



# 2025 Field Report on Commonwealth War Graves and Memorials in Iraq

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Date of publication: December 2025

*Caveat on data and information sources: every effort has been made to ensure the data and information in this report is correct however this is the work of a single private individual with limited resources so should be treated with appropriate caution and independently verified. The intent of this report is to try and fill the gap in information and awareness about CWGC sites in Iraq given 35 years of absence and to encourage the Commissioners of the CWGC to make good on their mission and obligation to Commonwealth war dead with a full operational return to Iraq and to complete the Non-Commemoration work needed there through research and action.*



## Table of Contents

|                                                                                         |           |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Table of Contents</b>                                                                | <b>2</b>  |
| <b>Authors Statement</b>                                                                | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>CWGC Statement of Purpose</b>                                                        | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>SECTION 1 — Executive Summary and Recommendations</b>                                | <b>7</b>  |
| Executive Summary                                                                       | 7         |
| Summary Recommendations                                                                 | 8         |
| Issues requiring immediate attention                                                    | 9         |
| Methodology                                                                             | 11        |
| <b>SECTION 2 — Introduction</b>                                                         | <b>12</b> |
| <b>SECTION 3 — Location Maps</b>                                                        | <b>16</b> |
| Map of CWGC sites in Iraq                                                               | 16        |
| Map of CWGC sites in Baghdad                                                            | 16        |
| Map of CWGC sites around Baghdad (commutable in a day)                                  | 17        |
| <b>SECTION 4 — Site Reports</b>                                                         | <b>18</b> |
| Southern Section - Basra                                                                | 18        |
| Basra War Cemetery (British)                                                            | 18        |
| Basra Indian Forces Cemetery & Cremation Memorial                                       | 25        |
| Basra Memorial to the Missing                                                           | 34        |
| Basra Tanooma Chinese Memorial                                                          | 37        |
| Central Section - Amara, Kut and Karbala                                                | 38        |
| Amara War Cemetery (British)                                                            | 38        |
| Amara Indian Forces War Cemetery                                                        | 42        |
| Kut War Cemetery                                                                        | 46        |
| Karbala Isolated Grave                                                                  | 52        |
| Baghdad Section - Alwiya, Northgate, Ma'Asker and Habbaniya                             | 54        |
| Alwiya Indian Forces Cemetery                                                           | 54        |
| Baghdad Northgate Cemetery                                                              | 56        |
| Ma'Asker Al Rashid RAF Cemetery (formerly called Rinaidi RAF Cemetery)                  | 66        |
| Habbaniya RAF Cemetery                                                                  | 71        |
| Central Section - Mosul and Khanaqin                                                    | 73        |
| Mosul War Cemetery                                                                      | 73        |
| Khanaqin War Cemetery                                                                   | 80        |
| A note on Ottoman and German Cemeteries and Memorials                                   | 83        |
| <b>SECTION 5 — Inequalities in commemoration and the CWGC Non-Commemoration Project</b> | <b>85</b> |
| <b>SECTION 6 — CWGC Inaction in Iraq</b>                                                | <b>89</b> |



|                                                                               |            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Evidence of Inaction                                                          | 89         |
| Lack of oversight and accountability                                          | 90         |
| Excuses for inaction in Iraq by CWGC                                          | 90         |
| Security                                                                      | 90         |
| Funding                                                                       | 91         |
| FCO travel guidance and insurance                                             | 91         |
| Risk of sites being damaged                                                   | 92         |
| <b>SECTION 7 — Recommendations</b>                                            | <b>95</b>  |
| Governance and Accountability (Immediate)                                     | 95         |
| Medium-Term Actions (1–3 years)                                               | 97         |
| Long-Term Vision (5+ years)                                                   | 98         |
| <b>Section 8 - A vision for the future of Iraq's Memorials and Cemeteries</b> | <b>99</b>  |
| Basra Concept                                                                 | 99         |
| Community Engagement Concept - Basra War Cemetery                             | 101        |
| Basra Indian Forces Peace Park and Memorial Wall Concept                      | 102        |
| Basra Memorial Concept                                                        | 103        |
| Alwiya Indian War Cemetery Concept                                            | 104        |
| <b>SECTION 8 — Remembrance Service at Basra War Cemetery</b>                  | <b>106</b> |
| <b>SECTION 9 — Media Coverage and Links</b>                                   | <b>109</b> |



## Authors Statement

I am Ben Soppitt; a UK National. My grandfather, Gunner Joseph Soppitt, served in the Royal Artillery during World War 2 in an Anti Aircraft battalion based in Basra, Iraq. He died of illness on 3 November 1941, aged 32. He is buried in the Commonwealth War Grave Cemetery in Basra.

In 2025 I travelled to Iraq to visit his unmarked grave and lay a gravestone; I also held a Remembrance Day service at the cemetery, the first in over 50 years, to honour all those who lost their life in service of their country and who are buried there. The Chaldean Archbishop of Basra attended the service along with a Muslim cleric and members of the local community.



*Image 1 Remembrance Day Service Basra War Cemetery November 9th 2025*

Whilst in Iraq I took the opportunity to visit every site under the auspices of the CWGC.

The CWGC withdrew from the country in 1990 and its staff have visited only once since then, spending a few days in Basra in 2018. This absence has created a substantial gap in understanding and awareness of the country and these sites within the CWGC leadership as well as the wider public. This report attempts to fill this gap and by doing so it is hoped that the CWGC will make good on their mission and obligation to Commonwealth war dead with a full operational return to Iraq; and to complete the Non-Commemoration work needed there through both research and action.





Every effort has been made to ensure the data and information in this report is correct however this is the work of a single private individual with limited resources and time so should be treated with appropriate caution and independently verified.

The views expressed in this report are those of the author.





## CWGC Statement of Purpose



**“Their bodies are buried in peace; but their name liveth for evermore.”**

*Ecclesiasticus 44:14.*

We, The Commonwealth War Graves Commission, work on behalf of the Governments of Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand, South Africa, and the United Kingdom.

We were established by Royal Charter to commemorate those from the Commonwealth who lost their lives in the two World Wars.

We believe that:

Remembering individuals who have died in conflicts around the world is of universal perpetual relevance, and that;

Reflecting on their deaths is of continuing and paramount importance for us all.

### CWGC Mission

Our Mission is to ensure those who died in service, or as a result of conflict, are commemorated so that they, and the human cost of war, are remembered for ever.





## SECTION 1 — Executive Summary and Recommendations

### Executive Summary

Over 56,000 Commonwealth service men and women have died in service in Iraq - the exact number will never be known. Of these 24% of them are buried in known graves, almost exclusively European casualties. 40,682 have no known grave and are commemorated on the Basra Memorial of which 7,385 are mentioned by name (European soldiers of all ranks and Indian Officers only, the remaining 33,256 Indian Army casualties only by unit totals). A further 8,582 (almost exclusively non-European) are buried in CWGC cemeteries but are unknown and more that were simply not recorded. This makes Mesopotamia/Iraq one of the most extreme theatres in the entire CWGC system for loss of both graves and identities, exceeding even Gallipoli in proportional terms.

Iraq is the 5th largest Commonwealth country by casualties representing 3% of total casualties globally. The Basra Memorial to the missing is the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest Commonwealth Memorial in the world and the largest outside Europe. Only the Menin Gate and Thiepval are larger.

3% of the 2023 Commonwealth War Graves Commission budget of £80m is £2.4m. If allocated fairly by casualty rate this is the minimum sum that should have been spent in Iraq annually over the last 35 years. The actual spend is estimated to be less than 0.1% of this.

CWGC cemeteries across the country hold the remains of casualties from at least 15 different nationalities including those from pre-partition India, Poland, Singaporean Chinese, Australia, Canada, South Africa, New Zealand, Iraq, Burma, Holland, Russia, Turkey the West Indies and West Africa; over 80% of all casualties were non-European.

Conducted between 21 October and 11 November 2025 this report is a firsthand account of these sites. It presents the findings of a comprehensive, independent and self-funded assessment of Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) cemeteries and memorials in Iraq. It is the first full public survey of these sites in more than a century since Lieut-Col F. R. Durham's report to the IWGC in 1924.

Major findings include severe deterioration across the majority of sites caused by long term underinvestment. A lack of maintenance, poor quality remedial work and lack of CWGC supervision. There is clear evidence of continuing inequity in the commemoration of Indian Army and other non-European casualties and the cemeteries and memorials in which they are commemorated.

Priority recommendations include immediate re-engagement in Iraq, an assessment of contractors, greater accountability over those employed by the commission, community partnerships, and long-term redevelopment of key sites as sustainable memorials.





Families of those who have fallen, and who are buried in Iraq have repeatedly contacted the CWWG seeking information regarding the upkeep of the graves. The excuses and reasons for lack of action include security, insurance and the possibility of sites being damaged. Many public and private organisations operate successfully in Iraq with appropriate security and insurance and so there is no reason why the CWWG cannot operate in the country. Other high profile sites such as the grave of Gertrude Bell and Christian, Turkish and German cemeteries are all secured and remain undamaged and so there appears to be no evidence supporting the risk of damage to the war graves and memorials.

It should also be noted that the 2024-25 Non-Commemoration Programme Annual Review makes no mention of Iraq. Iraq is not even listed as a Research Area; there is a need to rectify this serious omission and to fully recognise the contribution of all who died in Iraq regardless of their country of origin.

## Summary Recommendations

1. Commit annual funding in the CWGC budget for Iraq at a minimum commensurate with its volume of casualties (3% of casualties) £2.4m a year
2. Form an Iraq Advisory Panel with experience of operating in Iraq to provide appropriate guidance and oversight of Iraq operations.

The work of this panel should include:

- a) appointing a CWGC Iraq Country Manager
- b) reviewing the suitability of existing contractors for the work involved in stabilisation, renovation and maintenance of these sites.
- c) setting up mechanisms for the independent auditing of local contractors and contractor work.
- d) Reviewing CWGC policies regarding travel to Iraq and taking into consideration the unequal application of these policies in other countries so that regular site visits can be resumed.
- e) Proactive outreach and relationship building with local communities, local and federal government, other relevant Embassies not exclusively the UK Embassy and international companies active in the country such as BP
- f) Developing a 5 year plan for renovations and commemoration at all locations to ensure a long-term sustainable solution and to ensure that the men and women who gave their lives in service of their country are remembered and honored with appropriate dignity.
- g) Authorising and overseeing small scale renovation works at key at risk sites to signal ownership and demonstrate proactive management.







3. Undertake immediate action to secure the Amara Left Bank Indian Cemetery, Khanaqin and the Basra Indian Cemetery to prevent further encroachment, total loss of the sites and where possible to reclaim cemetery land.
4. Expand the Non-Commemoration Project to including the estimated 40,000 un-commemorated and under-commemorated Indian Army, Chinese, African and other nationalities and ensure that this historical and ongoing inequality is properly addressed
5. Update and correct the CWGC website as regards factual information regarding sites in Iraq (Karbala, Ma'Asker and Amara Left Bank as examples) including cemetery maps all of which are out of date and inaccurate.

**That it is possible to maintain these sites in Iraq cost efficiently and at a reasonable standard is evidenced by the German and Ottoman cemeteries from the same period and the work done by the local guardian at Amara British Cemetery with very limited money, resources or support from the CWGC.**





## Issues requiring immediate attention

Note: Immediate action has been defined as a grave danger to the integrity of the site or a risk to visitors or local communities.

| Location                                          | Action                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|---------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Alwiya Indian Forces Cemetery                     | Main Indian Army cemetery in Baghdad. The site is used intermittently as a parking lot for heavy machinery. Fence is in poor condition, its gate is broken. The site is overgrown and obviously untended. The nearest cemetery to the UK Embassy with it is being a 10 minute drive away. The site needs to be secured immediately.                                                                                                             |
| Amara War Cemetery (Indian)                       | The largest Indian Army cemetery in Iraq if not the world. Approximately 30% of the site has been fenced off and built on by a fun fair. The remainder of the site is unmarked, without any signage and only the remains of two pedestals from memorials remain. Site needs to be secured, fenced and signed and negotiated with the owner of the fun fair initiated.                                                                           |
| Basra War Cemetery                                | The site is used as a gathering place for illegal drug and alcohol use at night; a woman's body was recently discovered in the grounds. The local community fears the site at night creating a blight on what is a small tight knit residential neighbourhood. It's unacceptable that a site meant to be under the ownership of the CWGC should be used like this. Securing the site to prevent such use is easily and economically achievable. |
| Basra Indian Forces Cemetery & Cremation Memorial | The back boundary fence has been completely removed and local houses are now built into the cemetery itself. Large amounts of construction waste is dumped there and overgrown. Two gatehouses at risk of structural integrity loss. The site needs to be secured and negotiations with local residents initiated to remove them from the site.                                                                                                 |
| Khanaqin War Cemetery                             | No map of the cemetery is on the CWGC site and no mention of the site on the website. There is no boundary fence, no sign which states this is a location of war graves. The site is protected only by the goodwill of the local museum. Urgent action is required to protect and recognise this site                                                                                                                                           |
| Basra Memorial                                    | Local military and police are now not allowing cars to stop on the road on which Basra Memorial is located due to there being water and oil pipelines nearby. This has resulted in visitors to the site (including me) being detained and threatened by local security forces. Liaison with the local authorities and security services required to ensure access to the memorial for visitors.                                                 |



## Methodology

Site visits were conducted between 21 October and 11 November 2025 and covered all eleven CWGC cemeteries and memorials in Iraq along with relevant Ottoman, German, and civilian burial grounds.

