issues regarding the concentration of Muslim graves in Malaya (Malaysia) and Ceylon (Sri Lanka), and as a report from November 1951 noted:

> In each case the difficulty has been the (local) failure to realise that it is the custom of the soldier's country of origin and not that of the country in which he happens to be buried that governs the treatment of his remains.

[165] In this letter, Chettle drew a parallel to the First World War, as he noted that, wherever they could, 'and owing to the very serious imperfections of the Indian records this was not often', the IWGC erected headstones over Muslim graves and commemorated in the same cemetery any Hindus or Sikhs cremated at that place. He added that, in the cemeteries of the East, the IWGC commemorated the Hindus on collective memorials, but in France, as a rule, by headstones superscribed 'Here is honoured'. If a Hindu cremation plot had to be concentrated, a small amount of soil was removed from the original site and spread at the new point of commemoration. See CWGC/1/2/A/420, Memorandum by H.F. Chettle, 18 April 1945; Letter: Henry Chettle to High Commissioner for India, 11 May 1945.
[166] CWGC/1/2/A/420, GHQ India directive for the Disposal of Hindu and Sikh Bodies after Burial, 14 August 1945.
[167] CWGC/1/2/A/420, Letter: P.A. Meade for Adjutant General in India, to, The Director of Graves Registration and Enquiries, 11 September 1945.
[168] See CWGC/1/2/A/592, Letter: Brigadier Obbard to the Colonial Secretary of Singapore, 23 July 1951.
[169] CWGC/1/2/A/592, Letter: Colonial Secretary of Singapore to Brigadier H.N. Obbard, 26 September 1951.

Before any decision about leaving the dead in situ was officially authorised, it was suggested that the Government of Pakistan should be consulted for their views, given 'any such action on our part would be directly contrary to their expressed policy'.[170] However, on the advice of Brigadier Obbard, it was ultimately decided in January 1952 that approaching the Government of Pakistan 'would be unwise', given the length of time it would take to get a response, and because it could 'possibly cause doubts to be cast upon the rightness of exhuming Muslim graves in the Burma concentration scheme'.[171] Consequently, the IWGC decided not to contest the decision to leave behind Muslim war graves within the civil cemeteries of Singapore. The point of commemoration for these men, alongside those buried in what were deemed to be unmaintainable sites in Malaysia, were transferred to the Singapore (Unmaintainable Graves) Memorial in Kranji War Cemetery.[172] In relation to Ceylon (Sri Lanka), following discussions with the local Islamic authorities in Colombo, it was agreed that Muslim graves 'whether of Indian, Ceylon or African forces' were to be marked, maintained and concentrated wherever possible, whilst those which could not be concentrated, owing to objections or because they were unlocatable, were to be commemorated on the Colombo (Liveramentu) Memorial Tablets.[173]

Despite the IWGC eventually securing a clear policy for the treatment of Indian Army burials, it came too late to preserve the graves of some casualties, shifting their commemoration to memorials to the missing. In some rarer examples, objection to exhumation from local but otherwise unconnected coreligionists also had a surprising impact on the ability of the IWGC to enact those policies, leading to similar outcomes.

[170] CWGC/1/2/A/592, Letter: A.S. Laing to Brigadier Obbard, 1 November 1951.
[171] In this case, he noted the graves were in a different category because they were battlefield burials whereas those in Ceylon were not. See CWGC/1/2/A/592, Letter: Higginson to Brigadier Obbard, 18 January 1952.
[172] Following discussions with the Muslim Advisory Board, it was agreed that the temporary markers would not be removed. See CWGC/1/2/A/592, Letter: Secretary to Chief Administrative Officer, 19 March 1952; Chief Administrative Officer, India, Pakistan and South East Asia District, to IWGC Secretary, 15 July 1952; See Singapore Unmaintainable Graves Memorial, https://www.cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/2015801/singapore-unmaintainable-graves-memorial
[173] For those graves not officially adopted by the IWGC, it was noted that 'their temporary markers will not be removed but they will not be maintained or replaced'. This included the graves of Ceylon Local forces in private and garden burial grounds. See CWGC/1/2/D/10/17, Report: Summary of position in Ceylon as at 31/03/1952, 18 April 1952. See also Colombo (Liveramentu) Memorial, https://www.cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/2013501/colombo-liveramentu-memorial-tablets

5.3. 'Final Verification' forms not issued to families of pre-partition Indian and African casualties

At the end of the two world wars, the various military authorities provided the IWGC not only with the details of hundreds of thousands of casualties – including their name, unit or regiment and service number – but also with the addresses of their next of kin from their service records. Quite separate from reporting news of a death, something performed by the service branches themselves or higher military authorities, these details allowed the IWGC to contact families to provide a 'Final Verification' form. This form served several functions and was transactional. On the one hand, it provided next of kin with information about the place of commemoration, but its primary purpose was to confirm the details the IWGC had on record for the casualty and provide an opportunity for them to be corrected. For the next of kin of those with a known place of burial whose commemoration would take the form of a standard IWGC headstone, the Final Verification included space to add the casualty's age and indicate whether they desired a religious emblem to be inscribed. Should they desire it, this form also gave them the opportunity to provide text for a short 'personal inscription', which would appear at the bottom of the headstone. Next of kin were given six weeks to return these forms, otherwise the Commission would assume the details on record were accepted as correct.

The limit of this contact is in many ways surprising considering what the organisation was doing on behalf of families and next of kin, whether they approved or otherwise. By preventing repatriation and dictating the form and type of commemoration, the involvement of families and loved ones in this process was deliberately restricted as part of the pursuit of equality.[174] The only area in which that control was relaxed following both world wars was with personal inscriptions and the addition of age and religious emblems. Despite this apparent relaxation, personal inscriptions still became a point of conjecture in the aftermath of the First World War, principally because they were not provided for free for all. Instead, the families of British and South African (and in the latter case, only those of European descent) casualties were charged 3½ pence per letter, although submitted inscriptions were still engraved if the relative pleaded poverty or no payment was forthcoming.[175] The Australian and Canadian authorities chose, in most cases, to cover these costs. The New Zealand government, on the other hand, prohibited them altogether, believing they brought into question the principle of equality. Here they cited the inability of poorer families to pay and the fact that these inscriptions were not available to those commemorated by memorials to the missing – a group accounting for roughly half of all those who died during the war. Although the IWGC recognised that this difference in approach between member governments was effectively creating an inconsistency that might be construed

[174] On wartime casualties effectively becoming the property of the imperial state, and on the importance placed on personal inscriptions for some families, see Noakes, *Dying for the Nation*, pp. 172, 244-6.
[175] It was noted in 1948 that one of the reasons on which the Commission had based their policy of charging the relatives with the cost of personal inscriptions 'was their experience that this direct personal link with the stone was greatly appreciated and that it reconciled many thousands of relatives to the fact that in war cemeteries they could not have headstones of their own choosing at their own cost'. See CWGC/1/2/A/423, Memo: F.C. Sillar to Secretary Finance Committee, 14 September 1948.

as inequality, they nonetheless concluded that it 'must be accepted unless it is so great as to upset the whole idea of Imperial co-operation on the Commission'.[176]

Following the Second World War, at least some of these conditions were changed, as Ware was anxious to avoid a repetition of the difficulties faced following the First World War.[177] This included the payments, which were capped at a maximum of £1 and were described as entirely voluntary, something arranged in recognition of 'the desire known to be felt by many relatives to contribute towards the cost'.[178] Despite this, the IWGC still received a small number of complaints from relatives regarding the mere mention of payment within the forms sent out.[179] Nonetheless, personal inscriptions on headstones were still far from universal following the Second World War. In fact, looking across all the identified burials in the Commission's care, fewer than 60 per cent have this feature. While this average includes known exclusions like the New Zealanders, individual member government figures top out at 63.6 per cent for the United Kingdom. The most likely explanation for these figures not being higher is the difficulty the Commission faced in contacting a casualty's next of kin. In most cases, years had elapsed between the names and address being recorded by the military authorities and the Commission circulating the verification forms. In the intervening time, family members may have moved or passed away. In other cases, false information had been given by those enlisting, which prevented this follow-up with families. For others, even after receiving the forms, the process proved too distressing, and they chose not to pursue it. However, it is not just these issues and the absence of inscriptions for New Zealand casualties that skews these results.

