

Candidate Pack for the Commissioner

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COMMONWEALTH
WAR GRAVES
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Dear Applicant,

Thank you for your interest in becoming a Commissioner at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC).

The CWGC is a highly respected, prestigious, global organisation that honours and cares for the 1.7 million men and women of the Commonwealth forces who died in the First and Second World Wars, ensuring their sacrifice will never be forgotten. Funded by six Commonwealth Member Governments, we build and maintain memorials and cemeteries at 23,000 locations, in over 150 countries, including some of the world's most iconic, landmark monuments.

Today, over a century after we first began, our work continues through our staff, supporters and volunteers who preserve our unique cultural, horticultural and architectural heritage and ensure that the stories of those who died are told. At CWGC and in our charitable arm The Commonwealth War Graves Foundation (CWGF), we have a shared commitment, a clear vision and a set of values (Commitment, Ambition, Respect and Excellence) that drive all we do. They help define us and the standards we expect from our work and from each other.

As an organisation with 1,350 staff worldwide, we speak many languages, possess different talents, and come from a wide variety of backgrounds. We care about our people; we recognise and celebrate our diversity and our individual contributions and work always to ensure we help everyone, in every role across the Commission feel valued, appreciated and connected.

Our strategy Towards 2039: Many Stories, Many Voices, One Commission, One Mission was launched in 2023 and outlines an ambitious vision for our future. We are close to completion of the first three year implementation of the strategy, which has seen us make significant progress, with a key enabler for the next and future iterations of strategy and implementation plans, a focus on the evolution and acceleration our digital and technology strategy, to foster a culture of innovation and to leverage this to enable efficiencies while also ensuring that our IT infrastructure, systems, and processes are robust, secure, and scalable.

To help us deliver on this we have recently hired our first CTO, who will sit as a member of the Executive Leadership Team, and we are also seeking to appoint a new Commissioner to the board, ideally with a background in digital, technology (including AI) and commercial, as well as significant experience of leading strategic development and change. We view these appointments as complementary and therefore, are looking to match our new CTO with a Commissioner with like expertise and experience to help guide us as we move forward – these are exceptionally exciting times for the Commission.

Your experience will likely have been gained in a senior leadership role and potentially within an organisation of comparable stature and heritage, possibly as a CTO, where you will also have had broader leadership experience and oversight. Commercial experience is a significant asset; while not strictly essential, exposure to, or understanding of, complex, devolved international organisations would be useful, given our structure.

A sharp strategic thinker with highly effective interpersonal and influencing skills, you will also bring maturity of judgement, personal authority and presence. Above all, you will demonstrate an absolute commitment to our mission and commemorative purpose, as well as our values. This is a prestigious and impactful role, contributing to success, progress and strategic governance of a globally respected organisation. If you believe you have the skills and experience we are seeking, we very much look forward to hearing from you.

Vice Admiral Peter Hudson CB CBE
Vice Chairman

Established by Royal Charter of 21 May 1917, the provisions of which were amended and extended by a Supplemental Charter of 8 June 1964, the CWGC's purpose is to mark and maintain the graves of the members of the forces of the Commonwealth who died in the two World Wars, to keep records and registers, and to build and maintain memorials to the dead whose graves are unknown.

We work on behalf of the Governments of Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand, South Africa, and the United Kingdom to sustainably and safely care for the graves and memorials of more than 1.7 million Commonwealth service personnel at 23,000 locations in more than 150 countries and territories, and on every continent except Antarctica.

Each one of those we commemorate were people like us, with their own ambitions, hopes, and dreams; it is our duty and privilege to care for their graves and memorials and through our charitable Foundation, keep their stories alive. We believe that remembering individuals who have died in conflicts is of universal, perpetual relevance, and that reflecting on their deaths is of continuing and paramount importance for us all. In today's world of escalating tensions and volatility, our work fulfils a vital and increasingly significant role..

Our work is guided by the belief:

- that each of the dead should be commemorated individually by name either on the headstone on the grave or by an inscription on a memorial;
- that the headstones and memorials should be permanent;
- that the headstones should be uniform;
- that all should be treated equally in death.

The largest CWGC cemetery in the world is Tyne Cot in Belgium. It holds almost 12,000 graves, of which more than 8,300 are unknowns. Our smallest cemetery, on the other hand, is Ocracoke Island (British) Cemetery, North Carolina, United States, with just four burials.