Research combined a variety of different approaches to establish accuracy, understand the context and historical circumstances. It included:

- Direct on-site inspections of each cemetery and memorial.
- Photographic and 360-degree video documentation of all accessible areas.
- Interviews with local guardians, contractors, residents, and diplomatic officials.
- Review of CWGC archives, historical site plans, and published maps.
- Cross-referencing CWGC public statements with observable on-the-ground conditions.
- Identification of discrepancies between archival assumptions and current realities.
- Use of other relevant research such as that undertaken by Steve Johnson into Ma'Asker Al-Rasheed Cemetery.

This methodology ensures that the findings documented in this report reflect both the physical conditions of each site and the authors understanding of the factors shaping CWGC operations in Iraq.





## SECTION 2 — Introduction

The UK has a unique history of armed conflict and military presence in Iraq, a period that began in the age of cavalry and ended with guided missiles and jet aircraft.

With 3 invasions since 1914, 5 wars including the Arab Revolt, the UK has occupied Iraq for 30 years with 50 years of near-continuous military presence. No other country on earth has been subject to such a prolonged and recurring pattern of military engagement by the UK in the modern era.

Starting with the invasion of Ottoman Mesopotamia in 1914, the Arab Revolt 1918-1921, the British Colonial "Mandate" of 1920-1932, the Anglo-Iraqi War 1941 and the withdrawal of British forces in 1958. The Gulf Wars of 1991 and 2003-2009. The total estimated cost of these military engagements in today's money is in excess of £20bn.

The UK's presence in Iraq has cost the lives of over 56,000 Commonwealth service men and women 80% of them non-European, primarily Indian Forces but also Singaporean Chinese, West Indies and West African casualties. This makes Iraq the 5th largest Commonwealth country by casualties, representing 3% of total casualties globally a fact few are aware of.

| Rank     | Country / Region          | Identified    | Unidentified | Memorials     | Total         |
|----------|---------------------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| <b>1</b> | <b>Iraq (Middle East)</b> | <b>12,816</b> | <b>9,376</b> | <b>41,091</b> | <b>63,283</b> |
| 2        | India (Asia)              | 10,995        | 521          | 51,150        | 62,666        |
| 3        | Tanzania (Africa)         | 3,271         | 87           | 51,655        | 55,013        |
| 4        | Egypt (ME / Africa)       | 24,651        | 1,335        | 27,803        | 53,789        |
| 5        | Turkey (ME / Europe)      | 9,487         | 13,461       | 27,161        | 50,109        |
| 6        | Myanmar (Asia)            | 10,945        | 1,107        | 26,902        | 38,954        |
| 7        | Singapore (Asia)          | 4,458         | 858          | 24,675        | 29,991        |
| 8        | Israel & Palestine (ME)   | 11,991        | 2,581        | 3,400         | 17,972        |
| 9        | Tunisia (Africa)          | 7,750         | 810          | 1,954         | 10,514        |
| 10       | Libya (Africa)            | 7,056         | 1,460        | 0             | 8,516         |

*Top 10 CWGC Countries by Casualties Middle East, Africa and Asia*

It is the largest country where the majority of the casualties are Indian Army and constitutes an estimated 40-60% of all under-commemorated casualties (where the name is known but there is no physical monument) and an unknown proportion of the un-commemorated (where no record of the name exists) as many Indian army casualties were not properly recorded if at all during WW1 and many records such as Amara Left Bank cemetery have been lost.





#### HISTORY INFORMATION

During the First World War, Basra was occupied by the 6th (Poona) Division in November 1914, from which date the town became the base of the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force.

Casualties of the Indian Forces were buried in this cemetery during the First World War but their numbers and names were never recorded; the plots of graves in this cemetery are therefore marked by two memorials of a general nature, one commemorating those of the Hindu and Sikh faiths and the other commemorating Indian servicemen of the Muslim faith.

| Cemetery                               | Unknown Burials                         |
|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Alwiya (Baghdad) Cemetery              | 450                                     |
| Amara Left Bank Indian Forces Cemetery | 4,991                                   |
| Baghdad Northgate Cemetery             | 2,729                                   |
| Tanooma Memorial (Basra)               | 227 (Singaporean Chinese)               |
| Basra Indian Forces Cemetery           | Unknown number of Indian Forces Burials |
| Mosul War Cemetery                     | 185                                     |

*Table of Sites in Iraq by total unknown burials, source: CWGC Iraq Roll of Honour*

It remains unclear if the names of these unknown burials are known and they are counted as part of the Basra Memorial or not. This question has been put to the CWGC.

Basra Memorial to the missing is the 3rd largest Commonwealth Memorial in the world, only Menin Gate and Thiepval are larger and the only one in the top 5 outside Europe.

| Memorial                             | Location               | Casualties    | Notes                                                             |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Thiepval Memorial to the Missing     | Somme, France          | 72,246        | Commemorates missing from the Somme 1915–1918.                    |
| Menin Gate (Ypres) Memorial          | Ypres, Belgium         | 54,896        | Commemorates missing of the Ypres Salient up to August 1917.      |
| <b>Basra Memorial to the Missing</b> | <b>Basra, Iraq</b>     | <b>40,640</b> | <b>Largest outside Europe; &gt;80% are Indian Army.</b>           |
| Arras Memorial to the Missing        | Arras, France          | 35,942        | Commemorates missing from the Arras sector, 1916–1918.            |
| Tyne Cot Memorial to the Missing     | Passchendaele, Belgium | 34,857        | Commemorates missing from Third Ypres and surrounding operations. |

*Top 5 CWGC Memorials by Number of Casualties Commemorated*





*Basra Memorial - November 8th 2025*

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) formally withdrew from Iraq in 1990. In the last 35 years two small cemeteries (Kut and Habbaniya) have been renovated and over 500 new grave stones installed in Baghdad Northgate representing less than 2% of all casualties, the majority of them European. To date nothing has been done to address the inequalities in commemoration.

3% of the 2023 budget at £80m would equate to £2.4m a year that should be spent in Iraq - more if the inequalities in commemoration are to be rectified. This would be over £70m over 35 years with less than 0.1% of that actually spent there during this period.

The last visit by CWGC personnel to Iraq was in 2018 during what was termed a “historic return” and consisted of a few days in Basra. Any contractors doing for the CWGC during this time have had no direct supervision and are required to only self report on their work.

The total number of “key points of commemoration” in Iraq claimed by the CWGC is 19. In practice however there are 13 actual sites and only 9 locations (Basra Indian and British Cemeteries are in the same location as are Amara British and Indian Forces).

There is no evidence of a grave at Karbala so the total locations is actually just 8 - all but Basra and Mosul are between a few minutes or a few hours drive from the UK Embassy in Baghdad. Over 70% of total casualties are commemorated at a single location, Basra Memorial, and over 95% commemorated in the top 4 locations.





|    | Site                          | Estimated Casualties | Known  | Unknown                | Primary Composition                                                                                                    |
|----|-------------------------------|----------------------|--------|------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | Basra Memorial to the Missing | 40,640               | 10,640 | 0                      | >80% Indian Army, only Indian Officers and European soldiers mentioned by name.                                        |
| 2  | Baghdad Northgate Cemetery    | 7,216                | 4,487  | 2,729                  | British (plus Indian and Polish) - Khanaqin Memorial 542 named)                                                        |
| 3  | Amara Indian Forces Cemetery  | 4,992                | 9      | 5,001                  | Indian Army                                                                                                            |
| 4  | Amara British Cemetery        | 4,629                | 3,704  | 925                    | British                                                                                                                |
| 5  | Basra War Cemetery            | 3,029                | 2,890  | 74                     | British. 63 additional names in the RAF plot and 2 in the civil plot. Tanooma Chinese memorial 227 unnamed casualties. |
| 6  | Khanaqin Cemetery             | 542                  | 542    | 0                      | Indian Army WW1 and Polish Army WW2                                                                                    |
| 7  | Alwiya Indian Forces Cemetery | 451                  | 1      | 450                    | Indian Army                                                                                                            |
| 8  | Kut War Cemetery              | 418                  | 410    | 8                      | British                                                                                                                |
| 9  | Ma'Asker Al Rashchid          | 300                  | 300    | 0                      | British                                                                                                                |
| 10 | Habbaniya RAF Cemetery        | 279                  | 173    | 0                      | Plus Iraqi Levy Memorial 106                                                                                           |
| 11 | Basra Indian Forces Cemetery  | Unknown              | 280    | Unknown (not recorded) | Indian Army (WW2 Cremation memorial 1,032 named casualties)                                                            |
| 12 | Mosul War Cemetery            | 337                  | 152    | 185                    | British and Indian                                                                                                     |
| 13 | Karbala Isolated Grave        | 1                    | 1      | 0                      | Indian Army (no evidence found that this exists)                                                                       |

Summary Table: CWGC Sites in Iraq





## SECTION 3 — Location Maps

### Map of CWGC sites in Iraq



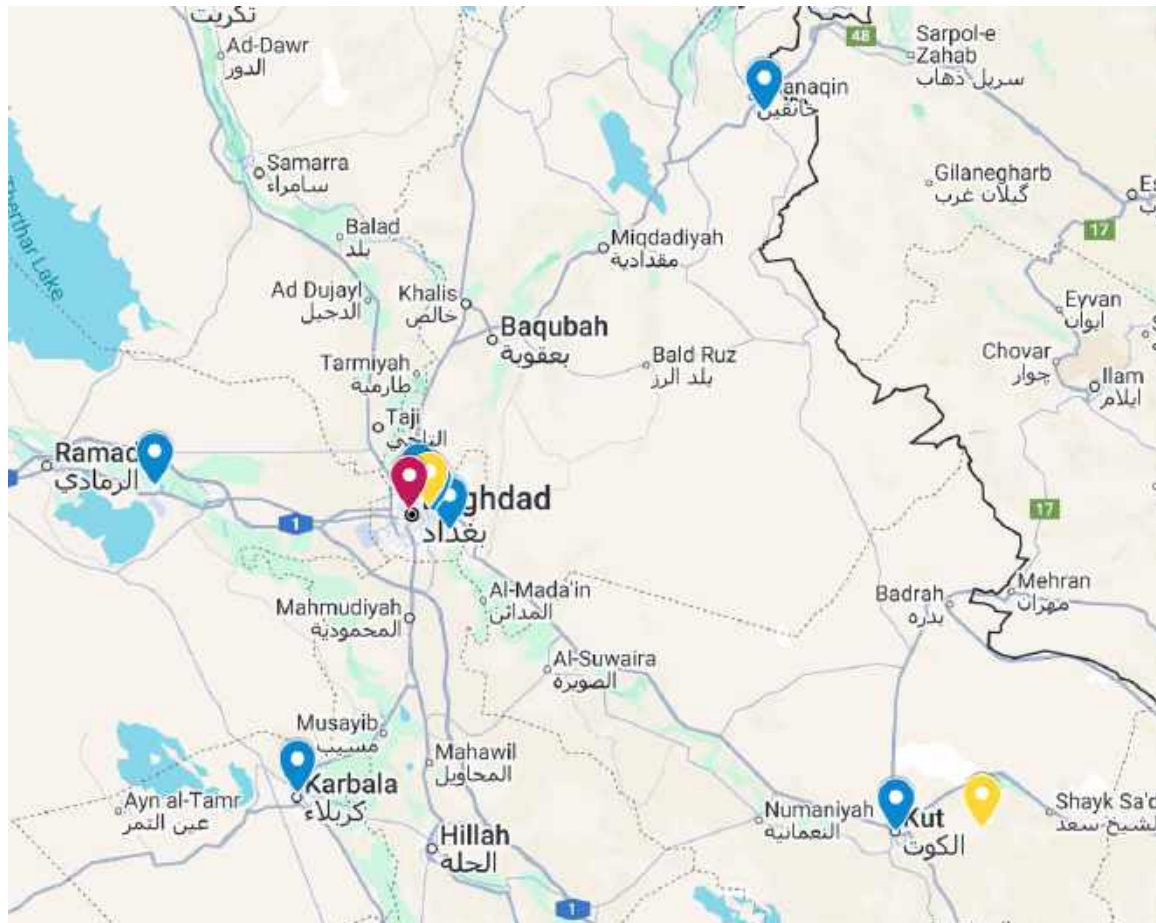
### Map of CWGC sites in Baghdad







## Map of CWGC sites around Baghdad (commutable in a day)



-  German Soldiers Cemetery
-  Ottoman Martyrs Cemetery
-  Ottoman Memorial Kut



## SECTION 4 — Site Reports

### Southern Section - Basra

#### Basra War Cemetery (British)

|                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Type                     | Cemetery                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Location                 | Makina district, Basra (~8 km NW of centre; ~540–550 km from Baghdad) a neighbourhood community in the suburbs of Basra close to the Shatt-al-Arab river.                                                                                                                                                          |
| Periods                  | WWI primary; some Inter-War; WWII additions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Burials / Commemorations | WWI 2,560 · WWII 364 · Civil/non-war 266 · RAF/civilian 71 · Ottoman POWs; 5 Soviet graves; 8 Russian refugees; 2 Dutch nationals. Total >3,190                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Notable Graves           | Major George Godfrey Massy Wheeler VC; Major Henry Molyneux Paget Howard; Sapper HJ Rampling RE (Grandfather of actress Charlotte Rampling)                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Key Takeaways            | <b>The contractor paid to do regular cleaning of the site is not carrying out this work effectively if at all. The site is not secure at night leading to its habitual criminal use and creating a danger to the local community. Removal of many gravestones and panels in 2003 by British Army are now lost.</b> |

Current condition (Nov 25): All WW1 grave markers were cleared in the 1930's and replaced with panels on the memorial wall.