Other omissions in personal inscriptions come from policies covering the Indian Army and other groups incorporated into the figures for the UK. In the case of the former, the Government of India, which was also the IWGC's agent in the country, noted in April 1947 that it did not believe providing the forms to next of kin would 'serve any useful purpose'. Furthermore, when it came to personal inscriptions, it believed they would be 'in vernacular script [and] would be an undertaking entailing considerable time and labour'. As a result, they recommended against their use.[180] There were, of course, some arguments for this beyond any labour or financial implications. The multitude of languages, the dispersed recruiting areas, and an average literacy rate below 20 per cent may have influenced this decision.[181] For the Government of India or the Indian Army to deliver this exercise in the field, most likely via the Indian Sailors', Soldiers' and Airmen's Boards, would have been resource intensive, potentially to the point of being beyond

[176] CWGC/1/2/A/422, Letter: F.C. Sillar to Lt. Col. W. Russell Edmunds, Treasury Chambers, 7 August 1947.
[177] CWGC/2/2/1/286, Commission Meeting No. 286, 21 November 1946.
[178] Circular letter to next of kin regarding voluntary contributions to personal inscription costs. CWGC/1/1/3/31, Commission Forms and Leaflets.
[179] See, for example, CWGC/1/2/K/7, Correspondence between IWGC and the Secretary of State for War; and IWGC and MPs, pp.41-49; Hansard, Vol. 536, Debate on War Graves, 27 January 1955. (War Graves - Hansard - UK Parliament)
[180] CWGC/1/2/A/424, Letter: India Office to Brig. McNair, 26 April 1947.
[181] The combined average literacy rate in 1951 was 18.33 per cent. See 'Literacy as seen in the 2001Census', Chapter 106., https://www.cindiabudget.gov.in/budget_archive/es2001-02/chapt2002/chap106.pdf

the capacity of the authorities.[182] In turn, this was all occurring around the time of partition, with the increase in communal violence and the mass movement of populations making any potential work, had there been a desire to undertake it, that much harder.

Perhaps more influential than any of these concerns, however, was the relationship that existed between the Indian Army and its soldiers. Although it is frequently described as the largest volunteer army in history by the end of the Second World War, few of those 'volunteers' were motivated by the cause of the conflict or driven by a desire to defend the imperial state. While there remained a well-established connection between the army and martial 'communities' in British India, particularly in the Punjab, even these relationships were more transactional in nature than those seen in the UK. While there is no question that some communities felt bound to military service through tradition, in many ways the army was 'mercenary' in nature, serving the Raj more for a monthly wage and potential pension than any warm feelings about the British imperial project in India and beyond. The transactional relationship that existed between Indian service personnel and the British Indian state only became more pronounced as the war went on and recruiting from other communities began in earnest. Still volunteers on paper, these new recruits from outside the 'martial classes' might be better described as 'economic conscripts', driven to service by push factors such as financial need or malnutrition.[183] These relationships contrast dramatically with the citizen armies of the UK and Dominions, where notions of 'patriotic duty' or the importance of fighting for and defending one's country were motivations, even if they were not always expressed openly.[184] Such a different point of view brought with it different expectations on both sides, including what a citizen soldier might expect from the state in life and death.

Given the size of the Indian Army and the complex relationship it had with its soldiers, it is less surprising that its administrative arms were adamant that they could provide all the details the IWGC required for the dead without having to resort to engaging individual families. The verification forms that survive for Indian casualties within CWGC records show this different thinking in practice, having been neatly and comprehensively typed by clerks of the Indian Army. Interestingly, despite the fact that no final verification had been carried out with the next of kin of pre-partition Indian casualties, there was also 'no policy ruling … prohibiting P.I's [personal inscriptions] for other ranks of Indian Army'.[185] This curious state of affairs meant that, amidst this otherwise seemingly state-led exercise, requests had in fact been received for personal inscriptions in a total of three examples. They remain the only Indian Army headstones dedicated

[182] For an analysis of the work of the Indian Soldiers' Boards after the First World War see, for example, Tai Yong Tan, 'Maintaining the Military Districts: Civil-Military Integration and District Soldiers' Boards in the Punjab, 1919-1939', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (1994), pp. 833-74.
[183] For more on all of these points see Fennell, *Fighting the People's War*, pp. 66-8, 448; Indivar Kamtekar, 'A different war dance: State and class in India 1939-1945', *Past and Present*, No. 176 (2002), pp. 190-2; Tan Tai Yong, *The Garrison State: The Military, Government and society in Colonial Punjab, 1849-1947* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2005).
[184] Fennell, *Fighting the People's War*, pp. 89-90.
[185] CWGC/1/2/A/336, Handwritten note: Carless to PAS, 27 October 1955.

to Indian casualties (which is to say, not British officers) to carry such inscriptions.[186] While this approach may have best reflected the nature of the relationship between the Indian Army and its soldiers and secured the timely return of the information required for commemoration, it denied the families of these men a role in the confirmation process and withheld the opportunity to contribute to headstone inscriptions.[187]

The second issue directly concerns those units raised from across the Empire and Commonwealth whose commemorations were and are maintained by the UK's contribution to CWGC funding. This means that all casualties not belonging to the other five member governments – Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand and South Africa – appear on the casualty database under the UK statistics without further territorialisation. Although in global terms these numbers are comparatively small, they do incorporate many of those affected by the issues in this report, including a substantial proportion of those whose families never received verification forms. Although there appears to be no detailed surviving information concerning policies like that seen for India, it is clear from the typed appearance of the documents in the CWGC's possession, and the total absence of personal inscriptions on headstones, that the next of kin of East and West African casualties were also not in receipt of these papers.

Nonetheless, and akin to India, across East and West Africa colonial officials maintained an established means of communicating with the relatives of the dead. This was not only to provide notification of death and to grant any outstanding pay and death gratuities owed to next of kin, but it was also used to return to families the personal effects of the deceased.[188] In the Gold Coast (Ghana) in particular, the 'greatest importance' was given to the latter, as the Colonial Secretary in Accra made it clear in April 1941 that:

> It is the prevailing custom in this territory that when a person dies in a distant place and it is not possible to bring the body back home for burial a small piece of the personal clothing of the deceased or some other similar souvenir is sent to the relatives for exhibition during the funeral obsequies.[189]

As a result, real effort does appear to have been made by the Gold Coast authorities to ensure that this was undertaken. Alongside this act, the names of those who died were published in the

[186] Two served with the RAF, one with the Indian Horse.
[187] It is important to note that personal inscriptions, if they had been made available, would only have been applicable to those casualties with headstones over identified graves. As a large proportion of the Indian Army was Hindu and Sikh, these commemorations would always have been on memorials following cremation, meaning personal inscriptions were unavailable. Those declared missing would also be commemorated by memorials.
[188] See Tanzania National Archives, File 176/13, Vol.3, Letter: E.S. Watson, Officer I/C E.A. Military Records to District Commissioner Korogwe, 9 April 1947; Ghana Accra, PRAAD CSO 22/4/214, Memo on Death reporting by H.V.A. Franklin, Officer I/C G.C. Regiment, 3 May 1941; PRAAD CSO 22/5/99, Letter: Record Office Gold Coast Area West African Forces to Colonial Secretary Accra, 27 April 1944.
[189] GH PRAAD, CSO 22/4/215, Letter: V.J. Lynch for Acting Colonial Secretary Accra to Secretary to Governors' Conference, 16 April 1941. The importance of this was reiterated in GH PRAAD, CSO 22/4/215, Letter: C.A. Stewart Cole for Colonial Secretary Accra to Records Gold Coast Area, 7 September 1943; for the assistance of the EACG in this see TNA, WO 230/55, Notes on Conference to discuss the policy for war cemeteries, 17 October 1941; For similar requests from the military authorities in India see GH PRAAD, CSO 22/4/215, Letter: Major Hodgson Officer I/C Records Gold Coast Area to HQ 2nd Echelon (West Africa Wing) India Command, 15 September 1943.

official government Gazette, official letters of sympathy were conveyed and a Royal Message of Condolence was sent to the next of kin.[190] In some cases, the distribution of these scrolls continued into the early 1950s. Although it might be assumed these processes were standardised and one-way, they did often encourage responses. For example, extensive evidence demonstrates how next of kin often wrote to the colonial authorities, especially in relation to the provision of death gratuities.[191] Moreover, in September 1942 the Provincial Commissioner in Nyanza, Kenya, had to defend the speed in which relatives in Owako village were notified of deaths following the Abu Haggag bombing, as in response to a written complaint stating that the government was 'against spreading such news', it was written that:

> It is important that you should explain to the addressee and the next of kin in each case that the writer is quite wrong in his supposition that casualties are concealed. It naturally takes a considerable time to verify them and they are not announced until every effort has been made to verify.[192]

In other cases, such as in Tamale (Ghana), colonial officials were undertaking surveys via local chiefs into the social and financial circumstances of the next of kin.[193] Following this work, in 1941 the District Commissioner in Tamale criticised the discriminatory nature of the assistance provided to African next of kin, which he argued was in no way equal to that offered to dependants in the UK. Indeed, although 'a letter of sympathy couched in rounded phrases [is] to be handed to the relatives none of whom can read or have the least desire or even use for the document', it was more direct financial assistance that was required. This was, of course, a reflection of the broader impact of such a death and:

> if those responsible had the misfortune to be present at the heart-rending scenes of despair I have witnessed by the relatives of East African casualties – despair not by any means only sorrow at their loss but at the thought of the future – the situation would very soon be rectified.[194]

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[190] For example of a Royal Message of Condolence, and the process of notifying next of kin of death, see GH PRAAD CSO 22/13/52, Casualties among West African Air Corps personnel in the Gold Coast; Cape Coast Regional Archive, PRAAD, Cape Coast, ADM 23/1/2977, Gold Coast Regiment Memorial (RWAFF) Scrolls for Deceased Soldiers (Casualties); National Archives of Nigeria, File 2424, Soldiers of the Nigeria Regiment death and dangerous illness of; for similar material covering East Africa see Tanzania National Archives, File 176/13, Vol.3, Military, Soldiers died or wounded on active service; KNA, DC/KSM/1/22/74, Death of Soldiers; KNA, DC/KSM/1/22/73, General Instructions; KNA, DC/NKU/2/29/10, Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, Administration Department, Military; KNA, DC/KSM/1/22/72, EA Military Record Office; KNA, DC/KSM/1/22/76, E.A. Military Record Office; KNA, DC/KSM/1/22/77, Military, General Instructions, Death of Soldiers.

