

part played by the British Armies in the Field in 1914 in laying the foundations. That it should be made is certainly the desire of men still in the Commission's service, or their immediate successors, who twenty-three years ago realised that the conditions of warfare in which the British Empire was involved demanded an attention to the dead less perfunctory and more systematic than could be paid by the existing army organisation, strained beyond the limits of its means and powers. It was fortunate that in those early days on the Western Front there was an Adjutant-General, Sir Nevil Macready, with breadth of vision and a deep understanding of human sentiment, who immediately lent a sympathetic ear to their proposals. He advised the Commander-in-Chief, Sir John French, to obtain War Office sanction for the creation of a Graves Registration organisation as an integral part of the Army in the Field.\*

The Directorate of Graves Registration and Enquiries, created in 1916, soon found that new responsibilities accrued as the scope of the work widened. British soldiers were dying in theatres of war more remote than France and Belgium, and men from all parts of His Majesty's Dominions were rallying to the defence of the Empire. On every field of battle, soldiers of the United Kingdom fell and were buried side by side with their comrades from Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Newfoundland, from

\* The work had at first been carried out, within the limitation of their powers, by the Joint War Committee of the British Red Cross Society and the Order of St John of Jerusalem. In September 1914, at the suggestion of Lord Kitchener, the Committee sent out a Mobile Unit to search for missing soldiers along the line of the retreat and advance between the Aisne and the Ourcq. During the first battle of Ypres, the Unit was attached to the French I Cavalry Corps, and later, behind Arras, to the French X Corps, and was engaged extensively in carrying French wounded from the battle-front to the hospitals. It was provided at its own request by the Red Cross Society with the means to mark and register British graves in whatever area they might be found. This Mobile Unit with its personnel was taken over and enlarged by the Army in October 1915.

India and from all the British Colonies. The powers of the Director were therefore extended, as a Director-General, to all the theatres of war and he was made directly responsible to the Adjutant-General to the Forces at the War Office, to which post General Macready had been promoted.\* One of the Director's first duties was to meet the demand of relatives—more insistent as the numbers of non-professional soldiers forming the New Armies increased—that provision should be made for the care of the graves after the War. It was immediately evident that any permanent body formed for this purpose should reflect the spirit of the free co-operation of the Dominions with the United Kingdom during the War and that its administration after the War should be civilian and above all responsible directly to all the partner Governments of the Empire. As a result, proposals based on these requirements were submitted to and approved by the Imperial War Conference of 1917 and the Imperial War Graves Commission came into being.†

\* He was succeeded later as Adjutant-General by Sir George Macdonogh, a no less staunch supporter of the Commission's work both then and since, and still one of the Commission's most active members.

† In January 1916, Dominion representatives had been appointed to a National Committee for the Care of Soldiers' Graves, of which the Prince of Wales was President. In March of the following year, His Royal Highness submitted to the Prime Minister a Memorandum incorporating the proposals of the Director-General of Graves Registration and Enquiries for the formation of a permanent Imperial organisation and asking that the matter might be considered by the Imperial Conference which was to meet that Spring in London under the Chairmanship of Mr Walter Long, Secretary of State for the Colonies. The Memorandum was accompanied by a draft Charter constituting an Imperial War Graves Commission, which should be empowered to care for and maintain the graves of those fallen in the War, to acquire land for the purpose of cemeteries and to erect permanent memorials in the cemeteries and elsewhere. The Memorandum and the Draft Charter (which had been drawn up by the Director-General with the assistance of Captain (later Sir John) Brooke and of the Legal Adviser to the Colonial Office and in consultation with Lord Derby, Lord Milner and other Ministers) were placed first on the Agenda of the Conference. The Charter was examined clause by clause and, with a few amendments, was unanimously

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