By 2003 the cross of sacrifice, war stone and panels and many gravestones were intact and in place. In 2003 the British Army (19 Mech BDE HQ & 209 Sig Sqn) occupying Basra collected the remaining grave stones and panels and stored them near Saddam's former palace by the harbour (now the Basra Museum). When the War Stone was moved and the Cross of Sacrifice destroyed is unknown.





*Removal of Basra Memorial panels by British Army 2003*



*Memorial panels from Basra War Cemetery prior to removal by British Army*





British army removing gravestones from Basra War Cemetery and Basra Indian Forces cemetery where they were stored in the second gatehouse by the WW2 Cremation Memorial

The British Army team dismantled part of the fence to get access to the site for heavy forklift trucks after which the local community removed the rest. The CWGC paid for the fence to be replaced in 2018 but did not reposition the war stone or conduct any maintenance or renovation work.







The fate of these grave stones and panels is unknown. Why this work was undertaken is not clear and permission was apparently not sought from the CWGC.

The gatehouse is in reasonable physical shape but used as a urinal by passing motorists and smells exactly as expected.





| Main Gate 1952 - Current                                                           | Wall and Cross 1952 - Current                                                       |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|   |   |
|  |  |

The site is now bare earth with the memorial wall largely intact. The cross of sacrifice was present in 2003 but now only the base of the pedestal remains. The War Stone also in place in 2003 was pushed on its side and lies by the fence.



The subbases from both WW1 and WW2 graves are intact and clearly visible. The site is a waste ground, home to feral dogs and used for domestic dumping but also has been in regular and prolonged use as a recreation ground for local youths to play football.

Dog carcasses on the site and the general amount of accumulated waste and brush suggests that the regular cleaning and maintenance of the site that the local contractor is paid to perform is not happening at all or not done very thoroughly.



At night the site is used for illegal activities including drug and alcohol use, a woman's body was found recently in the corner of the site by the civil cemetery. The local residents reported that they are afraid to go into the site at night.

The RAF cemetery plot has been cleared of the vegetable garden that was present last year but there is still a large amount of over growth and rubble. Adjacent to that is the small civil cemetery which still has graves and grave fragments in place.





| RAF Cemetery                                                                      | Civil Cemetery                                                                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |  |

The central wall has deteriorated since last July 2024 with more bricks along the base missing. In general there is overgrowth and building rubble accumulated in areas especially the boundary fence to the North East side all along to what was the Chowkidars house. Some accumulation of rubble and domestic tipping along the front fence line.

The is used as a recreation ground for local boys for decades playing football and volleyball. This is a well organised and systematic use with the younger boys using the ground to the right of the wall and the older boys to the left on what is Plot 1 and 3. Games start at 4pm and end around 6pm.

The relationship between the CWGC contractor and the boys who play football there is highly antagonistic. They report the contractor workers frequently destroying their goal posts and removing their improvised seating. On speaking with Mr. Ali the owner of the firm he characterised them as being “stupid, Shia and ISIS sympathises”. In retribution they break anything the contractor puts up including the gates at the gate house as these presumably were meant to prevent them entering. There are a number of spots where the fence has had holes cut in as well. This is an unproductive and unsustainable relationship.

I found the boys to be very friendly, pleasant and very interested in the cemetery - they had only the slightest idea what it was i.e. “an English cemetery” . I showed them the cemetery map, pictures from the 1950's and explained the significance of the site and the different parts of it. They helped construct the grave for my grandfather and many attended the Remembrance Day ceremony. They could be a significant asset to the ongoing care and management of the cemetery but not if the CWGC contractor continues the war of attrition with them.







### Basra Indian Forces Cemetery & Cremation Memorial

|                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Type                     | Indian Army cemetery + multiple memorials                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Location                 | Makina district, opposite Basra War Cemetery                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Periods                  | WWI & WWII                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Burials / Commemorations | WWII 292 (12 unknowns) · Turkish POWs 75 · Non-war 25 · Basra Cremation Memorial: 1,032 Indian soldiers · additional Hindu/Sikh/Muslim memorials                                                                                |
| Notable                  | Many Indian other ranks unrecorded; actual WWI totals unknown                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Key Takeaways            | <b>Two buildings (gatehouses) on site at risk of structural failure due to lack of maintenance. Contractor not effectively maintaining the site if at all. Boundary fence removed and local dwellings situated on the site.</b> |

Current condition (Nov 2025): cleared at the same time as the adjacent Basra cemetery with no remaining grave stones.

The main Gatehouse has a vertical crack above the entrance that should be fixed before it leads to the potential collapse of the structure. Otherwise it is in what looks like it's in a reasonable state except for the smell of accumulated urine.





The site contains the standard Hindu/Sikh and Muslim memorials and they are complete and in relatively good condition. Most of the central part of the site is relatively clear just with domestic litter scattered across it and some minor brush growth.

Basra Indian Forces Cemetery circa.1952





Basra Indian Forces Cemetery November 2025





There is a significant amount of overgrowth and tons of building rubble at the back of the site where the WW2 Indian memorial is to a depth of 50-75 feet from the boundary. This represents years of growth and dumping of construction and domestic waste that should presumably have been managed by the contractor paid to do so. This area has not been cleared since at least 2022 as can be seen from satellite photos below.







The back boundary fence has been completely removed and local houses are now built into the cemetery itself. Given the long standing presence of these buildings the CWGC must seek to negotiate their removal and compensate the occupiers to prevent ill feeling in the community.





Houses encroaching into the site.



The WW2 Hindu Cremation Memorial is in remarkably good repair and represents probably the best preserved and most architecturally interesting memorial to WW2 Indian Army casualties in Iraq. It lies however in the most inaccessible corner of the cemetery with rubble, domestic rubbish and years of overgrowth.









## WW2 Cremation Memorial



The Gatehouse at the memorial seems structurally sound but requires renovation and maintenance.



Two fragments from panels of the WW2 cremation monument currently survive in the gatehouse by the WW2 Memorial and should be stored safely and preserved for eventual renovation.

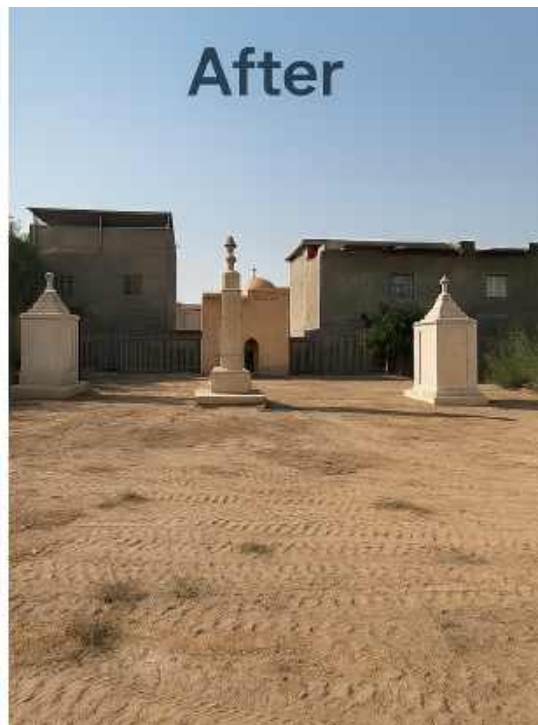
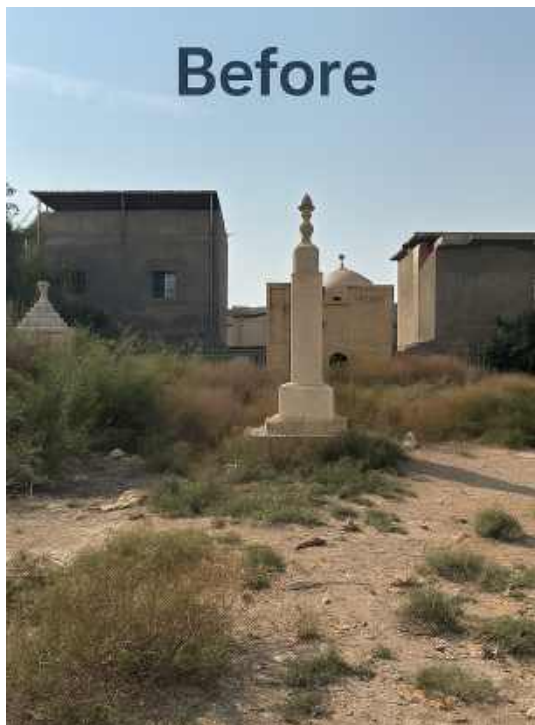




## Fragments of WW2 Memorial



Having met the contractor Mr. Ali on the evening of the 8th November and pointed out the state of the Indian side in particular a sudden flurry of activity started early on 9th November resulting in a significant clearing work to occur.





This sudden activity resulted in a dramatic uncovering of the hidden WW2 memorial for the first time in years. It demonstrates the degree to which contractors are not monitored independently or managed allowing sites that should be maintained to deteriorate even further. The current contractor has been in place for over 8 years. If 8 years of maintenance at the cost of almost USD\$300,000 (an enormous amount in Iraq to look after a small batch of bare earth) not including the cost of the 2013 reinstallation of the fence had been correctly carried out at this site it would look in a remarkably better condition than it does now.

---

#### Basra Memorial to the Missing

|                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Type                     | Memorial                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Location                 | Moved in 1997 from Maqil docks to Shaiba Road. Located in the desert surrounded by oil fields and quarry dumps.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Periods                  | 1914–31 Aug 1921 (incl. 1919–20 Iraqi Revolt)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Burials / Commemorations | Over 40,000 names; ≈33,000 Indian other ranks; officers named individually                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Notable                  | <p>5 VC recipients Lieutenant Commander Charles Henry Cowley VC, Lieutenant Humphrey Osbaldston Brooke Firman VC, Private James Henry Fynn VC, Private David Finlay VC, Captain George Stuart Henderson VC</p> <p>Lieutenant George Pinnock Merz (1891 – 30 July 1915) was one of Australia's first military aviators and the first Australian airman to be killed in action</p> <p>Sister Florence Narrelle Jessie Hobbes, an Australian nurse of the Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service - the only woman on the memorial.</p> |
| Key Takeaways            | <b>Access to the site is restricted by local security forces protecting the roadside pipelines.</b><br><b>Continuing decline of panels and building fabric through lack of maintenance or repair.</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

Current condition (Nov 2025): A 35 minute drive from Basra in an area used by oil and quarry companies. A protective concrete barrier was established in 2011. The building is in remarkable condition given it's had no maintenance in over 30 years in a very harsh climate.







Only about 6 of the 39 panels have delaminated from the walls completely or in part but more are clearly in process of coming off. The plaster on the ceilings is in a poor condition.

| Ceilings | Panel Delamination | Panels 60-69 |
|----------|--------------------|--------------|
|          |                    |              |

The panels were all photographed in 2024 by the Commonwealth War Graves Iraq project and made freely available online for the first time. ([link](#))







*Panel 46 Nov 2025 delamination*

The big change from last year is that the military now restricts traffic from stopping on the road as there are oil/water pipelines running adjacent to the site. We were detained by the armed soldiers for over 30 minutes who had a shack about 500 yards from the site but ultimately they let us go having been threatening us with arrest.

360 Video in 8K video was taken of the site and made available to the public enabling anyone to virtually visit the memorial themselves. This is the only publicly available video of the site.

