

ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY WAR HERITAGE GROUP

**TUESDAY, 5 DECEMBER 2013
COMMITTEE ROOM 3
HOUSE OF LORDS**

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

Present: Lord Faulkner of Worcester (Chairman), Lord Boswell, Lord Chidgey, Lord Cope, Baroness Golding, Baroness Hooper, Lord Luke, Lord Watson of Invergowrie, Eric Ollerenshaw MP

Apologies received: Earl Attlee, Lord Clarke of Windermere, Lord Eden, Lord Roper, Lord Tebbit, Lord Tyler, Michael Dugher MP, Jeffrey Donaldson MP, Anne McGuire MP, Peter Barton and Professor Peter Doyle (Co-Secretaries)

In attendance: Dr Andrew Murrison MP, Minister for International Security Strategy & the Prime Minister's Special Representative for the Centenary Commemoration of the First World War for Agenda Item 3. Apologies were also received from Helen Grant MP, Minister for Sport & Tourism.

Colin Kerr and Liz Woodfield (Commonwealth War Graves Commission) for Agenda Item 4. Nigel Steel (Imperial War Museums) to minute the meeting *vice* Professor Doyle.

Frank Baldwin (Battlefields Trust), Felix Gott (Heritage Lottery Fund), Dan Hill (Hertfordshire at War Project), Robert Jelley, David Knight (Church of England), John Peatty (British Commission for Military History), Mike Peters and Mike Scott (Guild of Battlefield Guides), Erica Stokes (WW1 Liaison Support to Dr Murrison), Georgina Treacy (for Margot James MP), Colin Wagstaff (Western Front Association)

Lord Faulkner of Worcester opened the meeting at 4.00 and introduced Dr Andrew Murrison MP, the Prime Minister's Special Representative for the Centenary of the First World War. Lord Faulkner invited Andrew Murrison to address the meeting, followed by Colin Kerr and Liz Woodfield of the CWGC, before inviting members to join in and question Dr Murrison.

Dr Andrew Murrison MP thanked Lord Faulkner for the invitation once again to talk to the All Party War Heritage Group and to update members on government plans for the First World War Centenary. He referred members to a print out of a set of Powerpoint slides that he had used in a previous presentation with Maria Miller MP, when she had been the Minister responsible for the Centenary at DCMS. Dr Murrison passed around copies of these slides,

along with a photocopy of the booklet 'Do Mention the War: will 1914 matter in 2014?' produced earlier this year by British Future. He would refer to the slides as he spoke.

Dr Murrison first commented on the name of the war. He preferred the 'Great War' because he believed this gave some idea of the vast scale of the conflict. He did not like the more modern use of 'WW1', although he understood that it worked better on Twitter and other internet-based uses as an URL. The Centenary of the First World War years between 2014 and 2018 would affect all aspects of life in Britain and many institutions and bodies, big and small, will wish to do something to mark this historic event. It has already received considerable exposure and, as noted on the first slide in the handout, the Prime Minister began serious national preparations with his statement at Imperial War Museums (IWM) in October 2012. There he outlined his vision for the country's commemorations of 1914-18 and what was being planned to deliver this. Dr Murrison stressed that in following this up it was vital for everyone to adopt the right tone. This was an event of commemoration not celebration. The Prime Minister had announced the formation of a national advisory board to oversee the tone and nature of the commemorative events. It was an eclectic group, representing people from many walks of life who were all linked by an interest in the First World War, and at times their opinions were not always helpful. But they were an essential grist to the mill in order to make sure the commemorations were correct and reflected everyone. The Group scrutinised ideas that had been put forward and made suggestions of their own, and helped to keep ideas on track. Sir Menzies Campbell MP had rightly described them as the 'keepers of the tone and spotters of risk'. It was vital that government's guidance of the Centenary moved hand in hand with public opinion. If it failed to do this, then it would not inspire the respect and interest that the event fully deserves.

