

ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY WAR HERITAGE GROUP

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

WEDNESDAY 9 JULY 2014
4.00 pm COMMITTEE ROOM 3A
HOUSE OF LORDS

Minutes of the Meeting

Apologies for absence: Lord Clark of Windermere, Jeffrey Donaldson MP, Dr Julian Lewis MP, Ann McGuire MP, Lord Selkirk, Lord Tebbit.

Present: Lord Faulkner of Worcester (Chairman), Lord Cope, Baroness Golding, Lord Roper (Vice Chairs), Earl Attlee, Sir Peter Bottomley MP, Lord Eden, Kevan Jones MP, Angus McNeil MP, Lord Ramsbotham, Baroness Sharples, Lord Watson, Professor Peter Doyle (Secretary).

In Attendance: Simon Bendry (WW1 Centenary Battlefield Tours), Dr James Cooper (Woodlands Trust), Karl Mitchell (Woodlands Trust), Frances Moreton (WMT), Luke Smith (IWM), David Tattersfield (WFA).

Minutes of the last meeting. The minutes of the last meeting were circulated. Lord Eden proposed that they were an accurate record of the meeting held on Wednesday 26 June 2013, and this was confirmed.

Election of officers. Professor Peter Doyle was invited to take the chair to take nominations. Baroness Sharples proposed Lord Faulkner as Chairman, seconded by Lord Eden, and was duly elected. The nominations of Lord Roper, Lord Cope, Nigel Dodds MP and Baroness Golding as Vice-Chairs, and Jeffrey Donaldson MP as treasurer, were proposed and moved *en bloc*.

Re-appointment of secretaries. From the Chair, Lord Faulkner thanked Professor Doyle for his hard work over the past year, and noted his willingness and that of Mr Peter Barton to continue in their roles. They were duly re-appointed.

Treasurer's report. Jeffrey Donaldson MP provided the following Treasurer's Report, which was proposed by Lord Faulkner, and accepted.

Accounts summary for 2013–14

Balance Brought Forward	£221.14
Membership Subscriptions Received	£ 15.00
Website Costs (URL Registration & hosting)	- £115.00

Balance in Bank Account as at 31.06.14	£106.14
Cash in Hand	£ 15.00
Total Balance	<u>£121.14</u>

Rt Hon Jeffrey Donaldson MP
Treasurer
9 July 2014

Lord Faulkner closed the business and invited Luke Smith (IWM) to make his presentation.

Luke Smith (Imperial War Museums) is the digital lead of the IWM's 'Lives of the First World War Project', and was delighted to be able to give an update on progress with the project, and on the redevelopment of the museum in London.

He explained that IWM London had undergone a major transformation, and is due to open to the public on 19 July. The new First World War (FWW) gallery is 1000 m³ bigger than its predecessor, and is built around a rich number of objects, with some 1300 objects on display, many of which have not previously been seen by the public. All the other galleries will open at same time. The atrium at heart of the museum has also changed, transformed by Foster & Partners into a more effective and impressive space, with film and artworks telling the whole history of conflict, and around 400 objects on display there. In all, the space works a lot better, is a lot easier to get around, and includes a better café. In addition to the FWW Gallery, there is also a major retrospective of British war art. The museum is home to the second largest twentieth century art collection in Britain (after the Tate Modern), and the new exhibition will feature many significant pieces. The total bill for the redevelopment has been £40 million, with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. It is expected that the opening will be well attended and the museum will be busy. In order to view the new museum, Diane Lees, the Director-General, has invited the All Party Group to hold its next meeting at the museum. On behalf of the Group, **Lord Faulkner** accepted this invitation with thanks.