Other iconic CWGC memorials include The Menin Gate in Belgium; The Neuve Chapelle Memorial to Indian forces in France; The Australian Memorial at Villers Bretonneux in France; The South African National Memorial at Delville Wood in France; Canada's National Memorial at Vimy in France (all of which, with other cemeteries and memorials in Belgium and France, have recently received UNESCO inscription as world heritage sites); The Air Forces Memorial at Runnymede in the UK; The New Zealand Memorial at Caterpillar Valley in France; and the Naval Memorials at Portsmouth, Plymouth and Chatham in the UK.

Our workforce numbers a total of around 1350, more than 850 of whom are horticulturalists; in addition to our role as a global leader in commemoration, we are also one of the largest horticultural organisations in the world.

To find out more about our sites, and how we care for them, [please follow this link](#).

Our Strategy and Values

In 2023, CWGC launched our new strategy Towards 2039: Many Stories, Many Voices, One Commission, One Mission.

It is **Evolution rather than Revolution of Our Mission** BUT it is an **Evolution with Ambition**.

Our new strategy is based on four strategic priorities:

- **Caring Sustainably & Safely** for the graves, cemeteries, memorials, landscapes, and records of those who died;
- **Sharing the Stories** – of those we commemorate with an ever-wider and more diverse audience, across all nations;
- **Deepening Relations** – with our existing membership, public, volunteers and international partners to help us to become a valued instrument for diplomacy and influence;
- **Organisational Fitness** – we will ensure CWGC is well-governed and well-led, safe, just, fair, diverse, and inclusive, with its people given the tools they need to do the job.

Our Strategic Priorities are matched to 12 goals. Each goal has clear benefits for our organisation. The Goals are Raising **Our Profile**; Putting Our **People First**; **Governance and Compliance**; **Ways of Working**; **Digitally and Technology Enabled**; **Financial Sustainability**; Caring Safely and Sustainably for the **Graves, Memorials and Cemeteries**; Caring Safely and Sustainably for our **Horticulture**; Caring Safely and Sustainably for our **Commemorations, Recovery, Identification and Reburial of Remains**; **Non-Commemorations** righting Historical wrongs; **Sharing the Stories** of those we commemorate; and **Deepening Relations**.

We are delivering our strategy through a rolling three-year plan, the first of which runs from 2023 to 2026 and is close to completion. To read more about our strategy, [please follow this link](#).

Our values

Our values are not just words on a page; they reflect and set our culture, and are lived and breathed as we work, as shared expectations, behaviours, and standards.

Our organisation is entrusted with the responsibility and honour of caring for the graves, memorials, records, and stories of the fallen. We are an organisation of ABIDING CARE, which is shown each day, in all that we do, in who we are and in how we work. We have taken this vital word – CARE – and used it as the base for our values:

Our work is guided by the belief:

- **Commitment** – to getting it done and with pride
- **Ambition** – to aspire, inspire and innovate
- **Respect** – for ourselves, each other, our stakeholders, and our visitors
- **Excellence** – by doing it well, safely and to the highest possible standards

Our Commissioners

Our work is overseen by a Board of Commissioners. The official members of the Commission are:

- UK Secretary of State for Defence
The Rt Hon John Healey MP, Chairman
- High Commissioner for Canada to the United Kingdom
His Excellency The Hon Mr Ralph E Goodale PC
- High Commissioner of South Africa to the United Kingdom
His Excellency Mr Jeremiah Nyamane Mamabolo
- High Commissioner for Australia to the United Kingdom
His Excellency The Hon Stephen Smith
- High Commissioner for the Republic of India to the United Kingdom,
His Excellency Mr Vikram K Doraiswami
- High Commissioner for New Zealand to the United Kingdom
Acting High Commissioner, Mr Chris Seed

These are joined by up to nine non-official members. Historically, non-official members have included a retired senior member of the three Armed Forces; two Members of Parliament; a retired senior diplomat, and three others. One of the non-official members is appointed as Vice Chairman.