[191] See for example Cape Coast Regional Archive, PRAAD, Cape Coast, ADM 23/1/2977, Letter: Kwoku Prah to Officer-in-Charge Records Accra, through District Commissioner Cape Coast, 8 November 1949.

[192] KNA, DC/KSM/1/22/72, Letter: Provincial Commissioner Nyanza to District Commissioner Kisumu, 23 September 1942; Letter: Okumu Ouma 1808 Company to Julisi Omoro, undated, attached to above.

[193] These questionnaires asked, for example, 'Are the people hungry or not?', 'Do you consider they are poor or not?', 'In what state of repair is the compound?', 'Is anybody earning a salary?', 'Any other details which will show whether the family has suffered economically by the death of the deceased'. See Tamale, PRAAD, NRG/6/24/217, African home allotments.

[194] Tamale, PRAAD, NRG/6/24/217, Letter: Ag. District Commissioner to The Ag. Chief Commissioner Northern Territories Tamale, 28 March 1941.

Such sentiments, beyond reflecting the impact of death at an individual level and spelling out the unequal nature of the colonial relationship, shows for the purposes of this paper that there was a system in place that provided, in many cases at least, a direct line of communication with the relatives of the dead. However, given the geography, the dispersed nature of populations, the structure of the imperial state within the territories in question, and the relationship that existed between soldiers and the authorities, it is perhaps not surprising that a similar approach to that seen in India was adopted. What might be considered surprising, however, is that this was not the IWGC's desired outcome.

In a memo from April 1946, the rights of all next of kin to be involved in this process, regardless of origin, was considered, principally within the wider context of delivering equality. Initially remarking on the imperfect nature of records following the previous war and the enormous social and cultural changes seen across global societies since, it was noted:

> It must be recognised that the present day forces of the Imperial and Colonial territories are very different from those who fought in the 1914-1918 war. They are far better educated and are rapidly becoming politically minded. On material grounds alone therefore there should be no difference in the treatment proposed for European and non-European war graves. On moral grounds there must be equality of treatment for those who have given their lives irrespective of creed, race or colour.[195]

In response, Chettle noted that although 'we may take it that P.Is [personal inscriptions] for native headstones would present insuperable difficulties', he strongly agreed with the concluding statement of the memo that 'the Commission should endeavour to obtain as full personal particulars for non-Europeans as for Europeans', and that forms should be sent to the Chief Secretaries or equivalent authorities of the territories concerned with a request for their assistance.[196]

The language in this memo hints at fears of emerging independence movements that might ultimately challenge British imperialism and suggests the IWGC's work could potentially help to curtail that threat. Nonetheless, it is also clear there was a belief that there existed a moral imperative to commemorate equally. In line with this, it was acknowledged that collecting the relevant information from families would not be easy, but it was thought the attempt should be made and, if the authorities of the territories concerned were asked to assist, the prospects of success were fairly good. In the case of Africa, it was even hoped that District Officers could be relied upon to 'take a personal interest in obtaining the correct information'. As it was, the final surviving note on this subject from June 1946 concluded that the IWGC should 'deal with the question of PI's for native headstones when we come to them'. As in India, there was no policy ruling prohibiting them but, ultimately, nor was there an effort to see them taken up by next of kin.[197]

[195] CWGC/1/2/A/409, Memo: FV Particulars from N/K Non-Europeans,12 April 1946.
[196] Ibid.; CWGC/1/2/A/409, Note: Chettle to Carless, 21 May 1946.
[197] CWGC/1/2/A/409, Handwritten note, 28 June 1946.

While there were certainly arguments for not pursuing this information in India and across Africa, mechanisms for doing so existed and were in use for similar purposes. The result is a difference in treatment for the families of the dead from these regions and the legacy of this is the near complete absence of their words from the graves of their people.

5.4. Non-standard paper-based commemoration for all domestic pre-partition Indian casualties, including those buried in the country

As already stated, the approaches taken to the commemoration of Indian dead outside Europe following the First World War had been considered unsatisfactory by the senior leadership of the IWGC. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the organisation made frequent complaints about the quality of records provided by the Indian Army and offices of state, but also the look and feel of Indian Army cemeteries and memorials across the Middle East, which had been shaped by that force. Similar disagreements had also taken place around the commemoration of Indian dead within India itself and its immediate surrounds. This issue was much complicated by fighting that took place on the North West Frontier, in the north east and in Burma, and during the Third Afghan War (1919), but also by disagreements over access to and jurisdiction over Muslim cemeteries in the country itself. In all cases, the British Indian authorities believed graves could not be marked, either for fear of desecration during future fighting or because no government authority had a right to interfere with the burials in existing Indian civil cemeteries. On the latter point, an Indian government advisory committee of 1919 was also convinced that the numbers of burials in India (discounting Sikhs and Hindus who would have been cremated) was probably very small.[198] The solution to these problems was the erection of memorials, which ultimately took the form of the India (Delhi) Gate and Shillong Memorial. In the first instance, the India Gate was to be a national memorial to all the 70,000 soldiers of pre-partition India who died during the years 1914–21, the majority of whom were and are commemorated by name outside the confines of India. As well as this, however, it carried the names of men who were buried or cremated in the operational zones 'West of the Indus'. The Shillong Memorial would bear the names of 95 men of the Assam Rifles and the Assam Military Police who died in three small campaigns on the north-east frontier, and in Burma. Because of village-level commemorative efforts being undertaken by the Indian Soldiers' Board, the British Indian Government insisted that non-operational deaths in the country – those through illness or accident while on depot or garrison duty, for example – did not require formal commemoration by the Commission.[199]

Issues connected to these decisions rumbled on into the 1930s and, with the outbreak of war at the end of that decade, the Commission was keen to avoid a repeat performance of these difficulties. The issue of graves in India was given space on the agenda at the 239th Commission Meeting on 12 November 1941 following receipt of an Army Instruction discussing the temporary marking of British graves in the country. As Ware put it, 'this raised by inference the question of the treatment of Indian soldiers' graves in India, and the validity, to-day, of the decision taken after the last war, in deference to the Indian Government's wishes, not to attempt to commemorate Indian soldiers dying in India'. Ware wanted this raised with the Indian government alongside questions of treatment of the dead in operational theatres.[200] At the Commission's next meeting

[198] CWGC/1/2/A/420, Draft letter: anonymous (IWGC) to Under-Secretary of State, India Office, undated but likely 1943.
[199] CWGC/1/2/A/526, Memo: Commemoration of Indian Troops dying in India, 16 November 1948.
[200] CWGC/2/2/1/239, Commission Meeting No. 239, 12 November 1941.

in January the following year, it was reported that this appeal for full equality had been put to the India Office.[201]

The initial response of the Government of India on 31 July 1942 was to continue with the conditions laid down during the previous war and to re-examine the question at the close of hostilities. In a guarded response, the Commission once more reminded the India Office that the success of such a course of action would 'depend upon full and accurate lists of the casualties' and asked whether these would be obtainable.[202] In isolation, the importance of this question might easily be missed, but it linked back to decades of discord caused by inaccurate or non-existent records provided by the Indian authorities. Perhaps just as importantly, it once more raised concerns about unmarked graves and compromised commemoration in India itself. Further correspondence with Erskine at the India Office in April 1943 indicated that the 'government of India have not agreed to the marking of Indian graves in India, but we expect … to obtain full lists of the Indian dead in India after the close of hostilities'.[203] Erskine said he had put the Commission's concerns in front of the Military Secretary, who had in turn informed him that 'in view of the Government of India's attitude to the question of the recording and marking of graves of Indian soldiers dying in India and elsewhere in the present war, it would be useless to refer this matter again officially'. Instead, he urged direct correspondence with the Adjutant-General in India and concluded that 'things have changed a lot since the last war and … there is a good deal to be said for treating India's dead in the same way as those of other countries in the Empire'.[204]

The major change in the Indian Government's opinion that took place in late 1943, which saw concentration work begin overseas, was reported to have had significant implications for grave marking and cremations across East Africa and the Middle East. On summarising these changes, however, Chettle mentioned that it was doubtful this policy change was meant to apply to the Indian dead in India and that 'this point must be cleared up'.[205] Despite his urgency, the question of domestic commemoration kept being pushed back by the British Indian authorities. While there was recognition of the fact that all casualties should receive some form of fitting permanent commemoration that aligned with their religious practice, the Indian authorities appear to have had an issue with delivering this promise to Indian officers and other ranks of the Indian Army who died in non-operational theatres in India.