Basra Memorial Fly By ([link](#))

Basra Memorial Walk through ([link](#))





### Basra Tanooma Chinese Memorial

|                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Type                     | Originally a cemetery; later a panel at Basra Cemetery                                                                                                                                                         |
| Location                 | Former Tanooma waterfront district, now built over                                                                                                                                                             |
| Periods                  | WWI                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Burials / Commemorations | 227 Chinese Labour Corps (unidentified)                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Key Takeaway             | <b>CWGC website incorrectly states that this memorial still exists at Basra Cemetery. These men are not mentioned on the digital roll of honor. Unclear if they are non-commemorated or undercommemorated.</b> |

Notes: 227 unidentified men of the Chinese Labour Corps. During the 1914–1918 War those men, attached to the Inland Water Transport of the Royal Engineers, were buried at Tanooma, a waterfront suburb of Basra.

No arrangements were made in regard to land tenure in respect of the burial place because, as early as 1929, it was reported that the site had been built over by the Basra Port authorities.

Current condition: whilst the CWGC states that a panel exists at the memorial wall at Basra Cemetery all panels were lost prior to 2003. This panel therefore no longer exists and the information provided on the CWGC website is at least 20+ years out of date and should be corrected.





## Central Section - Amara, Kut and Karbala

### Amara War Cemetery (British)

| Type                     | Cemetery                                                                                                                                                                        |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Location                 | Amarah on the Tigris (~305–344 km SE of Baghdad) with a large neighbouring fun fair surrounded by dumping grounds for construction rubble and small community neighbourhoods.   |
| Periods                  | WWI primary; small later additions                                                                                                                                              |
| Burials / Commemorations | WWI 4,621 (c.925 unidentified); later WWII/non-war small numbers; headstones lost → names on screen walls. Single plaque to an Operation Telic casualty (the only one in Iraq). |
| Notable Graves           | Cpl Sidney W. Ware VC; Lt Cdr E.C. Cookson VC DSO; Lt Col E.E.D. Henderson VC; Sir Victor Horsley (pioneering British neurosurgeon and pathologist)                             |
| Key Takeaways            | <b>Despite limited funding, training or support the local guardian shows what can be achieved in Iraq.</b>                                                                      |

Current condition: the cemetery is easily accessible through the guardians house on site. The cemetery is a beautiful green oasis with grass and palm trees. The panel wall is largely intact. The original entrance gatehouse has been demolished although parts of it are retained by the guardian near his house as are a few grave fragments and parts of the war stone.





Only the pedestal of the cross of sacrifice remains but remarkably the guardian has the original bronze sword - believed to be the only original one left in Iraq. Photos of all the panels were taken and posted on Facebook for public use. The boundary fence is intact for the most part and the guardian has installed irrigation, lighting and CCTV to protect the panels on the wall.

The guardians' family have looked after this site for over 65 years and its protection and maintenance is a remarkable achievement for the family especially as for many years they were unpaid and came at significant personal risk. They deserve better recognition for this service.



Amara British Cemetery is the best kept Commonwealth Cemetery in Iraq by a very long way and shows what can be achieved even with a limited budget and with little or no oversight when good guardians are in place who are invested in the site.







All panels were photographed and published on Facebook to make them available to the public ([link](#)).

It also contains the only known memorial to a casualty of the last Gulf War during Operation Telic. Lance Corporal James McCue was killed whilst writing a letter home by a tank shell from an abandoned tank that the coroner wrote may have been fired by children playing on the tank.







The original entrance and gatehouse have unfortunately been destroyed. This was reportedly done in 1998 reportedly on the orders of the CWGC country manager at the time a Mr. Khalid. It seems unlikely that he would have done this without the consent and funding of the CWGC and there must be a record of this in their archives as to why this would have been done. This would have been the standard gatehouse design as can be seen at Basra cemetery.

Site of the British Cemetery Gatehouse Destroyed on CWGC Orders in 1998





### Amara Indian Forces War Cemetery

|                          |                                                                                                                                                                       |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Type                     | Indian Army cemetery                                                                                                                                                  |
| Location                 | Adjacent to Amara British Cemetery                                                                                                                                    |
| Periods                  | WWI                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Burials / Commemorations | Estimated 5,000+ Indian burials; only 9 recorded as identified. Original records sent to Simla HQ in 1919 and lost/destroyed.                                         |
| Notes                    | One of the largest Indian Army burial sites in the world. Majority of casualties unrecorded and non-commemorated; European officers commemorated on the British side. |
| Key Takeaways            | <b>Site at extreme risk of total loss. 30% already lost to local fun fair. No boundary or signage. Only two pedestals of memorials remain.</b>                        |

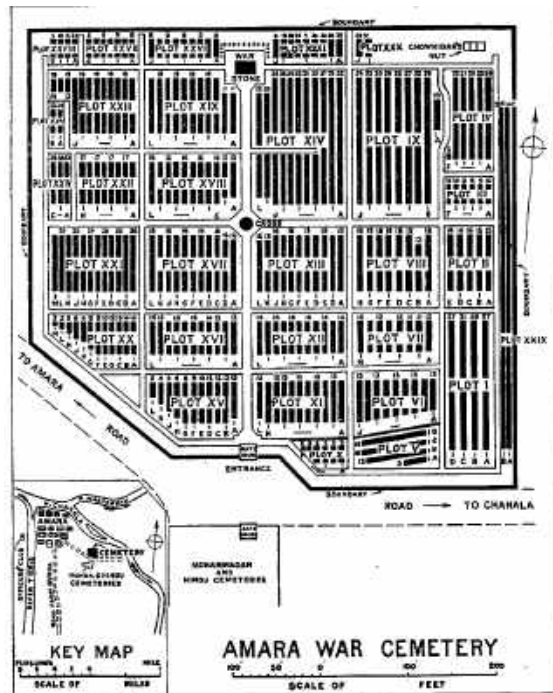
Believed to contain over 5,000 Indian Army burials, making it one of the largest Indian cemeteries in the world. Only nine of these burials are recorded as identified, all post-Armistice. CWGC notes that the original burial records were sent to Simla HQ in 1919 and have since been lost/destroyed, so there is no surviving complete nominal list.



The great majority of Indian casualties here are therefore not known by name, and they are not on any roll of honour, CWGC or otherwise, they are therefore considered Non-Commemorated under the CWGC definition. No work has been carried out to rectify this as far as is publicly known under the Non-Commemoration Project that is due to complete in 2026.

European Officers from the Indian Regiments that led these men are commemorated on the British side.

Current condition: In complete contrast to the British Cemetery the Indian Cemetery is a wasteland similar to Basra but without any physical boundary. Even the map of Amara Cemetery relegates the Indian side to a mere blank fragment to the side of the very detailed British side without even showing the two memorials that were once there - typically these were dedicated to Hindus and Sikhs and Muslims respectively.



The gatehouse and Memorials were present in 2004 but was destroyed apparently by militants in 2006 with some remnants saved by Mr. Hasan the guardian.





The Same View of the Location of the Gatehouse Today



Of the two memorials only the pedestals remain.



The original road is now a dirt track seemingly used to dump waste in the fields behind the cemetery.

The road between the gatehouses today - the two gatehouses would have been to the left (Indian) and right (British) in the photo below.





The site has been encroached on by the neighbouring fun fair. If the CWGC holds the title to this land it seems reasonable that compensation could be sought for the loss of the land and used to renovate what remains of the site.

Encroachment on the Amara Indian Cemetery



Amara Indian Cemetery Plan



Amara Indian Cemetery 2004



Amara Indian Cemetery 2025







## British vs Indian Cemeteries at Amara across the fence



The historical inequalities committed in the past that led to the unequal commemoration of non-European casualties seems to have continued to the present day.

If urgent action is not made it is likely that Amara Indian Cemetery will be lost forever. CWGC must research and assert its land ownership immediately and secure the boundary before coming up with a longer term plan. The encroachment by the funfair could lead to compensation to fund the renovation and possibly longer term collaborative partnership to develop the site and honour the men commemorated and buried there for the long term.

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### Kut War Cemetery

| Type                     | Cemetery                                                                                                                                |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Location                 | Kut (~160–175 km SE of Baghdad) within the town Souk surrounded on three sides by buildings with an intact fence and gate.              |
| Periods                  | WWI (Siege of Kut)                                                                                                                      |
| Burials / Commemorations | ≈410 WWI burials; many died in captivity; 410 replacement headstones installed in 2014                                                  |
| Notable Graves           | L/Cpl Michael Rood, Dorsetshire Regiment – only Jewish grave at Kut                                                                     |
| Key Takeaways            | <b>Renovation done poorly with inappropriate materials and corners cut (such as the cross not being replaced). Lack of maintenance.</b> |





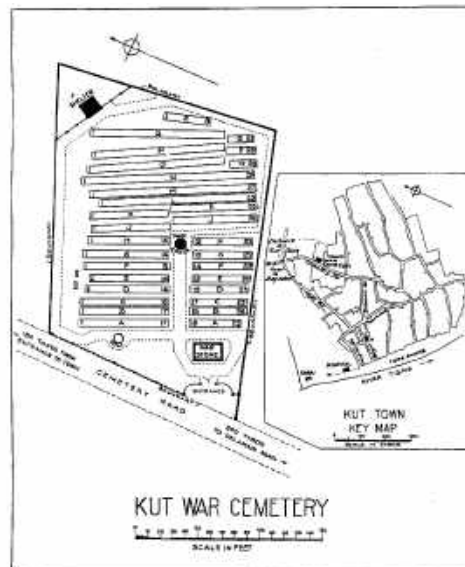
Current condition (Oct 2025): The cemetery is in relatively good order having been renovated in 2014 especially compared to the other cemeteries in the country. The guardian maintains some flower beds around the cross of sacrifice and the entrance and clearly take care of the site to the best of his ability and resources available to him. It was also good to see a Jewish grave stone present in perfect condition - a poignant counter point to the stereotypes referred to by CWGC in communication with me in the past that there is no point in renovating these sites as the locals would damage them regardless due to their apparent antipathy towards Commonwealth countries.



The renovation in 2012 was done to a poor standard and on the cheap. Rather than replace the cross of sacrifice the top half was merely bolted onto the bottom half and a cheap metal cross painted gloss black attached to it. This would be unacceptable in a cemetery in the UK or Europe or indeed anywhere else so why would it be acceptable here especially given the cemetery was renovated.



In addition the War Stone that was shown in the original cemetery map has not been replaced.

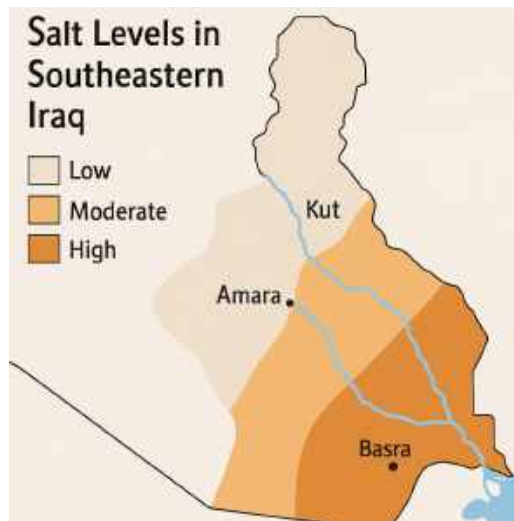


Many of the bases of the replacement gravestones are crumbling which look at first analysis as if poor quality or unsuitable cement was used.



The CWGC claims this is due to salt in the soil which is certainly true however:

1. Kut is in a low salt region



2. The issue with salt degrading concrete is not new and has been known since the 1930's when the IWGC removed all WW1 grave markers from Basra and Amara and replaced them with panels. However there are well established methods to make concrete resist salty soil: use sulfate-resistant cement (Type V/SRPC) with a low water–cement ratio (0.40–0.45), increase density with pozzolans like fly







- ash or slag, ensure proper curing, and avoid or protect steel reinforcement because chlorides accelerate corrosion; combine this with good drainage, optional waterproofing admixtures or surface sealers, and a gravel base to keep it out of saturated saline contact, which together greatly slow chloride and sulfate attack and extend service life for decades vs standard concrete service life of 5-7 years as at Kut. However this takes time and money and if no one is enforcing quality control on the contractor there is nothing to stop them cutting corners and maximizing their profits - after all the results of their bodge won't be visible until years after they have been paid.
3. The same issue of new concrete bases has been seen with the replacement grave stones at Northgate where there is no salt.
  4. Salty soil has not stopped massive construction in Basra, Amara and Kut including a world class Football stadium in Basra:

It therefore seems unlikely that it would be an impediment to some simple grave stones. In fact there are several examples from the civilian cemetery in Basra that show that concrete is capable of weathering the soil conditions long term.