The non-official members of the Commission are:

- Vice Admiral Peter Hudson CB CBE, Vice Chairman
- Dame Judith Mayhew Jonas DBE
- Sir Tim Hitchens KCVO CMG
- Ms Keryn James
- Mr Vasuki Shastry
- Lt Gen Sir Ben Bathurst KCVO CBE
- Air Marshal Sir Stuart Atha KBE CB DSO
- Chris Evans MP
- The Rt Hon Tom Tugendhat MBE VR MP

To find out more about our Commissioners, [please follow this link.](#)



Our Commissioners help guide the CWGC in delivering its mission to commemorate the 1.7 million Commonwealth service personnel who died in the two World Wars, ensuring their memory lives on in perpetuity. All members of the Board of Commissioners share the responsibility of ensuring that the work of the Commission's staff is conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Royal Charter.

Commissioners are expected to:

- Attend and contribute to quarterly Commission meetings (typically held in London and, once per annum, on tour which may be in the UK or internationally and typically will be over a 3-day period) noting that attendance in person is expected.
- Scrutinise and discuss all papers and proposals put to them by the Executive Leadership Team, ensuring the organisation continues to deliver its mission effectively, and remains financially viable, and managed in a way which is appropriate for a publicly funded body.
- Serve on one or more subcommittees (e.g., Audit, Finance, Remuneration), with potential for involvement in ad hoc sub-committees.
- Provide strategic oversight and constructive challenge to the Executive Leadership Team.
- Act as a public ambassador for the CWGC at commemorative and representational events.
- Support the Commission's strategic priorities, including sustainability, digital innovation, and global engagement.
- Embody our CARE values, and the Nolan principles of selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

Working together with our new CTO, you will also:

- Help drive organisation-wide technology transformation with focus on AI implementation and cybersecurity.
- Contribute your expertise towards the development of governance processes, policies, and assurance mechanisms across IT and data functions.
- Contribute your expertise towards global technology, cybersecurity, and data protection strategies and programmes aligned with organisational goals.

Remuneration

This role is offered on a voluntary basis. Reasonable expenses incurred in the course carrying out the role will be reimbursed by the organisation.

Time Commitment and Location

The time commitment for this appointment is approximately 12-15 days per year

Generally, Commission meetings are held quarterly, usually on the second Wednesday in March, June, September, and December (with the September meeting typically on tour visiting Commission sites and lasting 3 days). Commission meetings usually take place at one of the High Commissions in London, or at the Ministry of Defence. Very occasionally we may set a meeting at our Headquarters in Maidenhead.

Attendance may also be required at commemorative events marking occasions such as ANZAC Day and Remembrance Sunday.

Term of Appointment

Initial appointment of 3 years, with the potential for this to be renewed for an additional 2 terms of 3 years, therefore, to a maximum of 9 years in total.



Your knowledge and experience

- Experience as a Board-level leader within an organisation / organisations of comparable stature, heritage and scale.
- A deep understanding of digital, technology (including AI) and commercial, with proven experience of ownership across substantial strategic development and change. The successful candidate may have operated as a CTO, or in senior commercial role at a technology company or have significant experience managing/leveraging technology.
- Ability to provide strategic oversight and constructive challenge to help guide CWGC's technology roadmap
- International experience and exposure to / understanding of complex, devolved international organisations would be an asset but is not strictly essential.
- Prior experience as a non-executive board member and / or of sitting on board-level committees is highly desirable.

Your skills, leadership style and behaviours

- Personal presence and authority to engage with distinguished Commissioners outside their area of expertise.
- Open, engaging communication style; works with others to pursue shared objectives.
- Strong communication, influencing, and collaboration skills.
- Sharp strategic thinker with sound judgment and attention to detail.
- Works with emotional intelligence and is self-reflective in approach.
- Unimpeachable integrity; accountable and accepts collective responsibility
- Commitment to CWGC's mission, values, and commemorative purpose, as well as to diversity of thought, culture, and lived experience.



To make an application, please go to <https://starfishsearch.com/jobs/cwgc-commissioner/> and click on the apply now button, with the following prepared:

- Your CV of equivalent biographical information (no more than three sides please).
- A covering letter that sets out your motivation for the role and describes the specific experience you can bring to the appointment.

We would also be grateful if you would complete the Equality and Diversity monitoring form on the online application process. This form is for monitoring purposes only and is not treated as part of your application.

Deadline for applications is **Friday 31st October 2025**.

Recruitment timetable

Closing date for applications	Monday 3rd November 2025.
Preliminary interview	w/c 10th November 2025
Final panel interviews	25th / 26th November 2025