Mr Smith went on to outline the IWM's 'Lives of the First World War (FWW)' project for the benefit of the group. He explained that this was a major project that would serve as a permanent digital memorial to the eight million British and Commonwealth people who served in uniform, and who made a significant contribution on home front. It would also remember those who refused to serve, including some 17,000 Conscientious Objectors. The Museum's aim of uncovering the life stories is not new, though, as it connects to moment of the foundation. The founders believed that everyone who made contribution should be represented there in a 'Hall of Memories', and that it should not become a monument to military glory. Given the scale of the war, it was not possible to build such a Hall – until now, with the opportunity to do so in a digital form.

'Lives of the FWW' (<https://livesofthefirstworldwar.org>) was launched on 12 May 2014, with much media attention both at home and overseas and the IWM are carrying out a nationwide tour to introduce the project to as many people as possible. So far, almost 300,000 have signed up to the website, and 50,000 records have had facts added to them, including 20,000 photos and images. It is envisaged that this is just the beginning. Mr Smith explained that the launch of the website was actually with limited functionality, limited at present to the British Army overseas and the

Canadian forces. The navy and RFC, and the other commonwealth countries will be added, and there are moves to begin the hard work of recording those who made contribution outside the armed forces.

Lord Faulkner asked how new details could be added. Mr Smith explained that this is to be done by people uploading details and images for individuals who may not be listed. These submissions are then passed to historians at the museum who will verify them. The rationale behind this vetting procedure is to prevent duplicate records for the same person, so that there will be one story, not fifty individual ones for the same person. This care is part of the curatorial aspects of creating a permanent memorial. As far as the IWM is concerned, this will have the same value as any other collection within the museum.

The site will be added to and new functionality developed. The opportunities provided by key moments in the four-year commemoration of the Centenary will be important. This means that 4 August this year, and the Remembrance Weekend will be significant, as will other dates in the calendar. Mr Smith made the suggestion that in addition to the normal aspects of remembrance, part of remembering could be the act of adding details to the site, which is free to access, and free also to schools, with a programme aimed at KS3 pupils. The IWM is hoping to work with the Schools Remembrance Tours in this respect. The Museum will also visit Commonwealth countries to broaden the scope and gain material from overseas, particularly Australia and New Zealand, but also from the Indian subcontinent.

Mr Smith finished by explaining how local communities could get involved by setting up a group to assist the collection and uploading of material. The IWM is keen that people actively use the site and believe that such local groups and communities could be the best way of getting this involvement.

Lord Faulkner thanked Mr Smith for his excellent contribution, and invited questions.

Sir Peter Bottomley MP asked about workers on the land. Mr Smith replied that all who directly aided the war effort would be involved, though in some cases it might be difficult to identify them.

Lord Eden thanked Mr Smith for his invitation to hold the next meeting at IWM London.

Lord Roper reiterated the importance of engaging with local groups and communities, and supported Mr Smith's suggestion that this was significant.

Kevan Jones MP asked just how broad the scope of the project will be? In his constituency, there was coal mining and agriculture. Would these be included? Mr Smith explained that both were of national significance, but that finding a boundary between what is included and what is not is difficult. He went on to suggest that other sites detailing such activities could be linked to Lives of FWW, and this might be a valuable way of recording the activities of these people.

Lord Watson thanked Mr Smith and recalled that his grandfather had fought in the war. Making his first point, Lord Watson was interested to know whether the site holds records of soldiers. Mr Smith confirmed that the basic records from the Medal Index Cards (MIC) were there, and the site invited viewers to add to this, building up entries for an individual from such things as census returns, or other military records, or even from links to other sites. Making his second point, Lord Watson enquired after the refurbishment of the museum. Recognising that there will be queues; he

asked whether timed tickets would be available for entry? Mr Smith responded that, as a free-to-enter museum, issuing timed tickets would be difficult.

Earl Attlee reiterated Lord Watson's last point, and suggested consideration be given to it.

Angus McNeil MP made the point that the Scottish islands represent an intact community with folk memories of the war, but wondered whether news about the site will reach the public there. Mr Smith confirmed that there will be a large amount of media coverage across all the component nations of the United Kingdom, and that he would hope that this would be disseminated widely as the project develops.