Following the Second World War, the IWGC believed the arrangements made by the Indian authorities after the previous war had been repeated 'with added force'.[206] The final position was that while they could furnish the names and dates of death, the 'long established practice of not recording the places of burial or cremation' would make it impossible to commemorate domestic Indian casualties by headstone or tablet. Finally conceding the point as lost, and in an attempt

[201] CWGC/2/2/1/240, Commission Meeting No. 240, 14 January 1942.
[202] CWGC/1/2/A/420, Letter: Erskine to Fabian Ware, 31 July 1942; Letter: Fabian Ware to Erskine, 31 August 1942.
[203] CWGC/1/2/A/420, Letter: Henry Chettle to Erskine, 26 April 1943.
[204] CWGC/1/2/A/420, Letter: Erskine to Henry Chettle, 5 May 1943.
[205] CWGC/1/2/A/420, Memorandum on Indian burials and cremations by Henry Chettle, 11 October 1943.
[206] CWGC/1/2/A/526, Minutes by Colonel H.N. Obbard, November 1946.

to reconcile the accepted need for commemoration with the obvious difficulties faced, the IWGC suggested erecting memorials within India. Showing the limits of its reach and influence, the Commission made it known that if this was of interest to the Government of India 'the Imperial War Graves Commission would be glad to receive a formal invitation to assume the responsibility for such commemoration'.[207]

This proposal had actually been communicated to Samuel Runganadhan, the High Commissioner for India, in a letter from Fabian Ware on 4 August 1944. Independently of the Commission, however, the Government of India had already appointed a War Memorials Advisory Council that was pushing forward 'a scheme for a National War Memorial', which would house books of remembrance.[208] Writing to Colonel H.N. Obbard in December 1945, Brigadier F. Higginson, IWGC Controller, stated that the Commission's position was that any memorials should be decentralised and that they should be structural rather than paper-based, something 'necessary if the Commission's purpose of doing equal justice to all members of H.M. Forces fallen in the war is to be fulfilled'.[209] This position was reiterated to the High Commissioner in July 1946, where a written record was considered 'insufficient and … does not completely fulfil the purposes which the Commission had in mind in 1944'. As one Commission spokesperson saw it:

> A National Memorial is one thing; the Commission's commemoration of the individual dead, according to the places where they fell, is another. The Indian killed on Active Service gets full war grave treatment: if he is a Christian, a Mahomedan or a Gurkha his grave is maintained in perpetuity and he gets a headstone; if he is a Hindu or a Sikh he is cremated and he is commemorated on a suitable memorial near the place where he was killed. The Commission's intention was that those Indians dying in India who did not thereby get full war grave treatment should have an alternative form of commemoration. Commemoration in Books of Remembrance in the National War Memorial … does not fulfil the purpose of the Commission.[210]

At the 289th Commissioners' Meeting on 20 February 1947, the proposed position of the Government of India was discussed, which argued for Indian Army casualties in India not to receive full war graves status unless they had been buried in one of the permanent war cemeteries. Despite its strong and extensive objections, the Commission ultimately accepted this compromise.[211] However, these decisions were being made on the eve of independence and partition in August that year, which naturally confused matters a great deal. In May the following year, the Head Office of the IWGC was urgently chasing the number of Indian dead who had died in India so that it might plan the form of memorial required, something that partition

[207] CWGC/1/2/A/420, Memo: War Graves in India, undated.
[208] CWGC/1/2/A/526, Letter: J.K. McNair to Samuel Runganadhan, 9 July 1946.
[209] CWGC/1/2/A/526, Letter: Brigadier F. Higginson, IWGC Controller, to Colonel H.N. Obbard, IWGC Inspector for India and South East Asia, 21 December 1945.
[210] CWGC/1/2/A/526, Letter: J.K. McNair to Samuel Runganadhan, 9 July 1946.
[211] CWGC/2/2/1/289, Commission Meeting No. 289, 20 February 1947.

confused further with the impossibility of dividing casualties between the two states.[212] At the beginning of 1949, after ongoing discussions, the IWGC took the pre-independence proposal of the British Indian Government to the independent governments of India and Pakistan. Referring to an agreement reached in June 1947 in which the British administration 'indicated their wish that all [servicemen] … should be commemorated by name', the IWGC solicited the thoughts of the newly independent states on the matter. The proposal was for two separate memorials – one in New Delhi and one in Karachi – with a suitable inscription engraved on them but with the names of all the dead, regardless of domicile, recorded in registers.[213] Both governments agreed to the existing proposals.[214]

The approval of this proposal spurred further urgency on the part of the IWGC to progress the work, whose officers worried that the limited activity in the most populated districts of India and Pakistan made it difficult to see what the Commission was doing to commemorate the dead of either country. The planned memorials would act as the entrance features to the concentration cemeteries in the two capital cities, ultimately known as Delhi War Cemetery and Karachi War Cemetery, the burials within being – for reasons already outlined – all Europeans. The two books, ornately finished but presenting the names on paper as opposed to stone, would sit on stone tables in bronze containers with a description inscribed on the walls of the room.[215] The finished memorials were inaugurated in November 1957, commemorating some 25,866 predominantly British Indian armed forces personnel cremated or buried across pre-partition India during the Second World War.[216] Given the diversity of funerary customs, it is impossible to give an exact number for those who might have been buried. However, as Muslims are thought to have made up approximately 40 per cent of the Indian Army of the Second World War, and assuming that Hindus and Sikhs will have been cremated, it might be said that up to 10,000 of the 25,866 of those commemorated by the Delhi/Karachi Memorials had graves, albeit spread across the country and dispersed in private cemeteries.[217]

Although the circumstances are very different – the dead being lost at sea and therefore genuinely having no known grave – the Bombay/Chittagong 1939–1945 War Memorials present a similar issue. These dual memorials, housed at Chittagong War Cemetery and a special room at the Indian Seamen's Hostel, Mumbai (formerly Bombay), commemorate 6,463 service personnel of the pre-partition Indian Royal Navy and Merchant Navy on paper rolls of honour rather than in

[212] CWGC/1/2/A/526, Letter: IWGC HO to IWGC India Area Superintendent, 14 May 1948; CWGC/1/2/A/526, Memo: Commemoration of Indian Army Officers and Other Ranks, 16 November 1948.
[213] CWGC/1/2/A/526, Letter: F. Higginson, IWGC Secretary, to High Commissioner of Pakistan, 3 January 1949.
[214] CWGC/1/2/A/527, Memo: Secretary, IWGC, to Chief Administrative Officer, IWGC India and Pakistan District, 15 November 1949.
[215] Concentration cemeteries were created by bringing burials in from elsewhere, something the British Indian authorities barred the IWGC from doing with domestic Indian casualties due to fears of raising objections over government interference with Muslim cemeteries. See CWGC/1/2/A/527, Letter: F. Higginson, IWGC Controller, to H.N. Obbard, IWGC Inspector for India and South East Asia, 18 January 1952; CWGC/1/2/A/527, Minutes of 426th Meeting of the IWGC Finance Committee, 8 June 1955.
[216] Delhi on 14 November 1957 and Karachi on 30 November 1957.
[217] See Roy, *India and World War II*, p. 28.

stone or bronze. The decisions associated with these memorials, alongside the IWGC's misgivings over their paper-based form, effectively mirror those associated with Delhi/Karachi. What sets it apart, however, is that Indian naval casualties of the First World War were commemorated by name on bronze plaques in the Seaman's Hostel in Mumbai. Moreover, a request for the IWGC to provide similar plaques for the dead of the Second World War was made by the Principal Seaman's Welfare Officer in May 1948.[218] Although this request was met with some support by the IWGC, it was not a formal request by the governments of India and Pakistan, and as such it could not be acted upon until each gave their approval.[219] As it was, when final approval for the memorials was granted by each respective government in 1956, it was for ornate rolls of honour rather than bronze plaques, which were subsequently unveiled in 1962.[220]

Even though these forms of commemoration had met the approval of the independent states of India and Pakistan in the late 1940s, they appear to have continued to cause unease within the Commission. In one documented example, questions about equality were raised by Sir Arthur Hockaday, then Director-General of the CWGC, following a visit to Delhi War Cemetery in 1985. Here he noted that:

> it is not difficult to see that visitors might leave with the impression that this is simply a British war cemetery. There is nothing to tell them that there is a major war memorial to 25,000 Indian war dead unless they actually go into the shelter to the right of the entrance. Even here the inscription (perhaps deliberately because of Partition) nowhere contains the word "Indian" and a conscious effort is needed to grasp which "motherland" is being referred to.[221]

On his return from India, he wrote to the Indian High Commission to speak of 'our misgivings about the adequacy of the present commemoration', before explaining 'that we are not happy with the existing memorial books, and that we are proposing to improve the commemoration by bringing the names of the dead more vividly to the eye'.[222] With this, plans were subsequently drawn up to alter the design of the memorial, whereby the names would be added to its physical structure via metal panels. This meant that, rather than being 'so inconspicuous' to the point of being easily overlooked, the names would instead fill the entire entranceway to Delhi War Cemetery.[223] Despite these plans and the Commission's equality concerns, the Indian government – a funding government of the CWGC – felt no need to make the proposed change. As a result, the issue was

[218] CWGC/1/2/A/352, Letter: L. Krishnan Seaman's Welfare Officer to Vice-Chairman IWGC, 29 May 1948.
[219] CWGC/1/2/A/352, Letter: IWGC Secretary to IWGC Chief Administrative Officer New Delhi, 2 December 1948.
[220] CWGC/2/2/1/396, Commission Meeting No. 396, 18 October 1956; The memorial in Bombay was unveiled on 14 January 1962, and Chittagong on 26 February. See CWGC/1/2/D/1/81, Chittagong Memorial Unveiling; CWGC/1/2/D/1/80, Bombay Memorial Unveiling.
[221] CWGC/7/4/2/19623, Extract from Report by DG in India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan, 9–27 January 1985.
[222] CWGC/7/4/2/19623, Letter: Director-General to Indian High Commission, 25 November 1985; Letter: Arthur Hockaday to Sir Robert Wade-Gery British High Commission New Delhi, 25 November 1985.
[223] CWGC/7/4/2/19623, Letter: Director-General to Vice-Chairman, 8 April 1986.

dropped in 1989, although the plans for the proposed alterations remain on file in the CWGC's Drawing Office.[224]

[224] CWGC/7/4/2/19623, Letter: Brigadier Satish Nambiar, Military Adviser's Department High Commission of India, to CWGC Director-General, 6 May 1986; Extract from DG's report on his round the world tour, Discussions in India, March–April 1989.