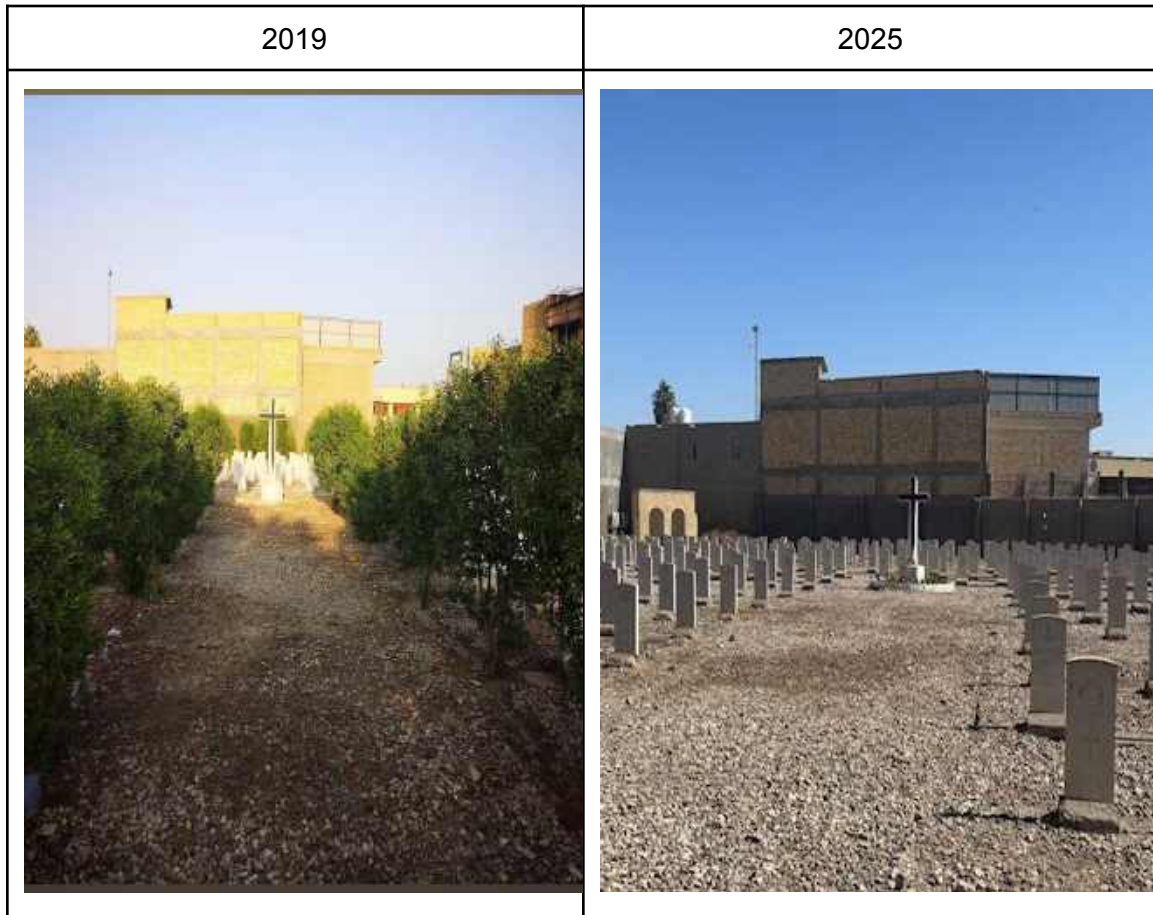
The cemetery has not been professionally maintained since the renovation as evidenced by the condition of the CWGC signage:







The shrubs that were planted during the renovation and are shown in relative health in historical photos are now all dead.



Maintaining the cemetery to any acceptable standard is far beyond the resources and ability of the local key holder so no criticism is meant towards him at all. Mr. Mohamed has been incredibly helpful both on site and since in providing images of relatives graves who are unable to visit themselves. He also maintains flower beds around the cross and at the entrance.

---





### Karbala Isolated Grave

|              |                                                                                                                                           |
|--------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Type         | Isolated grave                                                                                                                            |
| Location     | Karbala (central Iraq)                                                                                                                    |
| Periods      | Second World War era (1943)                                                                                                               |
| Individual   | Major Saiyid Wasiul Hasan Askari, Indian Army Medical Corps; death recorded 21 October 1943                                               |
| Key Takeaway | <b>No evidence of this grave was found. CWGC needs to update its website and research into whether this site actually existed or not.</b> |

The CWGC maintains that Major Askari was buried in the courtyard around the tomb of the Prophet Hussein who died at Kirmanshah in 1943.

The significance of this site cannot be overstated.

Hussein, son of Ali and grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, was the third Imam in Shia Islam, a totemic figure who fought and sacrificed his life at the Battle of Karbala in 680 AD. Here, together with a small army of 72 followers, he engaged in an unequal struggle with the greater forces of the Sunni Caliph Yazid for the future leadership of Islam. He and his retinue were killed in the but attained a glorious martyrdom.

Every year the Arbaeen pilgrimage to Karbala, the largest annual gatherings in the world, drawing tens of millions of pilgrims from across the world who walk—often for weeks, to the shrine of Imam Hussein. Arbaeen (40 in Arabic) marks 40 days after Ashura, the anniversary of Hussein's death at the Battle of Karbala in 680 C. The pilgrimage is renowned not only for its scale but for its spirit of service and solidarity: volunteers line the routes offering free food, water, medical care, and shelter to all participants, creating a vast, communal act of devotion and remembrance.

Current condition (Oct 2025): Field visit found no evidence of the Major's grave.

The shrine was cleared of a lot of old buildings including a mosque and graves in 1979 and 1987 to make the site more accessible and modernize it.

It was also damaged in later conflicts:

1991 Uprising (March 1991): Following the Gulf War, Shia Muslims rebelled against Saddam's regime. The Iraqi Republican Guard brutally suppressed this uprising in Karbala, leveling parts of the city and killing many civilians.

2003 U.S. Invasion (March 2003): American forces, specifically the 11th Regiment of the 3rd Infantry Division, fought fierce street battles against Saddam's Fedayeen and





Republican Guard units to secure the city, bypassing it initially before clearing it in two days of fighting.

Burying a mere Major at this site would be the equivalent for a Catholic of a burial at St Peter's Basilica in the Vatican. He would be in the grand company of the highest ranking Sheiks, Kings, Princes and Generals.

The shrine was rebuilt after 2003. Inquiries were made with the historian of the Shrine and no evidence was found of the burial. CWGC needs to update its website and conduct more research of its own files to find definitive proof this grave once existed there if at all.





## Baghdad Section - Alwiya, Northgate. Ma'Asker and Habbaniya

### Alwiya Indian Forces Cemetery

|                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Type                     | Principal Indian Forces Cemetery in Baghdad                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Location                 | 10 minutes drive from the UK Embassy.                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Periods                  | First World War.                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Burials / Commemorations | 451 WW1 with two memorial columns                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Notable Graves           | Only 1 grave is of a known casualty<br>RIFLEMAN KHARAKBIR THAPA 4th<br>Gurkha Rifles 2nd Bn.                                                                                                                         |
| Key Takeaways            | <b>Site not secure, used as a parking lot for heavy machinery. The easiest site to be renovated appropriately requires some small works to the boundary, horticultural maintenance and more informative signage.</b> |

**Notes:** Many Indian other ranks unnamed, total casualties unknown. This was the primary burial ground for Indian Forces in Baghdad in WW1. The site is a 10 minute drive from the British Embassy. The closest Commonwealth War cemetery site to it.

Current condition (Oct 2025): The closest cemetery to the British Embassy. The gate is broken and the site freely accessible. There is a lot of overgrowth of vegetation and it's been used as a parking lot for heavy machinery. The two memorials remain in good condition.









Standard Indian Forces memorials.

| Hindu Sikh Memorial                                                                | Muslim Memorial                                                                     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |  |

#### Baghdad Northgate Cemetery

|                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Type                     | Principal Commonwealth cemetery in Baghdad                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Location                 | Near the former North Gate of old Baghdad it's an area crisscrossed by large busy roads by the Sarafiya Bridge across the Tigris. Lots of colleges and educational buildings, commerce and neighbourhood communities being slowly replaced by commercial buildings. |
| Periods                  | First World War; inter-war; Second World War                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Burials / Commemorations | ≈4,480 First World War burials; ≈220 Second World War burials; small number of non-war burials.                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Notable Graves           | Lt-Gen Sir F.S. Maude; Lt-Col G.E. Leachman; Capt A.C. Pearson; Flt Lt Edmund Roger Tempest MC DFC.                                                                                                                                                                 |





|                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Key Takeaways</b> | <b>Most visible, accessible and largest of the CWGC sites. The cemetery map is inaccurate and incomplete, totally ignoring the Indian part and the memorials. Gatehouse deteriorating but otherwise looks structurally sound. Thousands of missing, broken or fallen gravestones.</b> |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

**Notes:** Principal Commonwealth cemetery in Iraq's capital in the center of town and a short drive from the British Embassy. The site of an annual Remembrance Day service organised by the British Embassy but not publicised outside other Embassy circles it appears.



Includes a small number of non-war burials (civilians and dependents). Features Turkish Memorial, Muslim ("Mohammedan") Memorial, Hindu Memorial, Maude Tomb, Baghdad (North Gate) (Khanaqin) Memorial (104 Commonwealth + ~440 Polish servicemen), 13th (Western) Division memorial, and 6th Battalion Loyal (North Lancashire) Regiment memorial.

Current condition (Nov 2025): 511 headstones were replaced in 2012 however these were not installed well and are already deteriorating:





There are many thousands of other graves with damaged and missing headstones and memorials are in a poor state of repair.



The Map of the cemetery on the CWGC site is strangely focussed on the two WW2 plots with the WW1 and Indian Cemetery areas given little or no detail.

Many of the memorials are completely missing from the map. Many of the grave coordinates on the CWGC site do not reflect the reality on the ground.

There are a long row of grave markers at the boundary opposite the gatehouse that are not on the cemetery map at all and no mention is made of them on the CWGC website for Northgate.

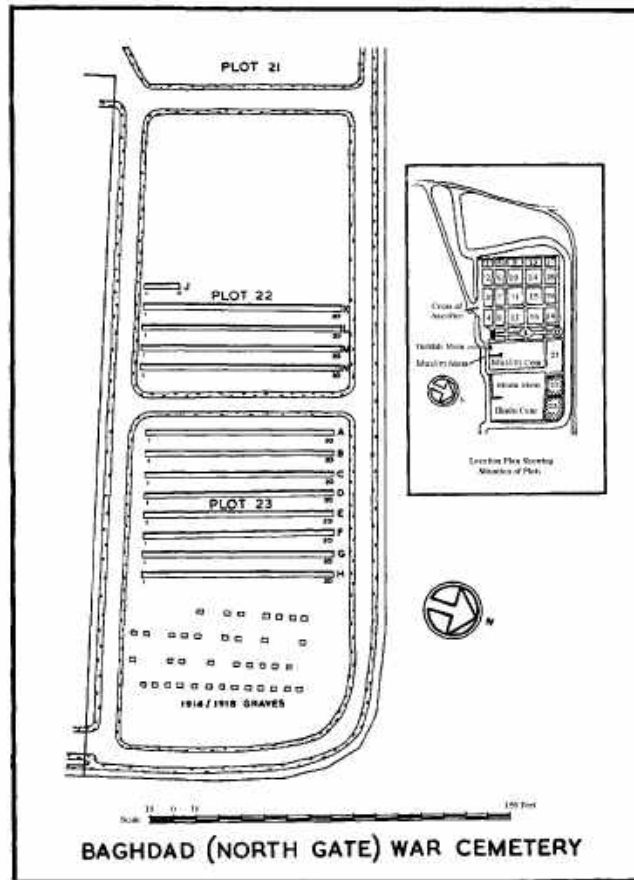
They are all very close together and each is identified as being buried at one of the POW camps in Turkey at Angora (today Ankara), Nisibin (Nusaybin) (then in the Vilayet of Diyarbekir), Mersina (Mersin), Bozanti (Bosantii/Pozantı) and Islahie Cemeteries.











The Indian/Muslim area of the site is bare earth. The perimeter fence is in poor repair and the gate house derelict. There is a large build up of earth, rubble and dead brushwood in the right hand corner facing the gatehouse where there is a building that is not shown on the map at all.



General Maude's tomb is in excellent condition as are most of the memorials.





The memorial to the 15th Division however is in a very poor condition indeed and the cross of sacrifice is missing both its cross and the sword.



Many of the few remaining trees are in poor condition and there has been no visible effort to maintain the cemetery in any sort of systematic way.