Moving to Slide 2, Dr Murrison outlined the wide range of partner organisation with which government has been working for many months now. The range of these bodies adds gravitas and appeal to the government's own position. Common to all these organisations is the desire that the centenary be about learning, about education. It was vital that people understood the war more widely from its causes, courses and consequences to the nature of its experience for so many. Dr Murrison highlighted a representative sample of the partner organisations. He began with IWM, referring in particular to the IWM run First World War Centenary Partnership Programme. This was a museum initiative to provide an umbrella for a wide range of organisations all focussed on the Centenary. Ranging from large, national institutions to small, local bodies, there were now over 1900 members of the partnership. He next mentioned the Commonwealth War Graves Commission which, he explained, he knew was a first rate and well run organisation that would be a vitally important part of the Centenary. Referring again to IWM, Dr Murrison explained that the museum had been founded in 1917 to stand at the front and centre of how the First World War would be remembered by the nation. This was why the government had invested in the current Regeneration of IWM, so that this original role could continue into the Twenty First Century. He referred too to the international partners and other government with which Britain would be working. He cited in particular France, Belgium and from the Commonwealth Australia for whom 1915 and Gallipoli would be of particular significance. He believed that support would be vital across the UK for a range of initiatives to mark the Centenary. The sums offered by the Heritage Lottery Fund would reach a new level with many of the new funding schemes that were now available to support community initiative. This was very much in step with what the public wanted and needed to facilitate their own commemorations. He was particularly pleased that HLF money was being invested into small as well as big projects, citing again HLF's support of IWM's Regeneration.

Using Slide 3 Dr Murrison recapped on the government's own core programme for the Centenary. He highlighted the programme of school battlefield visits that was currently

being piloted by the Institute of Education and STS School Travel Service on behalf of the Department for Education (DfE) and the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). He was sure that an important part of the programme would be visits to CWGC sites across the countries where the war was fought. The selected students would then be in a position to carry learning and education back to their schools.

Slide 4 expanded on government's own programme with details of several other projects that had developed since the Prime Minister's announcement in October. Dr Murrison mentioned first and foremost the work being done by the BBC. It had announced a broad platform of 130 programmes that would tap into public opinion and appetites with 2500 hours of programme time. He felt sure that most people would experience the Centenary primarily through the broadcast media and what the BBC had outlined offered potentially a very high quality of output. They would include engaging and catchy ideas that would make people more aware of the issues and nature of the First World War and prompt them to start asking questions. He next mentioned the Poppy Campaign recently launched by the Royal British Legion in conjunction with B&Q. The RBL are encouraging people to plant Flanders poppy seeds, available from B&Q, across the country. Dr Murrison hoped that as a result we would see a proliferation of poppies in hedgerows across the country in August 2014. He added that to reduce the concern of farmers, particularly in rural constituencies like his own, this idea had been checked with Defra and it was in line with other governments initiatives. The Christmas Truce of 1914 was one of the best known episodes of the war, particularly with all those who had an interest in football. Sport would be an ideal way to bring awareness of the Centenary to huge numbers of people who might otherwise not connect with it and in 2014 football will provide a way to do this. The message of the truce was totemic of reconciliation and humanity. He looked forward to seeing football highlighted through the support of the Premier League and the Football Association. The Centenary would also be a national event within the United Kingdom. The regional governments within Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland had devolved responsibility for delivering their own events. However, he felt sure there would be widespread commonality leading to a nationwide commemoration of this shared experience. No doubt the events and regional initiatives would be subtly different and inspire the public in local ways. But it would ultimately be a national event and he foresaw no real issues in this respect.