5.5. Underreporting of civilian war dead from the majority of the British Empire

The Civilian Rolls of Honour are held in Westminster Abbey and record the names of more than 69,000 men, women, and children from across the British Empire who were killed as a result of enemy action during the Second World War. These volumes and the way they commemorate the dead were deliberately very different to standard IWGC practice, and they came into being as a direct response to the nature and reach of the Second World War.

In March 1940, a Supplemental Charter had extended the Commission's remit to cover the Second World War, allowing it to perform the same duties it had for the military dead of the First World War. However, following the first bombing raids over the UK in the autumn of 1940 in which critical infrastructure and people's homes became targets, the Commission's Vice-Chairman felt compelled to seek recognition for civilians who were killed. As he put it, 'the Commission cannot omit to commemorate these if the higher purposes inspiring their work are still to guide them'.[225] With almost no aspect of life now left untouched by the conflict, and with civilian morale made a target through bombing and the war at sea, the potential victims of war increased exponentially. Shortly after Ware's intervention, a further Supplemental Charter was approved in January 1941 in which the Commission resolved to keep a record of these casualties.[226] Distinct from war grave status and the cemeteries and memorials that went with it, the names of civilians killed through enemy action were to be collected and preserved by the IWGC in rolls of honour.[227]

As with many aspects of the Commission's work, actually delivering against this worthy objective was more difficult than had been assumed, for the most part due to the availability of data.[228] Unlike the military services, there were no centralised administrative offices recording and reporting on civilians killed by the enemy, something that was just as true for the UK as elsewhere in the British Empire. In the UK, although helped by the Registrar General and the British Liner Committee (for those lost at sea), much of the available information was incomplete. Local authorities were enlisted in the effort to gather these names, although they were facing competing demands from civil defence responsibilities and the needs of the living, and there was no way to make them comply or share their data – if, indeed, they had it. The second difficulty was that, despite Ware's protestation, the British government would not countenance any publicity for the commemorative scheme until the war was over for fear of raising panic in Britain's densely populated cities. While newspapers and broadcasts encouraged the civilian population to share information about those killed, there was no further information as to why this was being done and there would be no display of the lists during the war itself. The net result of these difficulties was a recognised underreporting and under-recording of those killed.

[225] TNA, WO 32/9850, Letter: Fabian Ware to Winston Churchill, 18 September 1940; a response giving no objection was sent by Churchill on 10 October 1940.
[226] See CWGC/1/1/2/19, CWD Supplemental Charter, 15 January 1941; CWGC/2/2/1/235, Commission Meeting No. 235; CWGC/2/2/1/236, Commission Meeting No. 236, 30 April 1941.
[227] For the significance of this for many families see, for example, Ellena Matthews, *Home front heroism: Civilians and conflict in Second World War London* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2024), pp. 225–68.
[228] For reference to Ware's frustrations see TNA, WO 32/9850, Letter: Rupert Howorth Privy Council Office to E.B.B. Speed War Office, 21 January 1941.

Though clearly a reaction to the developing air war in Europe, the scheme was meant to incorporate all subjects of the British Empire alongside the wider IWGC commemorative effort.[229] However, if the process of gathering names was hard within the UK, when extended to the rest of empire it was compounded by misunderstandings, distance and a lack of administrative capacity. Outside the United Kingdom, India was perhaps best equipped to deal with the extra demand. Unlike the majority of territories, India had a long established and sizeable civil administration, which lent itself to this sort of activity. On 9 October 1942, following instructions from the IWGC, the Government of India requested the state authorities provide all relevant information on British and Indian civilians who died as a result of war injuries in India and abroad. The IWGC also requested the co-operation of the public regarding any information they may have on Indian civilians who died abroad, especially within Burma. This information was requested every quarter.[230] On 11 July 1945, a circular was issued stating that, in the UK, one system used to compile records was via the 'Personal Injuries (Civilians) Scheme', whilst in India the parallel scheme was the 'War Injuries (Civilians) Scheme 1942'. Among other demands, the circular reiterated that particulars of those who had died be sent to the Civil Defence Branch of the Government of India for forwarding to the IWGC.[231]

The Indian government's interest in the effort seems to have been genuine and even saw it debate the inclusion of men working on civil transport schemes who might die from disease in connection to their war service. Thousands of porters were enrolled in these units working with troops in North-East India and under the orders of the army, and it was pointed out:

> that a number of these porters have died of disease while on service and that it would be anomalous if the names of members of the combatant services who died of disease while working side by side with these porters were recorded while the deaths of porters and members of the staff of the corps in which they serve go unrecorded.

The administration raised the issue with the IWGC, which stated it generally did 'not include under civilian war dead persons dying from disease contracted in the course of employment connected with the war', although there were specific exceptions.[232] Ultimately, the Government of India categorised these transport organisations as military units, meaning their dead were

[229] This was made clear in discussions with the India Office in IOR/L/PJ/7/5237, Letter: Chettle to Colonel Erskine, 15 April 1942; for Nigeria, the IWGC circular requesting information, alongside the internal forms developed for the reporting of information for African and European civilian casualties is included in Nigeria National Archives, CSO 26/02748, Registration and care of graves of British armed forces Vol. VI.

[230] Attached to this Circular was a copy of a letter from the IWGC Vice-Chairman and a form requesting, amongst other details, the following information: name, address, religion/caste, age, family details, date and place of death, cause of death and place of burial or cremation. See Abhilekh Patal, PR_000004009186, Civil Defence Department (Political) Circular No.47/42, Captain F.F. Pearson, Under-Secretary (Poll) to the Government of India, to, All Provincial Governments and Chief Commissioners, 9 October 1942.

[231] Abhilekh Patal, PR_000004058972, Civil Defence Circular No.680/45, 11 July 1945.

[232] Abhilekh Patal, PR_000004009186, Letter No. 25/Intt/CDD/42, from N.V.H. Symons, Joint Secretary to the Government of India, to, High Commissioner for India, 16 January 1943; Civil Defence Department Circular No.582/43, from N.V.H. Symons Joint Secretary to the Government of India, to All Provincial Governments and Chief Commissioners, 31 May 1943.

commemorated alongside the rest of the Indian Army.[233] The same, however, cannot be said for those civilians who died in what might be considered India's greatest wartime tragedy. While it was very deliberately designed to cover the full reach and impact of military violence, the remit of the Supplemental Charter excluded many whose deaths were indirectly attributable to the conduct of the war.[234] Indeed, to be eligible for commemoration in the civilian roll of honour, a death had to have occurred by one of the following means:

- as a direct consequence of enemy action or munitions;
- while detained by the enemy;
- after release from enemy detention if death was due to a condition directly attributable to the conditions suffered while detained;
- as a result of allied munitions (including accidental shootings but excluding factory accidents);
- allied weapons of war conducting military operations, where the military are at fault.[235]

Consequently, over 2 million Indian civilians who died during the Bengal Famine of 1943-4 were not eligible for inclusion. While the scale of this tragedy was undoubtedly compounded by the diversion of resources to the war effort, they were not victims of its violence.[236] Nonetheless, nearly 1,300 Indians who died as civilians were reported to the IWGC for commemoration under this policy, suggesting at least a degree of success for the scheme.[237]

Ultimately, the Indian example demonstrates what could be achieved by a functioning civil administration with the capacity and means to conduct this sort of programme. By way of stark contrast, however, the fall of Singapore and the subsequent treatment of the civilian population by the Japanese demonstrates how difficult this exercise could be. Although military record keeping provided a reasonably accurate account of personnel lost, the same could not be said for the civilian population once the civil administration had collapsed. Although many would not have been British subjects, the Sook Ching targeted killings of Chinese in Singapore between February and March of 1942 are thought to have left upwards of 5,000 people dead.[238] Although it is unlikely that a comparable number of British imperial subjects were exposed to the same levels

[233] See, for example, Indian Civil Porter Corps, Assam Civil Porter Corps, United Provinces Civil Pioneer Corps and Indian Pioneer Corps in the CWGC casualty database.
[234] CWGC/1/1/2/19, CWD Supplemental Charter, 15 January 1941.
[235] 'Commemorations Policy: Eligibility Criteria for Commemoration', 27 May 2020, https://www.cwgc.org/media/0awj5vti/policy-eligibility-criteria-for-commemoration_march21.pdf, (Last accessed 10 December 2024).
[236] For more detailed analyses see, for example, Cormac O Grada, 'Making Famine History', *Journal of Economic Literature,* Vol. XLV (March 2007), pp. 5–38; Hira Jungkow & Herbert Anderson, 'Reassessing the Bengal Famine of 1943', Economic Affairs, Vol. 44, No. 1 (2024), pp. 31–56; Abhilekh Patal, PR_000006189457, Office Memorandum: Submission of details of Civilian War Deaths to the Imperial War Graves Commission, 18 June 1947.
[237] For an example of the types of information received, see the table of names provided by the Government of Bengal in Abhilekh Patal, PR_211200026967, Imperial War Graves Commission Record of Civilian dead, 23 May 1947.
[238] Hayashi Hirofumi, 'The Battle of Singapore, the Massacre of Chinese and Understanding of the Issue in Postwar Japan', The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus, Vol. 7, No. 4 (2009), https://apjjf.org/hayashi-hirofumi/3187/article.

of violence, the CWGC commemorates just 278 civilian casualties for Malaya, which includes those who died at Singapore, the vast majority of whom were Europeans. Rather than a deliberate act of discrimination, though, it is likely these were the only names traced and reported from outside of the territory.