### Ma'Asker Al Rashid RAF Cemetery (formerly called Rinaidi RAF Cemetery)

|                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Type                     | Cemetery (RAF, Army, Indian Forces, families)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Location                 | Rasheed / Hinaidi barracks area, south-east outskirts of Baghdad. Right next to the busy Muasker Al Rashid Road situated by a large domestic rubbish tip. The area is undergoing rapid development with a major medical center being built opposite.                                                |
| Periods                  | Late First World War; inter-war; Second World War                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Burials / Commemorations | 300 burials; First World War hospital deaths; inter-war RAF personnel and families; Second World War RAF, Army and Indian Forces.                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Notable Graves           | Brigadier-General Sir Gilbert Falkingham Clayton; Phoebe Marks; Leonard Marks; other RAF and Army personnel.                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Key Takeaways            | <b>Unclear what the CWGC role is here, CWGC website states zero burials. Boundary wall implemented by MOD in 2021 but poorly built. Plans were made to clear the site of gravestones like Mosul but also like Mosul no plans to replace them. What the point of doing this is not at all clear.</b> |

Notes: RAF Hinaidi (also referred to as Hinaidi Cantonment / Ma'Asker Al Raschid) was formally handed over by the Royal Air Force to the Iraqi government in January 1938, with the RAF's final evacuation having taken place on 21 December 1937. The site was not managed by the CWGC and lay abandoned until 2021 when Steve Buster Johnson a British man living in Australia and who had conducted years of research on the site contacted the then Defense Attache Brig. Adam McRae and made him aware of the site. Brig. McRae arranged for a wall to be constructed and gate installed. Access is via the local gatekeeper. The site is less than 6 miles from the British Embassy.

Notable graves: Brigadier-General Sir Gilbert Falkingham Clayton, KCMG, KBE, CB High Commissioner (the base of his grave is the only grave in its original place), Phoebe Marks, born on the 6th November 1928 the daughter of a civilian electrician Leonard Marks and his wife Marie. Phoebe died at only eight months old on the 17th July 1929. Sadly her father was subsequently shot by a local employee and died 12th September 1934 and was buried 20 yards from his daughter. Her grave is the only one intact.





Funeral of Brigadier-General Sir Gilbert Falkingham Clayton, KCMG, KBE, CB High Commissioner 1928 (photos Steve Buster Johnson) attended by thousands and his death reported in the New York Times.

*The New York Times*

***BRIG. GEN. CLAYTON DEAD AT  
BAGDAD; Sir Gilbert, High  
Commissioner for Iraq, Stricken After  
a Game of Polo. HAD  
DISTINGUISHED CAREER He  
Helped to Organize Arab Uprising  
Against the Turks--Allenby Praises  
Him as Most Able.***





His grave today



It seems even if honourable service to your country is insufficient to secure commemoration for your sacrifice, fame, rank and influence don't matter either. Current condition (Oct 2025): The site and its history is already very well documented on Steve Buster Johnson's website (<https://www.stevebusterjohnson.com/hinaidi-raf-cemetery>) and there is little change from the last work done on the site to add a wall in 2021. However given the wall was only built 4 years ago the poor quality of the construction is clear and is already in danger of falling down in places - notably the right hand corner facing the gate and the sign has been vandalised.



There are many graves remaining relatively intact although not in their original position and not upright and many more fragments.





Sergeant William Stanley Woods RAF Iraq Grave Fragments



Sergeant William Stanley Woods RAF Iraq Grave Fragments



|                       |                      |                          |
|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Major H.C. Pulley OBE | Lance Corporate John | Phoebe Marks 6 Years Old |
|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|







|                                                                                   |                                                                                    |                                                                                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                   | Herbert Hedley                                                                     |                                                                                     |
|  |  |  |

The guardian lives nearby and is a likeable and most helpful gentleman who appeared very quickly once we arrived on site.

---





### Habbaniya RAF Cemetery

|                          |                                                                                                                                                                            |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Type                     | Cemetery + Memorial (RAF Iraqi Levies)                                                                                                                                     |
| Location                 | Former RAF Habbaniya (~85 km W of Baghdad, near Fallujah/Ramadi) inside the former air station perimeter now an Iraqi military base.                                       |
| Periods                  | Inter-War; Second World War; post-war                                                                                                                                      |
| Burials / Commemorations | 290 burials: 173 Second World War; 117 inter-/post-war; includes commemorations for those with no known grave. 102 men of the RAF Iraqi Levies commemorated on a memorial. |
| Notable Graves           | Three Australian airmen from 1941 operations.                                                                                                                              |

Notes: Renovated in 2019.

Current Condition (Oct 2025): the cemetery is in reasonable condition if a little unkempt given the renovation was only 6 years ago but has had no maintenance since. The site's biggest issue is that it is virtually impossible to access as it is on an active military base. I only managed to get access as my guide had senior contacts in the army. It was a curious choice by the CWGC to renovate a site that is inaccessible to the public.

Three Australian Airmen buried at Habbaniya







## Central Section - Mosul and Khanaqin

### Mosul War Cemetery

|                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Type                     | Cemetery                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Location                 | Mosul (~350–400 km N of Baghdad) bordered by a major new highway and surrounded by small workshops and truck garages.                                                                                                               |
| Periods                  | Late WWI; interwar and WWII                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Burials / Commemorations | WWI ≈191 · WWII ≈145 (Australia, Canada, India, UK) · some non-war. Many Indian other ranks unrecorded by name. Includes RAF and Army WWII personnel.                                                                               |
| Notable Graves           | George Evelyn Arthur Cheyne Monck-Mason (c.1886–4 April 1939), British Consul at Mosul, killed during anti-British rioting; Sergeant Watkins Hugh Price, South Wales Borderers, the only surviving grave fragment.                  |
| Key Takeaways            | <b>Clearing work commissioned by the CWGC using a local oil and gas service company (with no experience of archaeological or sensitive sites) in 2021 has effectively destroyed the site with soil removed to 2 feet in places.</b> |

Current condition (Oct 2025): In 2023 the CWGC instructed their local contractor Naqaa Al-Tabiaa Company “NT Company” based in Erbil to construct a wall around the site and install a gate as well as “remove debris”. NT Company is an unusual choice to work on a cemetery given its core business is working for oil and gas companies with explosive protection systems - how and why this qualified them to work on a site of this sensitivity remains an open question for the CWGC.

NT Company is a regional leader in safety and environmental protection solutions, headquartered in Erbil, Iraq. As the exclusive distributor of eXess® – Explosion Elimination System in Iraq and the whole middle east, our mission is to provide advanced technologies that protect human lives, assets, and the environment. With a firm commitment to quality, innovation, and sustainability, NT Company is at the forefront of introducing world-class safety technologies to industries such as oil & gas, transportation, warehousing, and manufacturing



On arrival the gate was locked and the formidable 10ft walls prevented easy access. A key holder at NT Company Mr Abdulkhalik Darwish was called and he refused access without the permission of the British Embassy. This ironically was the only site that we were refused entry to.

As we were only in Mosul for a short period and getting responses from the British Embassy had typically taken some time as well as being in my opinion unnecessary a ladder was bought and the walls were scaled and access made regardless.



The “debris removal” by NT Company has left Mosul cemetery in a shocking condition - tantamount to the desecration of the site and criminal damage. I do not blame the company, the CWGC were not on site to manage them (having not visited Iraq since 2018) and they were doing what they do on any industrial site requiring clearing - they brought in a bulldozer and dug down deep enough so that nothing was left. This meant digging down 2-3 feet below grade in some places and exposing the pedestal of the cross of sacrifice to below the foundation.



The debris removal involved a bulldozer whose marks are still visible. The site was leveled to several feet below grade removing all grave markers and sub bases something not even done at Basra where the subbases remain and only the graves markers themselves removed. This makes any eventual renovation of the cemetery far harder as the individual graves will need to be identified using ground penetrating radar.







| Believed to be Bulldozer Scars 2 Years After the Work                             | Soil Removed to Below the Foundation of the Cross of Sacrifice                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |  |

| Ground Level 1987                                                                   | Ground Level 2025                                                                    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |  |

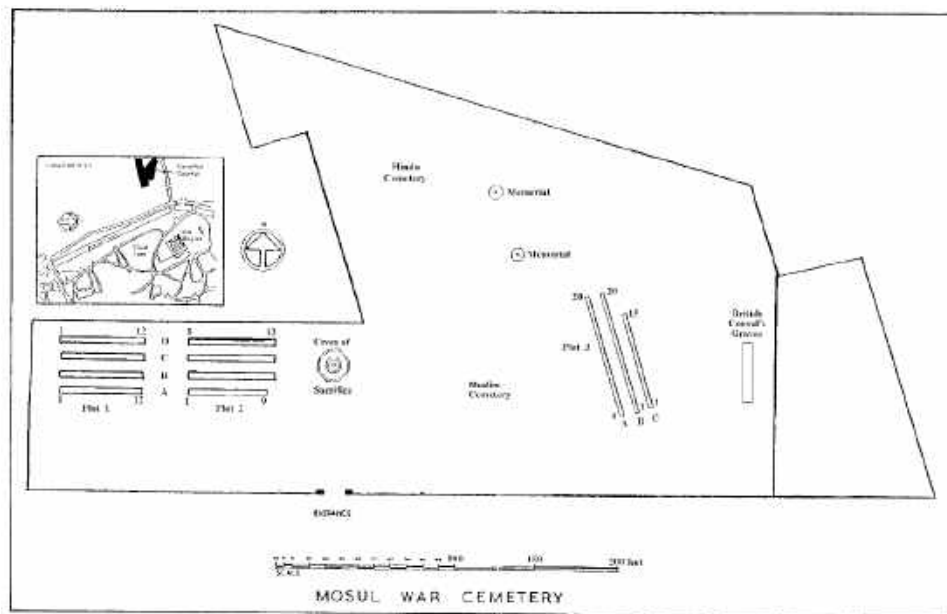
Using the approximate scale reference of the 6ft person in the picture below, the ground has been excavated to approximately 1.5-2 feet below the original level exposing beneath the level of the foundation of the Cross of Sacrifice pedestal, an extraordinary amount of material to be removed.







If this was not bad enough a large plastic work hut containing a handful of spades and rakes has been installed over WW2 graves at Plot 1. As can be seen from the cemetery plan there is plenty of space without graves that could have been used for this, demonstrating the lack of sensitivity and oversight of the contractor.





Whilst great effort was made to remove so much of the soil no effort was made to rehabilitate the site in any way with the memorials to the muslim, Sikh and Hindu casualties left lying in pieces in the dirt, some resources could one assumes have been directed to rebuild these to provide at least some degree of recognition of the site as a cemetery and the men buried or commemorated there.





Only one sole fragment of grave remains. Sergeant Watkins body lies under the tool shed.

|  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |  |
|--|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
|  | <p><b>WATKIN HUGH PRICE</b></p> <p>Serjeant<br/><b>Service Number:</b><br/>3908229</p> <p>Unit, Regiment,<br/>Country of Service<br/><b>1st Bn.</b><br/>South Wales Borderers<br/>United Kingdom</p> <p><b>MOSUL WAR CEMETERY</b><br/>1. C. 10.<br/>Iraq</p> |  |
|--|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|

The contractor also left “debris” unrelated to the cemetery they were paid to remove behind with several large pieces of concrete left in a pile and the bases of some concrete buildings also left in place.





| Remains of Buildings Not on Cemetery Plan Left Behind                              | Large Concrete Blocks Left on Site                                                  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |  |

The site has not been maintained and is gradually filling up with dead animals and detritus blown in.





### Khanaqin War Cemetery

|                          |                                                                                                                         |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Type                     | Commonwealth & Polish cemetery with Arab Legion burials                                                                 |
| Location                 | Khanaqin (160–180 km NE of Baghdad; near Iran frontier) situated in the desert a few miles from the town.               |
| Periods                  | Second World War (esp. 1942–43); WWI Indian Army burials                                                                |
| Burials / Commemorations | WWI: 102 Indian burials. WWII: 3 Arab Legion and 437 Polish Army burials.                                               |
| Key Takeaways            | <b>No boundary fence, signage. Remains of grave bases clearly visible. Central memorial remains but without plaque.</b> |

**Notes:** Deaths cluster mid-1942 to mid-1943. Between March and August 1942, about 114,000 people (including ~78,000 soldiers and ~37,000 civilians) were evacuated from the Soviet Union through Persia (Iran) into Iraq and Palestine. General Anders' headquarters was established near Khanaqin and Qizil-Ribat (both in eastern Iraq, near the Iranian border).

The Polish Army set up large camps in Khanaqin, Kirkuk, and Shaibah, where units were re-equipped, trained, and reorganised under British command as part of the British Middle East Command. Anders' headquarters was established near Khanaqin and Qizil-Ribat (both in eastern Iraq, near the Iranian border).

Current condition (Nov 2025): The CWGC abandoned the site in 1965 and erected a memorial in Northgate. The grave stones have been removed but the subbases and lines are clearly visible. The local museum has some grave stone fragments in the care of their collection. The memorial in the center of the cemetery stands with a fence around it although it has a gap. The inserts in the memorial are gone.