Baroness Golding asked if the prison records of those Conscientious Objectors who were sent to prison for refusing to serve would be available on the site? Mr Smith explained that though such records are widely spread, an historian, Cyril Pearse, has put together a database of such materials that will be of great value..

Kevan Jones MP mentioned that he had been shown a soldier's war diary at an MP's surgery, and asked if such things could be uploaded? Mr Smith confirmed that though sample pages could only be added at present, in time whole files could be uploaded.

Lord Faulkner thanked Mr Smith for his illuminating talk and interesting answers, and invited Dr James Cooper and Mr Karl Mitchell (Woodlands Trust) to give the next presentation.

Dr James Cooper and **Mr Karl Mitchell** work for the Woodlands' Trust (WT) and gave presentation to explain to the Group the plans of the WT to create permanent woodland memorials to those who had fallen during the First World War, one in each of the component nations of the United Kingdom. Dr Cooper pointed out that the Prime Minister was keen that any new memorials should be appropriate, and given the interest shown in the project initiated by the WT, this would seem to fit the bill, with tree planting a fitting aspect of remembrance.

Mr Mitchell took over the presentation. The WT are working with landowners to set up four centenary woods: Pentland Hills (Scotland), Ffos Las (Wales), Faughan Valley (representing the island of Ireland) and Langley Vale (England). This would include new planting, as well as the working with ancient woodland. There would also be formal parts of each wood, with an avenue of trees or something similar, as well as open areas with wild flowers. He went on to explain that many people are keen to plant a tree in memory of an ancestor. And it is fitting to reach out to landowners and individuals in this way.

Mr Mitchell noted that some of the sites chosen had also been found to have had direct links with the First World War. The Pentland Hills, for example, had training trenches, while Langley Dale was used by Canadian soldiers in training for gas attacks, with one of the flagpoles – important to determine the direction of gas movement – still standing to this day.

The project is estimated to cost some 20 million pounds, 7 million have been gathered so far. The WT is working with partners, such as Sainsbury's, who have a corporate link. But there are other partners too. The latest ones are army and air cadets, great groups of young men and women who are acting to raise funds, The Army Cadets will be working to raise a million pounds in a variety of activities.

Lord Faulkner thanked Dr Cooper and Mr Mitchell, and commented that the Group could assist by increasing awareness of the scheme, before opening the questioning.

Baroness Sharples enquired what species would be used in the planting. Mr Mitchell confirmed that they would be mostly native, broad leaved species.

Lord Eden asked clarification of a number of points relating to access. Mr Mitchell assisted by confirming that Langley Dale is under WT ownership, with free open public access. In reply to a question over safeguards of the new trees, Mr Mitchell confirmed that local community involvement is often the best way of handling such matters, engendering local pride and sense of community. Mr Mitchell also confirmed that the WT had been liaising with other FWW heritage groups to help build awareness of the scheme.

Lord Faulkner thanked Dr Cooper and Mr Mitchell and invited them to write to him with regard to other ideas relating to planting on the Parliamentary Estate. He then invited Liz Woodfield from the CWGC to give her presentation.

Ms Liz Woodfield commenced her presentation by providing some background to the war graves mapping project. In 2013 the CWGC, the All Party War Heritage Group, and 'In from the Cold' (a project to find war graves that are not yet commemorated) got together in an initiative to map out the war graves in Parliamentary constituencies, in order to permit MPs and Peers to engage with local areas in the understanding and recognition of war graves at home, and to enlist the assistance of local schools and communities. The scheme identified that there was a large number of sites and locations across the country.

The project was launched in November last year, and Lord Faulkner's office worked with the CWGC in order to arrange visits for MPs and Peers to their local sites. The uptake was high, with some 145 site visits arranged, of which 54 have taken place. There has been an enthusiastic response from the CWGC's dedicated local coordinators, who had a great time working with MPs, who in turn have been equally responsive. The largest group to visit so far has been 33, bolstered by two school groups. The success of the project has been such that it has been extended up to November of this year.