Further notable examples of gaps in these records can be found where remote indigenous populations were drawn into the conflict or where their homelands were subjected to occupation. Both were true to some extent for the islands of Papua New Guinea. Prior to the Second World War, the island of New Guinea was divided into a western area ruled as part of the Dutch East Indies and an eastern area further divided into the Territory of Papua (to the south) and the Territory of New Guinea (to the north), both of which were governed by the Commonwealth of Australia. During the war, New Guinea became an important theatre of war within the wider Pacific Campaign fought by the Allies – chiefly America and Australia – and the Japanese between January 1942 and September 1945. During this campaign, Allied forces were assisted by locally raised labour and military units serving primarily under the leadership of the Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit (ANGAU), the organisation established to administer the territory in March 1942 following the Japanese invasion. Papuans and New Guineans served in the ranks of the Royal Papuan Constabulary, New Guinea Police Force and with special units of the Australian armed forces, but many more men and women served as labourers and medical orderlies contracted to the ANGAU.[239]

Unlike the Indian transport organisations, there was never any question or debate over the status of the labour and medical units of the ANGAU, which the organisation firmly classified as civilian from the outset. Referred to at the time as 'indentured labourers', this now rather loaded term referred directly to the contracts under which they served rather than a form of servitude. Those contracts set them apart, quite deliberately, from those Papuans and New Guineans who enlisted in the various fighting and reconnaissance units.[240] As one memo put it:

> With the exception of NGIB [New Guinea Infantry Battalion], units … do not employ enlisted personnel and natives … are drawn from a general pool of indentured labourers. These labourers are civilians.[241]

The labourers received between 10 shillings and £5 a month, depending on service and responsibility, and were not subject to military law or the disciplinary systems that went with it.[242] Overall, it is estimated that nearly 50,000 Papuans, New Guineans and Australians served in some capacity with Papua New Guinea-connected units during the war. Of the Papuans and New Guineans of the civilian units of the ANGAU, evidence suggests some 46 died as a result of

[239] See Neville K. Robinson, *Villagers at War: some Papua New Guinean experiences in World War II* (The Australian National University, Pacific Research Monograph Number Two, 1979).
[240] AWM 54, 419/5/23, Memo: Personal records of Natives of Papua and New Guinea who may be enlisted for service in a unit of the AMF, 9 October 1944.
[241] AWM 54, 419/5/23, Memo: Native Labour Records Procedure, 27 September 1944.
[242] Ibid.

enemy action, while a further 2,000 are recorded as having died of illness whilst under contract.[243] However, while the Civilian Roll contains 170 names for Papua New Guinea, 91 are Europeans and the remaining 79 were added in 2021 as a result of ongoing efforts to collect this information. Although we cannot say for certain that the 46 Papua New Guinean civilians who died in ANGAU service are not amongst that 79, we can say they were not reported at the time and that, in all likelihood, this does not represent all the civilians killed by the Japanese in the territory during the war.

Given the way evidence had to be compiled and communicated to the IWGC, and the extreme difficulty of producing such information in parts of the British Empire that were fought over, overrun or occupied during the war, it is hardly surprising that the record of civilian dead cannot be considered complete. The fact that this exercise was similarly flawed in the UK – the administrative centre of empire and home to the head office of the IWGC – simply reinforces this. The difficulty of achieving these objectives at the time suggests filling the gaps is unlikely to be easy today, although the progress made offers hope that more names might yet be recovered for the records.

[243] Robinson, *Villagers at War*, pp. 72 and 189.

6. CONCLUSION

In part, this analysis compares the post-Second World War operations of the IWGC with its efforts after the previous conflict. This is important for several reasons. The First World War provided a blueprint for commemorating the dead of Empire but there were obstacles in getting there, some of which led to inequalities in the way the dead were remembered. To some extent, some of these issues came from the fact the IWGC had been formed at the height of the First World War after three years of brutal fighting. The all-important grave registration work that enabled the Commission to undertake its commemorative activities developed in tandem, but this meant there had been periods where it was effectively unregulated. Similarly, before these developments, at the onset of the war units had been disposing of their dead as they would have done during normal campaigning with no idea of the scale or nature of the war or the imperial commemorative movement that was to come. This was not necessarily a problem for the bulk of the British and Dominion armies where Christianity dominated. For these casualties, the main challenges during and after the First World War were largely connected to the devastation of the battlefield, which either destroyed graves or prevented men from being recovered at all. For the Indian Army and other colonial forces, however, varied and more complicated funerary traditions and practices added to these difficulties. Furthermore, in the context of empire, outside the battlefields of Europe, concepts of racial hierarchy and imperial attitudes concerning the state of 'civilisation' of some casualties saw them treated differently in death. This had a lasting impact on the future preservation of their graves, which in many instances were never marked following interment. In one final blow to the promise of commemorative equality, failures in record keeping also prevented more than one hundred thousand casualties of the First World War from receiving any form of named commemoration across East Africa and the Middle East.

Alongside these wider practical failures, the Commission in the aftermath of the First World War also made mistakes and poor decisions, some of which were similarly influenced by imperial ideology. The fundamental differences between the wars and the commemorative activities that followed them came in the form of knowledge, preparation and experience. These differences should have enabled the organisation to deliver against its vision without hindrance. Nonetheless, even though it was conscious of the flaws in its previous efforts, conditions, restrictions and attitudes still forced compromises that altered the way the dead would be forever remembered.

As in the First World War, at least some of the problems faced were the result of the way the war was fought, where it was fought and who was involved. For example, many casualties of the sea and air wars were denied marked burials by the nature and place of their deaths, with Commonwealth air forces alone suffering an eleven-fold increase in their casualties between these conflicts.[244] This, of course, was connected to the completely different nature of the fighting, but such shifts

[244] Commonwealth air forces of the First World War suffered 10,593 casualties. In the Second World War they suffered 120,757 casualties. See CWGC casualty database.

were not always the result of changes to the conduct of war. For example, in South-East Asia, total memorial commemorations outweigh total burials for the Second World War. Statistics for the theatre are somewhat skewed by the heavy involvement of the Indian Army, a large portion of which was Hindu or Sikh – religions that cremate rather than bury their dead. However, even accounting for this, brutal jungle warfare, fighting retreats and mistreatment in captivity meant huge numbers of the dead – from Australian, British, Indian and African units – were unreachable for extended periods. This had obvious consequences for their later recovery and identification. As a result, contrasting memorial commemoration to identified graves in Burma and Singapore shows close to four times as many casualties in the former category. By way of comparison, in Italy, where three Indian divisions also served in a much more favourable campaign, 88 per cent of those commemorated are on cremation memorials or in identified graves. In short, there were a multitude of factors that influenced the recovery of the dead and the subsequent nature of their commemoration, some of which were unquestionably connected to the brutality and circumstances of the war rather than any deliberate policy.

Nonetheless, despite the complexities of locating and appropriately dealing with the dead in some theatres, there are also extensive examples where policies led to identified and registered graves being left behind during concentration efforts. The complex and long story of how those policies were made has been dealt with at length in this report, in part to demonstrate how difficult that process was, but also to show that it was ultimately born out of a desire to treat the dead appropriately. Rather than forcing European practices on the Empire's African dead, the IWGC sought more specific and appropriate policies for their handling. This should have been commendable, and it is clear the organisation wanted to preserve African graves as they would any others, regardless of the circumstances. The exception was, of course, where this conflicted with its existing commitment to a general scheme of cemetery concentration, and it is here that the IWGC must bear the greatest responsibility for the loss of marked graves. Despite its failed efforts to bring changes that would allow it to move the dead, it was its policy to rationalise the dispersed burials it took into its possession at the end of the war that was the root cause of the bulk of these abandonments.