View from the hill above the cemetery



The remaining central monument - with panels removed



No map of the cemetery is on the CWGC site but the image below is believed to be of the Indian WW1 graves.



Remains of WW2 Polish graves.





### **A note on Ottoman and German Cemeteries and Memorials**

There are a German and two Ottoman military cemeteries from WW1 located near the Northgate Cemetery in Baghdad and another Ottoman one in Kut. In stark comparison to the Commonwealth cemeteries these are maintained by their respective nations' war cemetery organisations in excellent condition.

Ottoman Cemetery Baghdad



Ottoman cemetery Kut





## German Soldiers Cemetery Baghdad







## SECTION 5 — Inequalities in commemoration and the CWGC Non-Commemoration Project

With approximately 80% of all Commonwealth casualties in Iraq from the Indian Forces Iraq also represents between 40-60% of all under-represented casualties that the CWGC has committed in their Non-Commemoration Project to rectify by 2026 claiming on its website that *“Our five-year programme to address historical inequalities in commemoration after the World Wars is nearing completion”*.

However, without addressing the under-commemorated casualties in Iraq - mainly Indian forces but also Chinese and West African meeting this deadline is impossible.

The only known physical references to the West African deployment in Mesopotamia.



In 2016 in a BBC article Colin Kerr then publicity director for the CWGC commented on the inequality of commemoration of Indian Casualties on Basra Memorial that:

*“it is something the commission has now made it a priority to rectify. He says a total of 30,000 Indian soldiers are not named on the Basra memorial but, he says, the commission knows who they are and has launched a project to find ways to publicise them both in India and in Britain.”*

9 years later we are still waiting. Of Amara's and Alwiya's tens of thousands of unnamed dead nothing has been seen to have been said or done.







This is a scandal of the same proportions that the CWGC Non-Commemoration report found only these are not historical, they are still happening now.

FCO travel guidance for Iraq has been used by CWGC as an excuse for not fulfilling their obligations in Iraq. The same FCO advice in previous years for Israel has not prevented them working there nor appointing a Country Director - the only one in the Middle East/Africa region for a country with only an estimated 16,000 casualties - 70% fewer than Iraq the vast majority known and properly commemorated.



Whilst the CWGC has made much of its renovations in Habbaniya and Kut these represent less than 2% of total casualties and the majority of them of European descent doing nothing to address the inequalities in commemoration in Iraq.

The limited work done in Northgate and Ma'Asker in 2012 and 2021 were in marked contrast to Aliwiya Indian Forces cemetery which is the nearest

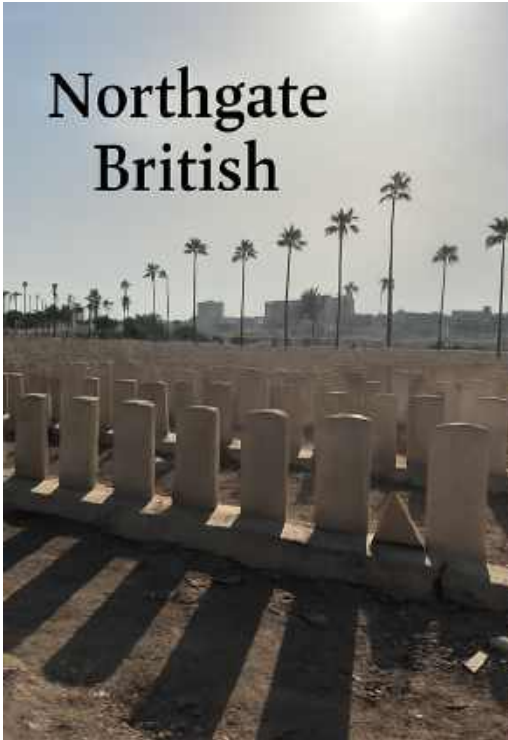
cemetery to the British Embassy (in red) and entirely ignored as per the map below.

Differences in how sites with both Indian and British casualties either adjacent or in the same site are just as stark.

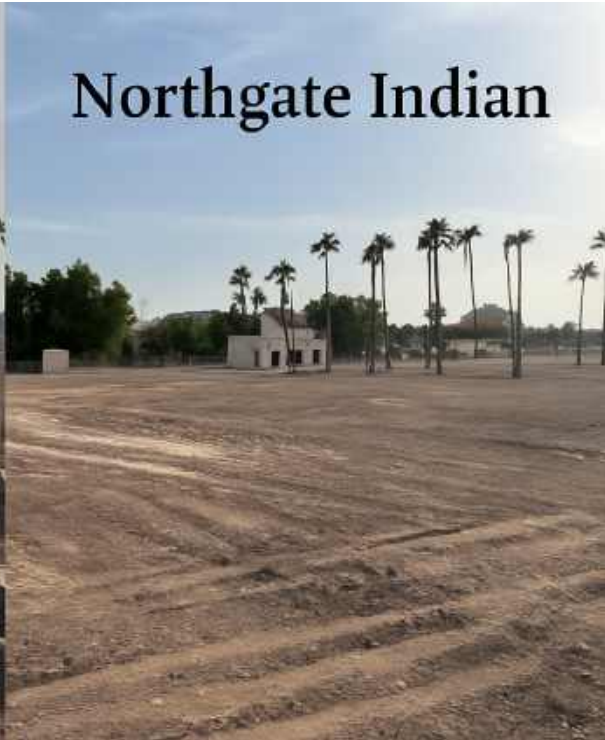




**Northgate  
British**



**Northgate Indian**



**Amara British**



**Amara Indian**





The CWGC Non-Commemoration Project has completely ignored the tens of thousands of unknown dead such as at Amara and the under-commemorated, including at Basra Memorial. Nevertheless they have claimed the project a success and due to end in 2026.

This is clearly premature. Given the scale of the issue in Iraq and the scale of the debt to Indian Forces in particular this would seem to demand a special project focussed solely on Iraq covering both research and site protection and development. This could be done in collaboration with the Indian Embassy and Indian Companies with employees in Iraq.

The cemeteries that have been prioritised to date for any sort of work (Kut, Habbaniya and Mosul) are the smallest cemeteries in the country and with a majority European casualties - Ma'Asker appears to be 100% European casualties in a country where over 80% of the casualties are non-European.

Renovating Alwiya - based in central Baghdad and 10-15 minutes drive from both the British and Indian cemeteries could simply involve managing the horticulture there and renovating the fence and gate plus some informational signage. It could become a valuable asset to the area, a peace park for those living and working there. A government ministry is located next door to it.

Basra Indian Forces Cemetery has all its monuments largely intact, clearing, minimal renovation of the buildings, signage and planting would make that into a beautiful park. There is no recreational use of the cemetery for sport - that happens next door in the larger British cemetery. This is also a natural site for a panel wall for those whose names are not on the Basra Memorial.

Amara Indian Forces cemetery - is currently in grave danger having lost its gatehouse, the fence and monuments and 30% of its area due to encroachment by the fun fair next door. It needs to be secured as fast as possible and a long term plan made in collaboration with the Mayor's office and local community. A huge effort would be required to identify the names now lost of those buried here. It may be impossible but something is better than nothing.





## SECTION 6 — CWGC Inaction in Iraq

### Evidence of Inaction

The CWGC formally withdrew from Iraq in 1990 the year Saddam invaded Kuwait however there is evidence of disengagement before this with the few publicly available images after the 1950's when all these sites appeared in good condition showing the sites in increasing levels of disrepair.



The last public visit by CWGC staff was in 2018 when a “historic return to Iraq” was announced, this involved a small team from CWGC visiting Basra for a few days.

This historic return was short lived and there has not been a single visit since despite thousands of international organizations visiting and working in Iraq from all over the world including major industries, archaeology and development.

Since 1990 only a small number of projects have taken place. These have been managed remotely by CWGC staff using both local contractors and international companies to conduct the work.

| Year    | Site                   | Activity                                                                    |
|---------|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1998    | Amara British Cemetery | Demolition of Amara gatehouse                                               |
| 2012    | Baghdad Northgate      | Replacing 511 gravestones                                                   |
| 2012-14 | Kut                    | Renovation                                                                  |
| 2018    | Basra                  | Fence erected at Basra Cemetery, cement bollards surrounding Basra Memorial |
| 2019    | Habbaniya              | Renovation                                                                  |
| 2021    | Ma'Asker RAF Cemetery  | Boundary wall constructed                                                   |
| 2012    | Mosul                  | Complete clearance of site up to 2 feet below grade. Storage hut on graves. |

Table 4: Timeline of CWGC Activity in Iraq





### **Lack of oversight and accountability**

The lack of knowledge and experience of Iraq within the CWGC is a major impediment to effective action.

The work that has been done in the last 35 years is, with the exception of Habbaniya, of poor quality and incomplete and without adequate follow up maintenance.

Some of the network of custodians and guardians are dedicated but lack the resources and support to undertake their role. It should also be noted several of the guardians and custodians of the sites say they have not been paid for past work, or at all.

Others working on behalf of the CWGC are less impressive. Contractors lack the experience and skills to work with sites of this sensitivity and age. They lack training, oversight and clear direction. The system of self-reporting is open to abuse and lacks accountability. Undirected and in appropriate work and employees who are not held to account for their actions wastes valuable resources and calls into question the lack of oversight of funds given, in good faith, to support the work of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission across the world.

### **Excuses for inaction in Iraq by CWGC**

In the 30 years my family has been enquiring with the CWGC about my grandfather's grave and Basra War Cemetery as well as other sites in Iraq the feedback has been remarkably consistent regarding their reasons for inaction:

1. Security
2. Funding
3. Inability to secure insurance
4. Risk of sites being damaged

### **Security**

The US State Department's Country Reports on Terrorism, UNAMI, Iraq Body Count show very few (2 in fact) isolated incidents of deliberate attacks on foreigners since the fall of ISIS at Mosul in 2018.

The recent elections in November passed without incident. European airlines have started flying into Baghdad and tourism is increasing.







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## 'This is where civilisation started - and the locals are very polite': For adventurous tourists who are unafraid of the occasional military roadblock, the hot new destination is IRAQ

- After years of bloody conflict, Iraq is enjoying a 'mini-boom' in tourism
- Most Western governments still issue travel warnings for all or parts of Iraq
- Last year, Iraq attracted 107k tourists including from Britain, France and the U.S

By AFP and LUCY LOVELL FOR MAILONLINE

PUBLISHED: 11:42 EST, 30 March 2022 | UPDATED: 11:46 EST, 30 March 2022

Hundreds of thousands of foreigners are working in Iraq and thousands of international organisations including those from the US and Europe. There is no rational reason why the CWGC is incapable of working effectively in Iraq.

### Funding

As previously noted with Iraq accounting for 3% of all Commonwealth casualties globally and an annual GBP20m budget a minimum of GBP2.4m should be spent on Iraq every year. This would be much more if the treatment of Indian Forces casualties were to be rectified under the Non-Commemoration project. Over the 25 years since CWGC has been absent this would be the equivalent of GBP60m that should have been spent but less than 1% of it has been.

The Commissioners and Executive leadership of the CWGC are not short of funds, they have chosen to prioritise other projects - the largest being in France with a new cemetery, the Loos British Cemetery Extension (1,200 capacity), complete renovation of Menin Gate and a Visitor Center and gift shop, just in the last 2-3 years. The choice was made to prioritise a visitor center over the proper commemoration of war casualties, a direct violation of their own mission.

Whilst expecting the decades of lack of funding to be made up quickly it is entirely reasonable that the GBP2.4m is spent annually - this goes a very long way in Iraq.

### FCO travel guidance and insurance

The FCO travel guidance for Iraq has been relatively constant with a two tier system:





- Some areas: “advise against all travel”
- Other areas: “advise against all but essential travel”

The CWGC is not a part of HM Government but an inter-governmental agency. It is not required to adhere to any FCO guidance.

It may have a policy not to do so but this is not applied uniformly. As an example Israel has had the same travel guidance as Iraq as recently as Dec 2024. This has not prevented CWGC maintaining an office and staff there despite the country being in almost constant state of war with surrounding counties and global humanitarian bodies including the United Nations Human Rights Council, the International Criminal Court and Amnesty International / Human Rights Watch accusing the government of war crimes with estimates of up to 170,000 casualties from recent years with a high proportion of civilians.

An inability to secure insurance given the FCO travel advice level in Iraq has been communicated by both CWGC and the MOD in response to questions on absence in Iraq.

FCO travel advisory for Iraq invalidates almost any standard personal or corporate insurance. However specialist insurance for Iraq is readily available for both personal and corporate travel.

If the CWGC is claiming that they can't travel to Iraq due to their current insurance policy excluding it, that might technically be true. However the statement that it cannot get insurance is patently untrue and their insurance broker could secure it readily.