Schools have been involved with MPs, with large numbers of Press and local Media attention. In the main, people have expressed surprise at the number of war graves there are in local cemeteries and graveyards. It was explained that the CWGC's educational department offer a schools visitor programme, and there is also a 'virtual cemetery' online portal to help with interpretation. Ms Woodfield took the opportunity to encourage Parliamentarians to get further involved, and to help promote local communities to take a greater part in the protection of their local sites.

The CWGC has also been involved in erecting information panels at local sites in order to assist visitors. These panels are there to assist visitors with their own personal stories associated with war graves. Ms Woodfield also pointed out that the Commission had launched its new 'Discover 14–18' website, as well as adding to the online archives, with burial details, and other original documents being added to the casualties recorded online. These are being put out in stages. Ms Woodfield closed by thanking the All Party Group on behalf of the CWGC for its help and encouragement.

Lord Faulkner thanked Ms Woodfield for her presentation, and added his endorsement and support for the work of the CWGC. Lord Faulkner himself visited the cemetery in Worcester with the local MP, and was surprised at the number of graves present in such a small area. It was the experience of both Parliamentarians that the local CWGC expert was excellent.

Earl Attlee enquired after the German graves in Britain. His experience of such graves was that they were rather sombre, mass graves. Is this the case in the UK, and do we know the location of all the graves? Ms Woodfield understood why Earl Attlee might find the German graves sombre, and indeed, the large German cemetery at Cannock Chase has similar graves. **Kevan Jones MP** pointed out that the site holds some 5000 German burials. Ms Woodfield was able to confirm that the CWGC was two thirds of the way through a joint project with their German counterparts, the *Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge* (VDK), seeking to validate all the information held on German graves in Britain. It is hoped to be able to provide consistent information on a joint website in the future.

Lord Cope enquired after the location of war graves of soldiers from the Indian subcontinent in Britain. Are there many, and can they be identified? Ms Woodfield confirmed that there were graves and that they were identifiable.

Kevan Jones MP, a Commissioner of the CWGC, also added his confirmation to this last statement, and noted the location of an Indian memorial in Brighton, and the location of around 40 Indian war graves in and around the town. He went on to consider the wider point that it is amazing just how many British and Commonwealth graves there are in local communities. He commended the local CWGC staff, who have been magnificent in delivering the recent initiative, which has given them new purpose as attention is focussed at home – particularly as the UK area has been seen as a poor relation to France and Flanders, and this has given the local people a boost.

Kevan Jones MP also pointed out that there is still an issue with the erection of boards and signage in some local cemeteries, and he urged Parliamentarians to help with this matter.

Lord Faulkner suggested that the CWGC headstones are usually easy to spot, and often surrounded by cut grass, though it is recognised that some private memorials, not denoted in this way, are often cared for by the Commission.

Baroness Golding requested details of sites in Newcastle-under-Lyme, and Ms Woodfield agreed to supply them.

Lord Faulkner closed the meeting with thanks to the contributors, and reminded members that the next meeting would be held in the Imperial war Museum, by invitation of its Director-General, Diane Lees.

The All Party Parliamentary War Heritage Group exists to promote and support the protection, conservation and interpretation of war graves, war memorials and battlefield sites.

Chairman: Lord Faulkner of Worcester

Vice-chairs: Lord Cope, Nigel Dodds MP, Lord Roper, Baroness Golding,

Treasurer: Jeffrey Donaldson MP

Secretary:

Peter Doyle, 17, Fairlawn Drive, Woodford Green, Essex, IG8 9AW

Tel: 0208 504 0381 - E-mail: doyle268@btinternet.com

Co-secretary:

Peter Barton, 8, Egbert Road, Faversham, Kent, ME13 8SJ

Tel: 01795 533024 or 01795 533035 - E-mail: pb @ parapet.demon.co.uk