Despite its necessity at times, this process of moving bodies into larger cemeteries exacerbated existing issues connected to protected mortal remains. Although concentration had always been a part of this work, it was a largely novel problem for that work to bring into question the future of registered and formally marked graves. As a process, it was often driven by a mix of complex pressures, including the complete isolation of a site or problems with access and land ownership. However, the ability to effectively maintain a site in perpetuity – an unusual condition in almost any other line of work – was also a major consideration, often not without reason. In most cases, the decision to close such sites was not problematic or controversial in its own right. The problems came when those interred could not be moved. With the repeated insistence by colonial authorities that some African dead should not be interfered with once buried, the IWGC left itself with limited options when it decided to withdraw from a burial ground. In at least some

cases, it showed itself to be inflexible and unwilling to maintain burials where they were in sites that, while not ideal, would have preserved African graves. This came down to a question of cost and appearance, and it is clear the organisation believed it could not easily maintain security and standards at these sites. While such fears may have been well placed and the organisation's budget remained a limiting factor on its operations, there was a willingness to follow this course within imperial settings at the expense of African graves.

Although many of these decisions were enacted in good faith and informed by the available evidence, that evidence and the way it was acquired was ultimately flawed. It is clear that colonial administrators did not fully understand the IWGC's approach to concentration or the impact their decisions would have on the preservation of graves. More importantly still, conspicuous by their absence in this decision-making process were the community voices that should have defined what appropriate treatment looked like, especially when the scale of the issue became known. Rather than initiating full and proper enquires reaching out to those affected, the British imperial state acted as a gatekeeper to the subjects of empire and a filter for their words. This layer of bureaucracy once more stripped away the nuances of faith, culture and customs, and essentialised African beliefs to provide a commemorative solution that was hoped to be the least offensive to the majority. To some extent, such an outcome is not unexpected, as the IWGC had never actively invited the public to help shape commemoration. To have done so would have endangered uniformity and the delivery of equality. As a result, its work had to be underpinned by compromises. Nonetheless, it is impossible to ignore that its default structures and approaches were designed to serve European Judeo-Christian traditions and sensibilities first, meaning the bulk of those compromises were borne by the people of empire.

Comparable consultations had never been made over the treatment of the mortal remains of British or Dominion casualties. Instead, the default policy was to move them without seeking the approval of families, communities or religious authorities. This, of course, was because such action was largely culturally and religiously acceptable within these societies, and it was with these casualties in mind that the IWGC's principles were formed. In its attempt to deliver equality in death and respect the rights and customs of those it sought to commemorate elsewhere, it is clear the IWGC unwittingly helped create a situation that jeopardised the future of some burials. Instead of changing its practice, it found ways to fit the dead of empire within its established approach, but it did so by enforcing additional compromises on those casualties to avoid infringing their religious or cultural beliefs. In the African context, while this process ultimately led to all those lost being commemorated by name and more than 8,300 East and West Africans being commemorated where they were buried, it also denied a permanently marked grave to potentially as many as 7,500 others. This outcome and its causes differ from what happened following the First World War, but the loss of mortal remains is an unescapable continuity.

There was also a marked difference in how the 'Final Verification' process was delivered. This allowed next of kin to confirm or correct information held about a casualty and, for those buried

with a headstone, provide an opportunity to create a short personal inscription. Although the provision of those personal inscriptions was never universal, the denial of Final Verification forms to next of kin in India and across Africa removed one of the few active roles available to families in the commemorative process. This reflected the administrative structures and cultures of the imperial state in the countries concerned, as well as the inherently imbalanced and transactional relationships that existed between administrations and those who served. This put greater distance between the state and next of kin, and although lines of communication are known to have existed between the two, those structures and cultures did not see value in exploiting them. Even though the IWGC initially believed that families could and should have been engaged, it fell in line with the wider imperial narrative that it was needlessly difficult and ultimately unnecessary. Even though the nature of employment and mobilisation of manpower differed to that seen in the metropole and the fact that this altered the relationship between personnel and the state, commemoration should have been uniform. The IWGC was still taking control of the dead and dictating how they would be permanently treated. These families were denied this opportunity to participate in the process – one that was otherwise extended to so many others across empire – and the legacy of this difference in treatment is seen in the near complete absence of their words from the graves of their dead.

While the IWGC pursued commemorative equality from the beginning of the war and used its influence to encourage the military and colonial authorities to conform to approaches that would enable it to deliver against this promise, it was still part of a much bigger imperial system; a system that was inherently structurally unequal. Despite its own policies, principles and expectations, the IWGC was never responsible for dictating guidelines for the treatment of the dead in the field. Instead, it attempted to influence, and regularly challenged, these policies via the channels available to it and then enacted them in good faith. Grave registration and concentration work during the war were conducted by the armed forces, and so the IWGC repeatedly applied pressure to the War Office, Colonial Office and India Office in attempts to ensure appropriate treatment that would allow it to do its work once the fighting was over. There is no doubt these interjections had positive effects, but they also clearly showed the limits of the IWGC's power and influence.

Beyond the battle zones, the greatest clash of ideas was seen once more between the IWGC and the British Government of India over domestic military casualties. Perhaps here more than anywhere else the limits of the Commission's power and influence were exposed, as the government repeatedly ignored or rejected its attempts to impose standard commemorative practices on its territory. The IWGC clearly favoured commemoration at the grave and on decentralised stone memorials, stating that a paper-based approach would fall short of its requirements. Nonetheless, without the authority to force the issue, the Commission ultimately acquiesced and accepted this solution.

In the case of the known underreporting of civilian deaths – the other issue outlined in this report – this outcome was less the result of poor policy or decision making and more about unfortunate

circumstances. Nonetheless, whilst casualty reporting was known to be flawed in the UK, it is worth noting that the situation was worse in the parts of the British Empire that were fought over, overrun or occupied.

It is right that the appropriateness of policies and decisions that dictated the shape of post-war commemoration are questioned here. On balance, the IWGC's thinking and actions demonstrate that it often pursued the idea of equality of treatment for all casualties, even if that treatment was not to be identical. Within IWGC philosophy, 'equality of treatment' had never meant 'the same treatment', and this was deliberate. From its establishment, it was understood that funerary customs differed across the British Empire and one single approach could not meet the needs of all those to be commemorated. Furthermore, with so many casualties missing or unidentified following both conflicts, memorial commemoration was always given parity with commemoration at the grave. With this in mind, as well as the organisation's apparent sensitivity towards offending religious sensibilities, its willingness in specific circumstances to leave graves in situ in favour of named commemoration on memorials is less surprising. Nonetheless, there is no question that these exceptions to uniformity disproportionately affected outcomes for non-European casualties. Furthermore, none of this work was completed in a vacuum and the organisation was aware of the failures of the previous war and its staff also frequently aired their misgivings about equality of treatment during and after this conflict. Despite this, however, while the organisation in the past has been happy to publicly celebrate its successes, it has until recently never publicly acknowledged the shortcomings of its work, providing only a partial account of its activities.

As well as these shortcomings, it is right that this analysis also acknowledges the many IWGC staff who clearly believed in the concept of equality in death and did what they could to see it delivered. We should also recognise that this work resulted in the named commemoration at cemeteries and on memorials of more than 650,000 men and women from across the British Empire who lost their lives in the Second World War.

7. APPENDICES

Appendix I - Quantifying the problem: breakdown and explanation of figures

7.1. Methodology:

The information presented here is drawn primarily from the Commission's Casualty Database, which in total, houses over 1.7 million names. This data, which was compiled from contemporary military records, provides an individual's key military information – such as their rank, regiment and service number – alongside information on their point of commemoration – such as the location of their grave or position on a memorial. In some cases, limited and incomplete personal information – such as the name and address of their next of kin – is also included, but this is not universal. A key point to understand is that the database holds no information as to an individual's race, ethnicity, nationality, or country of birth.[245] Inferences can be made based on name, rank, and the unit/regiment in which an individual served, but this is by no means fully accurate. This is particularly significant when trying to assess the treatment afforded to African service personnel, who are chiefly identified by the unit in which they served. However, included in the numbers are a small percentage of Europeans who served as officers, non-commissioned officers, and other ranks alongside their African comrades, but who cannot always be distinguished from them based on the available information. As such, owing to the limitations of the available data, the figures set out below are given as a best estimate.

7.2. Key Issues

As the analysis in the main report set out, the key quantifiable issues are broken down into the following categories:

1. The mortal remains of between 5,000 to 7,500 service personnel from East and West Africa and from the High Commission Territories were deliberately not concentrated into permanent cemeteries but were left in battlefield graves or at sites not selected for permanent preservation.
2. The mortal remains of potentially up to 1,200 casualties, predominately Muslims of the Indian Army, may not have been concentrated into permanent cemeteries but were left in battlefield graves because of a short-lived GHQ India policy prohibiting exhumation.
3. Final Verification forms, for the provision of personal inscriptions onto headstones, were not sent to the next of kin of pre-partition Indian and African casualties in the aftermath of war.

[245] Particular regiments are grouped together under one of the funding countries of the Commission – Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand, South Africa, and the United Kingdom. Consequently, those who served in Crown Colony units, such as those raised in Africa, are counted under the United Kingdom total. To find such casualties, you would need to search by regiment.