In the next slide (5), Dr Murrison outlined how the government was already handling a vast package of information about the Centenary. On its own sites, at GOV.UK and DCMS, it was not only talking about central projects but also offering active signposts to other elements of the commemorations. Slide 6 explained in more detail about some of the Centenary messaging. It was important to engage people on their own turf, not to remain too highbrow. Purists would no doubt argue for the importance of teaching the history of the war, paying attention to details like the 1914 Schlieffen plan for the German invasion of France. But if the ultimate aim is agreed to be educating people about the causes, conduct and consequences of the war, then they had to engage people more widely. To do this everyone needed to use the sophisticated wizardry of modern media that was now available. It was hard to reach young audiences and make them feel that the Centenary mattered to them. To stand any chance you had to use the full range of social media from Tumblr through to Facebook. This would be the only chance of projecting the desired messages to these groups of people.

A lot of research and evaluation had been conducted into public opinion on the Centenary and the war. This was summarised in Slide 7. Dr Murrison also drew members' attention at this point to a second circulated document, a photocopy of 'Do Mention the War: will 1914 matter in 2014?' which had been produced earlier in the year by British Future incorporating polling information from YouGov. He was pleased to say that British Future's conclusions about public views of the First World War appeared to validate the government's

approach to date and the tone it had adopted. He was confident in the accuracy of the picture presented by the YouGov data and referred in particular to the high desire that the Centenary should promote a sense of reconciliation and friendship. There had been a flurry of excitement in certain quarters of the popular press that the government was worried about British commemorations of the Centenary causing offence to Germany and trying to slant them to avoid this, believing that a Basil Fawcay approach of 'Don't Mention the War' was being adopted. But he was happy to confirm this had no foundation in truth whatsoever. There was no government narrative of the war, no approved version of what happened. It believed in creating a framework from which everyone could then form their own conclusions through greater understanding. Clearly, no-one wanted to alienate friendly nations. But he believed it was possible to be true to the nature of the event while remaining diplomatic and successful in cementing long standing friendships.

The final slide (8) reiterated this international dimension to the Centenary. The UK has now emerged as the leader in the field of preparing for the Centenary. It was no longer the laggard that it was once feared we might be. Since the successful hosting of the Olympics and the conclusion of the Diamond Jubilee the UK had overtaken most other nations in developing apt and comprehensive ways to mark the years 2014–18. The Centenary showed the importance of working in partnership. Questions had indeed been asked about why this historical event was being marked so prominently and one of the places asking was Germany, where there were obvious historical and cultural sensitivities about remembering this period. For the Germans it was important to remember that this was a particularly nuanced period of history. But the German government was happy with the UK's approach and recognised it was not at all celebratory or jingoistic. In fact Dr Murrison believed there were parts of the UK's programme that the Germans felt they could use to promote a sense of reconciliation and friendship. Ireland too was an area where different interpretations of the First World War had been used to support different political perspectives, as it had been in undivided India and South Africa. But this too was not less fraught than a few years ago. It was perfectly possible that deeper friendships, within countries as well as between them, might be another welcome outcome of remembering the First World War.

Lord Faulkner thanked Dr Murrison once again for a very stimulating and detailed presentation. He added that back in 2011 the All Party Group had instructed him to write to the Prime Minister to express their concern that no proper steps had yet been taken to prepare for the forthcoming Centenary of the war. The Prime Minister had replied very positively and Dr Murrison's appointment as his special representative had been one of the outcomes. Lord Faulkner was very pleased that the Group had been able to play this small part in initiating UK planning and he believed the lead the UK was now taking in leading the preparations, like the excellent way that Dr Murrison himself had fulfilled his role, was exemplary. Before throwing open the floor to questions, Lord Faulkner first invited the CWGC representatives to follow up briefly on the issue of the mapping of war graves in parliamentary constituencies.

Colin Kerr, CWGC, began by outlining very briefly the responsibilities of the CWGC for the commemoration of 1.7m Commonwealth dead from the two world wars, remembered both through burials with headstones and by memorials to the missing. It was very much a worldwide role, albeit one with the bulk of the work on the old Western Front, and he was keen to place a new emphasis on remembering those who died on the five 'forgotten fronts' in Africa, Palestine, Salonika, Italy and the British at Gallipoli. But to this he would add a sixth area – in the UK itself. The Group had asked for details and PDF packs showing details of graves in individual constituencies across the UK and this the Commission had been

pleased to provide. Few people were aware of the 300,000 graves in the UK and he welcomed any way of overcoming this.