### **Risk of sites being damaged**

It has been suggested by sources that know them and Iraq well that the CWGC will not conduct any proactive renovation of sites in Iraq until the threat of vandalism has reduced. It's not clear what criteria this might use.

In comparison the War Memorials Trust which monitors cases of vandalism, theft and anti-social behaviour against UK war memorials reported in 2023-24 there were 32 incidents of theft, vandalism and anti-social behaviour that they were aware of. The real number is likely orders of magnitude above this. So vandalism is something that is universal, not limited to Iraq.

If the suggestion is that there is an inherent risk in Iraq due to cultural or religious animosity to the UK and Commonwealth countries and non-Muslims this can easily be rejected with data and reflects more on the CWGC and potential implicit organisational bias rather than Iraqis.





1. The majority of the casualties are not Christian but Hindu, Muslim and Sikh
2. There are Christian churches in Basra (the Chaldean Archbishop of Basra attended the recent Remembrance service along with a Muslim cleric), Baghdad and many other cities.
3. There are many Christian cemeteries in Iraq including adjacent to the Indian Forces cemetery in Basra, the British Cemetery in Baghdad and the Armenian Christian cemetery in Mosul neighbouring the war cemetery - all featuring Christian symbolism and having existed for over 100 years

| Mosul                                                                              | The Immaculate Church Bakhda                                                        | British Cemetery Baghdad                                                             |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |  |  |

Ongoing renovations at the Christian cemetery by the German Soldiers Cemetery in Baghdad.



4. There is a Jewish grave marker in Kut - completely untouched and in perfect condition
5. There is no animosity to the US or UK or its citizens - quite the opposite. The most frequent question I received was how to study in the UK.

The Commonwealth sites have been abandoned for decades, a clear signal that the UK and Commonwealth countries don't care what happens to them. Why should we therefore be surprised if others treat them poorly. It's nothing compared to the damage the CWGC has done through inaction and the use of ill judged contractors poorly supervised.

Where damage has occurred in Basra for example where gates were removed from the gatehouses this was done as a direct retaliation against the heavy handed approach by the CWGC contractor seeking to prevent the use of the land for recreational sport.

These sites are terrible blights on their neighbourhoods. There is nothing the local communities would like more than for these to become an asset to their areas, creating jobs and investment.

Vandalism will certainly occur but if the communities are engaged this will help ensure the long term protection and care of these sites.





## SECTION 7 — Recommendations

Rectifying the under-commemoration of Commonwealth casualties in Iraq, particularly historic inequalities affecting Indian and other non-European forces, will require sustained commitment and investment over multiple years. Immediate corrective action and credible long-term planning are essential.

### Governance and Accountability (Immediate)

#### Formal acknowledgment and direction

- The CWGC Commissioners should formally acknowledge long term and systematic failures in Iraq (including the period between 1958 and 1990), including missed commitments under the Non-Commemoration Project.
- Commissioners should direct CWGC to produce a credible, costed 5-year Iraq Strategy with defined milestones and reporting.

#### Appoint in-country leadership

- Appoint a local Iraq Country Manager immediately (contract basis acceptable to accelerate hiring).
- Establish an Iraq Advisory Board comprising individuals with direct country experience (heritage, security, diplomacy, construction) to guide strategy and oversight.

#### Fix contractor oversight

- Cease reliance on inappropriate or unsupervised contractors.
- Separate delivery from quality control: no contractor should both execute work and self-audit.

#### Presence, Access, and Oversight (Immediate)

- Restore CWGC presence in Iraq, CWGC staff must resume regular site visits.
- Claims that insurance or security prevents visits are not credible; peer organisations (British Museum, universities, UNESCO, international companies) operate in Iraq routinely.

#### Implement independent site auditing

- Use embassies, expats, local contractors or organisations already operating in Iraq to conduct frequent independent site inspections. Simple outputs (photographs, short condition reports) are sufficient initially.

#### Leverage existing international footprints to collaborate with more than just the UK Embassy:

- Commonwealth embassies notably India given the majority of casualties are Indian Army and Australia which has been active locally with these sites especially in Northgate.
- Polish, German and Turkish embassies
- UNESCO and UNAMI







- Universities active in Iraq (e.g. Cambridge, Durham, Penn, Harvard, Radboud)
- British and Commonwealth companies with in-country staff (e.g. BP)

#### Guarantee access

- Put formal procedures in place with local authorities to ensure visitors, CWGC staff, auditors, and contractors can reliably access sites (e.g. Basra Memorial, Habbaniya, Mosul).

### Rapid Visible Improvements (0–12 months, low cost)

Addressing obvious neglect will immediately signal care, deter vandalism, and improve safety.

#### Basra

- Clean, repair, and “pee-proof” gatehouses and WW2 memorial buildings using established protocols.
- Replace damaged signage and augment with more informational signage.
- Install paving at entrances, basic lighting, security cameras, and minimal landscaping.
- Site safety: appoint a local community guardian (as at Kut, Ma’Asker and Amara), contract local police to do nighttime patrols to deter antisocial behaviour, install security lighting and cameras, replace gates and access routes through the fence but ensure there is an agreed closing time with the local community to not interrupt their recreational sport use of the site.
- Estimated cost: < £100,000, achievable within weeks by existing contractors.
- Kut
  - Replace faded and damaged signage.
  - Replace Cross of Sacrifice
- Alwiya
  - Contract local maintenance for weed control and security.
  - Replace barbed wire fencing with a more appropriate boundary treatment.

### People, Community, and Government Engagement

#### Compensation and recognition of local contributors

- Recognise and properly compensate local long term contributors including back pay where appropriate and retirement and succession planning
- Regularise and compensate unpaid or under-paid local custodians.
- Formally recognise exceptional service (e.g. Mr Hasan at Amara).
- Community partnerships
  - In Basra, work directly with local football teams using the cemetery: provide seating and shade. Sponsor teams and employ members as groundskeepers/guardians. Maintain open communication channels (Arabic-speaking contacts, WhatsApp).





- Local government liaison
  - Appoint named CWGC points of contact within municipal and provincial authorities.

### Critical Site Protection (Urgent)

#### Amara Left Bank Indian Cemetery

- Confirm CWGC land ownership.
- Erect boundary fencing and signage.
- Engage Amara Mayor's Office.
- Address encroachment by adjacent funfair (currently affecting ~30% of the site).

#### Khanaqin War Cemetery Cemetery

- Erect boundary fencing and signage.

### Medium-Term Actions (1–3 years)

#### Contractor reform

- Conduct formal performance audits of all contractors.
- Issue site-specific scopes of work with measurable outcomes.
- Appoint independent project managers for major works.
- Develop a network of local renovation, construction, horticultural, conservation architects and project managers - substantially lower cost than international security focussed firms (such as Pilgrims) and helps to develop community ties through investment and shared ownership in outcomes.
- Properly budget for ongoing maintenance and project based renovation work.

#### Update records and maps

- Update the inaccuracies and omissions on the CWGC website and social media channels
- Commission new, accurate cemetery maps reflecting current realities to correct missing structures, incorrect grave plots, panel numbering errors, and omitted names across sites including Basra, Northgate, and Amara.
- Complete a history of these sites since 1958 to present including the fate of the Basra panels and gravestones removed by the British Army in 2003.

#### Resolve encroachments

- Negotiate removal of illegal buildings from Basra Indian Forces Cemetery.
- Reinstall boundary fencing at the rear of Basra Indian Forces Cemetery.
- Negotiate a settlement with the Amara Fun Fair encroaching on Amara Indian Forces Cemetery (dependent if proof of ownership can be proved) and in cooperation with local government.





### Build Iraqi capacity

- Establish a training programme for Iraqi nationals in CWGC best practices (Egypt, France, UK).
- Create a sustainable local workforce and trusted companies for cemetery care, maintenance and restoration.
- Model this on successful programmes such as the British Museum's Iraq Scheme.

### Incremental Site Rehabilitation

- Deliver a rolling programme of small but visible improvements by site:
- Restore paths, walls, buildings and monuments.
- Re-install key CWGC architectural elements (War Stones, Crosses of Sacrifice).
- Introduce bilingual (Arabic/English) interpretive signage.
- Implement realistic horticultural plans using low-water plantings.

Cultural objections to CWGC monuments are overstated and unsupported by local precedent; damage or vandalism should be addressed as routine maintenance, as in the UK and elsewhere in the world.

### Long-Term Vision (5+ years)

Full European-style cemetery restoration is likely unrealistic given climate, cost, and resources. However, this is not necessary.

- Sites such as Basra and Amara have functioned as memorial parks since the 1930s.
- Developing them deliberately as memorial parks integrated into local community life is viable, respectful, and historically consistent.
- Low-cost memorial panels (stone or concrete rather than slate) can be reinstated at Basra and Basra Memorial with minimal technical complexity.

St. John's Wood Church Grounds (London) is a good model for this approach where an estimated 40,000 bodies are buried and is now a public park with children's swings and picnic tables but still very much a cemetery as well.





## Section 8 - A vision for the future of Iraq's Memorials and Cemeteries

### Basra Concept

Basra circa 1952 - a beautiful memorial park



Today - a waste ground with wild dogs and a magnet for nighttime criminal behaviour



Tomorrow - a Peace Park fittingly commemorating the men and women buried here and an asset for the entire community





Today - a deteriorating building used as a urinal by passing motorists



Tomorrow - a start on what could become a fitting memorial to those buried here and an asset to the community







### Community Engagement Concept - Basra War Cemetery

From antagonism with the local neighbourhoods to embracing them as partners in the community.





## Basra Indian Forces Peace Park and Memorial Wall Concept

Today - an unsightly mess dishonoring the men who died in service



Tomorrow - a Peace Park honouring the fallen and an asset to the community with memorial panels for those Indian soldiers not mentioned on the Basra Memorial





## Basra Memorial Concept

Today a crumbling desolate monument, barely known and rarely visited



Tomorrow - a monument on a par with Menin Gate







### **Alwiya Indian War Cemetery Concept**

Today - an unsightly mess in a rapidly developing area



Tomorrow - a Peace Park honouring the fallen and an asset to the community









## SECTION 8 — Remembrance Service at Basra War Cemetery

On November 9th 2025 the first Remembrance Day service was held at Basra Cemetery for over 35 years.

The event was attended by Archbishop Habib Al-Naufali and Sheikh Radhi Hamad in addition to Father Aram Bano who said a blessing for the dead and for peace.

Words were also said from Bhagavad Gita and Guru Granth Sahib to recognise Hindu and Sikh faiths.

The event was attended by members of the local community and recognised the dead of conflicts in Iraq since 1914 from all nations and faiths and the suffering of civilians.

Flags of India, Pakistan, Iraq, Turkey the UK were hung and poppy wreaths placed.



A portion of the poem for the Fallen by Laurence Binyon (1914) was read out in Arabic and English:

*They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old;  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning  
We will remember them.*

The worst trumpet player in Basra was secured to play his version of the last post.





The refreshment table was managed by members of the local football team that plays at the cemetery.



The event was [live streamed](#) on Facebook and featured on the official Basra Governorate [Instagram](#) page and received 7.9K likes to date.





basrat.na Following

basrat.na 2w

بعد 111 عاماً... حفيد جندي بريطاني يزور البصرة لإحياء ذكرى وفاة جده

في مشهد إنساني نادر شهده البصرة، زار رجل بريطاني يُدعى (بن) مقبرة الجنود الإنجليز والهنود التي يعود تاريخها إلى عام 1914، بحثاً عن قبر جده الذي قُتل خلال الحرب العالمية الأولى.

وبعد أن عثر عليه بين المقابر المنتشرة، قرر إقامة مراسم رمزية لتكريمه، مستعيناً باب كنسي ليتلو الصلوات، فيما شارك عدد من شباب المدينة بمساعدته.

لُطعت المرابيم وسط أجواء مؤثرة، لخللها لحظات جمعت وتوزيع الماء والتشاي والكعك والعصائر على الحضور — في حدث لم تشهد البصرة من قبل منذ أكثر من قرن.

إعداد وتصوير: [حسن علي]  
البصرة — 2025  
See translation

7.9K 988 November 10

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I also laid a gravestone for my grandfather Gunner Joseph Soppitt.





## SECTION 9 — Media Coverage and Links

The BBC coverage ([link](#))



Basra Governate Instagram Page Coverage ([link](#))

Fly By of Basra Memorial ([link](#))

Walkthrough of Basra Memorial ([link](#))

Alwiya Cemetery Walkthrough ([link](#))

Walkthrough of Amara ([link](#))

Walkthrough of Mosul War Cemetery ([link](#))

360 Photos of Kut War Cemetery ([link](#))

Walkthrough of Basra War Cemetery ([link](#))

Walkthrough of Basra Indian Forces Cemetery ([link](#))

Walkthrough of Northgate Cemetery ([link](#))

Walkthrough of Khanaqin War Cemetery ([link](#))

Commonwealth War Graves Iraq Facebook Page ([link](#))