4. The names of 25,866 casualties on the Delhi/Karachi 1939-1945 War Memorials and 6,463 casualties on the Bombay/Chittagong 1939-1945 War Memorials are recorded in paper 'Rolls of Honour' rather than in stone or bronze. Approximately 8,600 to 10,000 of those commemorated by the Delhi/Karachi 1939-1945 War Memorials are likely to have been buried in Muslim cemeteries in non-operational zones of pre-partition India, none of which were used as places of commemoration.
5. An unknown number of civilian subjects of the British Empire who died as a result of enemy action during the Second World War are believed to have gone unreported to the Commission and are not included in the Civilian Roll of Honour.

The following sections provide more insight into how the figures for issues 1, 2 and 3 were devised, as issues 4 and 5 are fully explained in the main body of this report. It is important to stress once more that these figures are estimates, often based on statistical analysis, and as such, do not always reflect the reality on the ground. They are nonetheless offered to show the potential scale of the issues set out in the main report.

7.2.1. Estimated number of Second World War African graves not adopted by the IWGC

The CWGC commemorates approximately 18,700 casualties who served with Africans units raised from East, West, North and the High Commission Territories of Southern Africa (excluding South Africa), including white/European non-commissioned officers and other ranks. Of these, 10,450 are commemorated by memorials either to the missing or for unmaintainable graves. This is approximately 55% of the total for these African casualties which, when compared to other Commonwealth forces, is disproportionately high. Indeed, those commemorated by memorials for Australia are 29%, Canada 17%, New Zealand 24% and South Africa 15%.

This percentage range, from 15% to 29%, would be influenced by a variety of factors, such as the period of the war, the theatre of deployment, and the force composition in which these individuals died. Indeed, the relative ratio of those commemorated by memorials varies even more considerably when looking at individual units. For example, some 73% of Royal Navy casualties are commemorated by memorials, given the vast majority died at sea, while 30% of the Royal New Zealand Air Force, 20% of the South African Artillery and 6% of the Scots Guards are commemorated as such. Even when comparing comparable units, such as the Australian Army Medical Corps (43%) and the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps (4%), the percentages can vary considerably. In this instance the difference is likely caused by the theatre in which these units served, as most of the Australian Army Medical Corps casualties occurred in South-East Asia and the Pacific, either fighting the Japanese or while prisoners of war.

In relation to United Kingdom force casualties (excluding those of African units) for India and Myanmar (Burma), the total dead amounts to 17,560, of which 4,860 are commemorated on memorials (28%). In comparison, the African casualties are 3,294 of which 2,544 are commemorated on memorials (77%). In East Africa (Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia

and Sudan) United Kingdom force casualties (excluding those from African units) amount to 1,433 of which 266 are commemorated on memorials (18%). In comparison, African casualties amount to 6,936 of which 3,442 are commemorated on memorials (50%). In turn, across the non-operational areas of Africa, as the following table shows, the total commemorated on memorials remains disproportionately high.

Location of Commemoration	Total African Casualties Commemorated	Commemorated by Memorial	Percentage Commemorated by Memorial
Zimbabwe	147	23	16%
Gambia	155	33	21%
Uganda	476	126	26%
Ghana	923	451	49%
Nigeria	1,976	1,244	63%
Tanzania	464	352	76%
Sierra Leone	310	247	80%
Zambia	135	126	93%
Lesotho*	943	943	100%
Botswana*	156	156	100%
Eswatini*	77	77	100%

*In the case of Botswana, Eswatini and Lesotho, as the earlier analysis noted, these former High Commission Territories requested that all their war dead be commemorated centrally and collectively, despite IWGC requests to erect headstones, meaning no High Commission Territory graves are marked by the CWGC in those countries.

More extensive analysis of the exact composition of the forces, and the various circumstances in which the African casualties served, might offer a more precise estimate. However, as a rough working estimate, 15–29% (the upper and lower estimates for other Commonwealth nations' casualties commemorated by memorials, excluding India) might be considered reasonable. This would mean that between 1,557 to 3,010 casualties might be expected to be commemorated by memorial. In reality, the Commission commemorates some 10,450, meaning approximately 5,000 to 7,500 more casualties are commemorated by memorials who might be expected to have had a known grave. This, however, is a working estimate based on percentages, and therefore does not necessarily represent the reality on the ground. Nonetheless, it is important to show the potential significance of the difference in treatment afforded during and after the war.

7.2.2. Estimated number of Second World War pre-partition Indian graves lost owing to actions of the Indian Army

As the main report set out, in September 1942 GHQ India issued instructions to discontinue the concentration of scattered Indian graves into permanent cemeteries. This order remained in effect until it was rescinded in August 1943. As such, for nearly a year an unknown number of scattered Indian graves went unconcentrated and were potentially lost as a result.

Quantifying this issue is extremely difficult. Potentially any grave from prior to the rescindment of this order could have gone unconcentrated. There are 28,961 Indian commemorations on Memorials whose date of death is between the beginning of the war and August 1943. Although it is likely, for religious reasons, that most of the graves will be of Muslim personnel, rather than Hindu or Sikh, it is also known that the exigencies of battle meant that Indian service personnel of all faiths were at times buried, either by their comrades, other Commonwealth or Allied personnel, or by the enemy. This is much more likely to have affected those dying in theatre rather than on the home fronts, as there was great facility and time to bury the dead in established cemeteries rather than extemporised battlefield graves or burial sites.

The issue would chiefly have affected the theatres of war in the period up to August 1943 where Indian forces were deployed, notably those in East and North Africa, the Middle East, and South-East Asia. The South-East Asian theatre can likely be discounted as a significant issue given the nature of the fighting, as the speed and brutality of the Japanese advance precluded any concentration work by the Grave Services at the time, and any subsequent work would have been carried out once Commonwealth forces returned to the areas overrun by the Japanese in 1944 and 1945, which is after the rescindment of the ban on concentrations. As such, as the following table sets out, the relative proportion of commemorations by memorials compared to burials of Indian dead may give an insight into this issue.

CWGC Indian Commemorations, excluding those in South & South-East Asia

Year	Alternatively Commemorated	On Memorial	Cremation	Identified Grave	Overall Total	Percentage on Memorials
1939	–	5	2	6	13	38.5%
1940	–	68	55	36	159	42.8%
1941	–	809	534	429	1,772	45.7%
1942	–	1,306	609	647	2,562	51.0%
Jan–Aug 1943	1	309	338	320	968	31.9%
Sept–Dec 1943	–	150	494	357	1,001	15.0%
1944	–	1,183	1,324	2,192	4,699	25.2%
1945	–	360	403	702	1,465	24.6%
1946	–	26	49	55	130	20.0%
1947	–	9	4	16	29	31.0%
Grand Total	1	4,225	3,812	4,760	12,798	33.0%

Up to and including August 1943, there were 2,497 pre-partition Indian casualties who were commemorated on memorials that are potentially affected by this issue. This accounts for approximately 45.6% of the total number of pre-partition Indian casualties (5,474) for that period. After August 1943, the relative proportion of those commemorated on memorials, compared to total casualties, falls to around 23.6%. As such, if the pre-August 1943 commemorations were in a similar proportion, this would result in an approximate total of 1,291 commemorated on memorials. This is 1,200 fewer than the current number. Those potentially affected are primarily commemorated by the Khartoum Memorial and Alamein Memorial. Again, it must be noted that this is an estimate, and does not take into account whether a grave was actually identifiable on the ground. Nonetheless, it is useful to understand the potential scale of the problem.

7.2.3. Final Verification forms not issued to families of pre-partition Indian and African casualties

As the main body of the report set out, the provision of personal inscriptions onto IWGC headstones was not universal, as the approach adopted by each member government varied. In this case, perhaps more than any other, it was down to the views of each member government

as to whether next of kin would be allowed to provide such an inscription. Moreover, beyond these different approaches, there were also a wide range of reasons why a personal inscription would not be provided. In most cases, years had elapsed between the names and address being recorded by the military authorities and the Commission circulating the verification forms. In the intervening time, family members may have moved or passed away. In other cases, false information had been given by those enlisting, which prevented this follow-up with families. For others, even after receiving the forms, the process proved too distressing, and they chose not to pursue it.

From the data held within the CWGC's database, as the following table sets out, of the 348,386 identified burials with headstones from the Second World War, some 57.39% have personal inscriptions.

1939–1945 War			
Nationality	Identified Burials	With Personal Inscription	Percentage
Australian	28,604	17,214	60.18%
Canadian	37,323	21,538	57.71%
Indian	18,228	655	3.59%
New Zealand	9,040	11	0.12%
South African	10,058	4,723	46.96%
United Kingdom	245,133	155,806	63.56%
Total	**348,386**	**199,947**	**57.39%**

However, one complication with these figures is that 'nationality' denotes the country which provides funds to the Commission. For that reason, the Indian total includes European officers and soldiers who died fighting with the Indian Army. Moreover, the UK figures as they appear on the casualty database incorporate the dead from countries and territories whose commemorations were and are maintained from the UK's contribution to CWGC funding. This means that all casualties not belonging to the other five member governments – Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand and South Africa – appear under the UK statistics without further territorialisation. Although in global terms these numbers are comparatively small, they do incorporate many of those affected by the issues in this report, including a substantial proportion of those whose families never received verification forms. For the most part this was the result of policies driven by colonial authorities who believed the process to be unworkable, despite the IWGC's desires. While the impact on commemoration is less significant, it nonetheless represents a difference in treatment between casualties and those they left behind.

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