Liz Woodfield, CWGC, continued by explaining that Lord Faulkner had originally suggested a programme of parliamentary briefings which might be followed up by UK site visits. This was in hand and had moved forward well. She stressed that the Commission's regional supervisors had detailed local knowledge of the graves looked after by CWGC and they were keen to see the number of visits increase.

Colin Kerr said the Commission was delighted that 10% of MPs had come back to them and suggested follow up site visits. He was very pleased that so many wanted to do this. But what he would really like to see was even greater community engagement, particularly through primary and secondary schools. He was particularly concerned about abandoned sites in which the Commission had an interest. On these they created access to their own graves and maintained these, but could not take on the whole site. He hoped to encourage greater community ownership of the whole sites, and to see more and more of the British Indian communities becoming involved.

Lord Faulkner thanked both Colin Kerr and Liz Woodfield for this interesting update, and for the significant work they had done in preparing the PDF packs and presentation to parliamentarians of details of graves located in individual constituencies. He invited members now to ask questions of the speakers or to make points in relation to what they had said.

Lord Boswell began by echoing Lord Faulkner's words about the fine way that Dr Murrison had undertaken his role as the Prime Minister's Special Representative. But he asked to make one general observation about the First World War. He believed that, in terms of historical events, it broke all rules about time and place. It was not Waterloo, pinpointed to one specific time and one clear place. The First World War covered four years and a wide range of geographical locations. There was also the question of focus on the more obscure battlefronts. Lord Boswell asked the Minister if it would be possible to move the emphasis of the main UK programme if new opportunities or offers came along, for example from the Greeks in relation to Salonika? Could something be arranged if an opportunity arose at a place like this not currently covered by the national programme? And secondly if there was a slack period over the course of the Centenary years, could resources be vired to support it?

Andrew Murrison Murrison replied by explaining that it was very much a four year programme of events. He saw it more as a marathon not a sprint. The plasticity of the planning was good. The programme could be tweaked, but only in a limited way. In relation to the far flung and interesting fronts, he agreed that these should not and could not be ignored. Embassies had been instructed to watch out for developments and initiatives in these countries and to monitor local expectations. Events were often begun and developed at the last minute. He hoped very much that the 'forgotten theatres', such as Basra and Iraq for instance, would get the prominence they deserved.

Colin Kerr cited Salonika as just such a case in point. The British Defence Attaché had been extremely helpful to the CWGC. He hoped they could capitalise on the current levels of interest in such places.

Eric Ollerenshaw MP said he believed the Centenary offered a real opportunity in Britain to bring our new ethnic communities on board with these events. All our grandfathers had been

in the First World War together. But there were few clues in the lead up to the Centenary of this diversity. In Bradford, he felt, there was a great deal of misunderstanding about the service of Indian soldiers. But this was now an opportunity that should not be missed.

Andrew Murrison agreed. Good work was already being done in this area and he felt the UK should once again take the lead. To improve this, good role models were vital to convince communities that the Centenary is to do with them. He cited Walter Tull, now recognised as one of the first Black officers in the British Army. His was an extraordinary story and it is astonishing now to think of how he must have felt when he walked into the officers' mess of his day. He was also a well-known professional footballer, leading him into another area of specialist interest. Why his story had not been bigged up even more was a mystery to him. He believed we need to address history head on, even when it is troubling. It should not be air-brushed or sanitised. But confronted and dealt with directly. The Centenary will deal with Black and Minority Ethnic groups and they were working closely with DCLG in this respect. He saw two approaches that needed to be followed: the first looking at the original communities of the servicemen in the countries from which they came and the other examining this heritage within the new communities in the UK today. Many would be surprised to find out about their links back to the First World War, although some are already more aware of this than others.

Lord Luke asked why there seemed to be so much emphasis on the Western Front, particularly through the CWGC, and why there was no real focus on other aspects of First World War history, such as the role of the Royal Navy or the Royal Air Force and Royal Flying Corps, or the supply lines with the Merchant Navy? He was thinking of the rapid development of aircraft from box kites to the efficient machines of 1918. He would like to see a wider historical perspective.

Andrew Murrison agreed that the Eastern Front too was often left out. The Russians were very keen to see the huge role they played more widely recognised, with the heavy casualties they suffered and the vast distances that the campaigns there covered. He added that he, himself, was a former Naval officer and could assure the Group that he had been collared several times by the First Sea Lord to make sure that then Royal Navy's part in the war would be fully recognised. He had assured the First Sea Lord and was confident that this would be done, mostly prominently in the commemorations of Jutland in 1916, which will be one of the big national events, and also of Gallipoli in 1915, which began as a naval assault on the Dardanelles. So two out of the key six government events would have a naval slant, offering significant Royal Navy representation. The country's maritime museums would also be noting the Centenary and planning events. These include both the Royal Naval Museum and the National Maritime Museum, which were looking to build up links with their German equivalents. Dr Murrison reminded the Group that commemoration was not just down to government. Each service would place great emphasis on anniversaries of their own and significant events for them. It would be the RAF's own centenary in 1918, and this would undoubtedly be commemorated. Individual regiments within the army would have notable battles, while the Royal Navy would note additional engagements. But to lift people to the higher level history of the war it is important to remember that it is necessary to attract them first through popular history. They need to be willing to be engaged on their own terms. However, he knew there would also be no shortage of high end products and books being published in 2014, albeit of varying quality.

Lord Cope said he wanted to raise the question of Israel and Palestine in particular. He had visited the First World War battlefields there, returning with the families of men who had fought at Huj as well as going to Beersheba and Jerusalem. He had found there was a mixed local message there. Some Israelis were interested and saw the First World War as a prelude to the establishment of Israel and a new era. But for Palestinians it was seen as a disaster. In some cemeteries he had seen damage to some of the headstones by extreme Zionists, defacing and damaging Christian crosses. But not in CWGC cemeteries which were headstones. He explained that his father had served in Palestine and was torpedoed on the way, being picked up in the Mediterranean by a Japanese destroyer. He wondered if there were any known Japanese plans to remember their part in the war on the Allied side?

Andrew Murrison said he had spoken to the Japanese ambassador who was enthusiastic about the Centenary. Understandably for the Japanese the Second World War had very negative connotations. But they felt that the First World War offered an opportunity to show that their military campaigns were not all bad and redress the balance. They feel it would be both popular, but also a surprise to many people who do not know the Japanese were involved from 1914 to 1918. Plans were being worked out to devise ways that involvement of all the Allies could be registered. This was particularly the case for those where the war was part of the way nations were created or dissolved. He was very aware of how important the Centenary was likely to be in Australia, where huge sums of money were being spent to reflect the way the war was responsible for promoting national unity and identity. It was seen as the genesis of the country, with very strong and clear Anzac branding was being used to emphasise Australia within the wider history. Much would be focussed on Gallipoli, but the Western Front as well. It was fascinating to see unexpected countries also coming forward to be involved, and he was thinking here of Morocco with its reluctant, complex history.

Colin Kerr explained that there was a Japanese temple in Malta and an Australian and New Zealand memorial in Beersheba, as well as on Mount Scopus.

Lord Chidgey said he had been very impressed by all the liaison between the various bodies and institutions involved, and asked about how involved Parliament and parliamentarians had become. He felt that many constituency MPs already had an accepted role to play in Remembrance Day services each year. This was accepted apolitically. Did Dr Murrison see a role in the Centenary for parliamentarians?

Andrew Murrison replied by describing the Fields of Battle photographic exhibition developed by the photographer Mike Sheil. It has begun with a launch in the House and was now intended to tour its very powerful images round the country in public places like shopping centres and outside town halls. It was seen as High Street art. Many MPs had been there at the launch and he hoped they would pass on the suggestion to town halls that might like to think about hiring Mike Sheil's work to increase awareness of the Centenary locally.

Eric Ollerenshaw suggested that maybe closer co-ordination could be promoted among their number by parliamentarians.

Andrew Murrison mentioned Keith Simpson MP who had been appointed by the Speaker to liaise on behalf of the Commons with the Lords over the Centenary and what it might mean for parliamentarians.

He was disappointed that only 60 parliamentarians had followed up the help being offered by the CWGC to locate war graves within individual constituencies. He intends to write round his colleagues to encourage more of them to take up this offer and become more engaged with the subject. It was up to MPs to show leadership in this area.

Lord Watson of Invergowrie said he had a couple of questions to raise. The first was about Ireland. Was it known what was being planned in Ireland? The history of Ireland's involvement in the war had always been troubled and difficult, with a clear split between Ulster Protestants and Republican Catholics. Secondly, what was being done about the wider social history of the war, the role of women for example? And what about Conscientious Objectors? Often they were overlooked, particularly the non-combatants who still served in the front line.

Andrew Murrison agreed that of course the commemorations were about everyone who experienced the war and concerned as much about the Home Front as the fighting fronts. HLF were supporting projects about many aspects of the war's history including munitionettes and women in the wider work place. HLF was also supporting a project about Conscientious Objectors, even if this was perceived as controversial. It was vital that HLF supported all outlooks on the war, all opinions. If Conscientious Objectors were ignored that would be appalling. His own great-uncle had been a non-combatant stretcher bearer who had been killed in 1917. Turning to Ireland, he was confident that it would be fully engaged and studies of its history would be a revelation to many. Unless it was better understood, it risked perpetuating existing misunderstandings. He believed Ireland to be forward leaning. The shared history of its two distinct cultures would bring them closer together. He was keen to work with the Irish to achieve this and bring about greater rapprochement.

Lord Faulkner apologised that, as it was nearly 5.00, he would have to step down from the Chair and leave the meeting as he was due to take over the Woolsack at that time. He invited Baroness Golding, as one of the Group's Vice-Chairs to take over the Chair for the rest of the meeting. Lord Faulkner hoped that the non-parliamentary attendees who were at the meeting would soon be able to follow on from the Group's members and raise any issues and questions with the speakers.

Lord Faulkner stepped down from the Chair at 5.00 and left the meeting. Baroness Golding took on the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

Baroness Golding thanked Lord Faulkner for conducting the meeting so far and added that she had been about to speak herself. She explained that she had been working with her local council to develop plans locally. She had also been surprised about residual attitudes to Conscientious Objectors and wondered why more had not been done to highlight their position. Baroness Golding invited the non-parliamentary attendees to address the Group.

Frank Baldwin, Chair of the Battlefields Trust, began by saying he was thankful that visits were being planned to the First World War battlefields abroad. But he pointed out that there had also been a battleground in the skies over Britain. Through the Battlefields Trust he had initiated 'The First Blitz Project' to record the aerial bombardment of Britain between 1914 and 1918, a point that was often forgotten, as was the service of the Merchant Navy which, he reminded the meeting, was commemorated at the Tower Hill Memorial in London.

Andrew Murrison admitted that the Battle of Jutland would form the government's main naval focus for the commemorations. But he was very keen, as the son and grandson of Merchant Navy officers, to remember their valiant work in keeping Britain fed. He hoped that, once again looking beyond the purely national events being organised by government, there might be initiatives developed by other bodies connected to Britain's remaining merchant fleet such as Trinity House. The BBC would also be highlighting the Merchant Navy's role. But he wanted to stress the importance of individuals and private bodies playing a part in ensuring all aspects of the war's history were properly represented. It was not for government to do it all. They could not micro-manage everything. He hoped that others would play their part too. But for the moment the government focus would remain on Jutland and Gallipoli from a naval point of view. He had recently visited some of the First World War associated heritage sites in Wiltshire, such as the preserved practice trenches on Salisbury Plain and the extant aircraft hangers from the RFC at Tidworth. This showed there was lots to be seen in the UK and be visited here and it was right to be aware that not all First World War sites had to be visited abroad.

Colin Kerr added that, in connection with the Merchant Navy memorial at Tower Hill, the CWGC had added new interpretation panels to it, along with photographs of some of the major ships that had been lost.

Mike Peters, Chair, International Guild of Battlefield Guides, told the meeting that for those members of the Guild working on the ground the Centenary had already started as the number of visitors was already rising. But he questioned what the legacy of the Centenary would be. What would remain afterwards? After 1918? What hard infrastructure would there be of national interest?

Andrew Murrison agreed that, yes, it had already begun and he cited the recent arrival of the Sacred Soil from Flanders, a ceremony that he had attended only a few days earlier. He felt as if people had already entered the foothills of the Centenary. He was convinced that there would be a permanent legacy and he particularly admired some of the Canadian plans, including a new visitor centre on Vimy Ridge. This is the kind of undertaking that would continue for years. The highly esteemed work being carried out by the CWGC was another clear example, as was the £40 million being invested into the Regeneration of Imperial War Museums main site in Lambeth Road, to which government had contributed. He felt that everyone would agree when it re-opened in 2014 with new First World War galleries that people would see this had been money well spent and would meet the needs of visitors for decades to come. There was also a clear educational legacy, with a shifting emphasis from contemporary considerations to examining more historical questions. It was vital to place children and their education in the history of the war front and centre. And on a wider basis, there were the hundreds of diverse initiatives collected together by IWM in the Centenary Partnership. Collectively they would all create a very strong legacy.

Colin Kerr added that, in respect of legacies, by 2016 the CWGC would have installed over 500 new information panels including QR codes linked to further details among their key sites.

Mike Peters asked how this would all be balanced?

Andrew Murrison replied that this would be one of the challenges and most difficult things to achieve. Many people would discover the Centenary through television and other popular

media. So they carried considerable responsibility and events would need to be treated differently from the anniversaries of the Second World War, which still had living veterans to consider and the sensitivities that went with that, such as the 70th anniversary of D-Day which would also be in 2014. He did not feel that this had been well done for the 65th anniversaries in 2009.

Mike Scott, Guild of Battlefield Guides, questioned the scope and range of the pilot project being undertaken for the Centenary schools visits. He also wondered if the successful ‘Heroes Return’ programme undertaken for Second World War veterans could be extended and funded to include descendants of those who fought in the First World War. He was only too aware of the value of such visits, having guided many families for whom it was the first time in 100 years they had been to visit their relative’s headstone.

Andrew Murrison replied that he would like also to be able to offer some encouragement in this area, but he reminded everyone that today was the day of the Autumn Budget Statement and felt there simply were not the resources to support this. Also he wondered if there would really be capacity to support the large numbers who might want to visit. Many of the most regularly visited sites were already under some pressure, such as Tyne Cot. It will only get worse over the coming years and he was concerned about what would happen if even more visitors were directed to them.

Colin Kerr added that huge numbers were expected at Thiepval and on the Somme in general in 2016. He cited the issues already surrounding the preservation of highly visited areas like the grave of 15-year-old Valentine Strudwick in Essex Farm Cemetery. This required bonding in the grass around it and artificial turf to deal with the existing numbers. The Commission would be seeking further advice on how to deal with the rising numbers over the next few years, while remaining within the spirit of the original CWGC philosophy.

Baroness Golding said that, with no further questions forthcoming, she first wanted to thank Lord Faulkner for opening the meeting, and Andrew Murrison, along with Colin Kerr and Liz Woodfield, for giving up so much time to speak to the Group, and everyone else for coming.

With this Baroness Golding drew the meeting to a close at 5.30.

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.

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