
The Commission in Iraq



Iraq is located in the Middle East, bordering the Persian Gulf, between Iran and Kuwait

Our Commitment

Just over 54,000 Commonwealth war dead of the two world wars and some 700 of other nationalities are buried or commemorated in eleven sites in the Republic of Iraq.

Of the war dead, some 41,000 who have no known grave or whose graves could not be maintained are commemorated on four memorials.

The Commission also cares for nearly 1,200 non-world war graves as an agency service, some 600 on behalf of the United Kingdom Ministry of Defence and some 700 on behalf of cemetery committees.



Historical note

1914-18 The dead are mainly from the campaign against the Turks, starting at Basra in November 1914 and ending with the occupation of Mosul on 4 November 1918.

1939-45 The casualties arose during the operations in 1941 to expel Raschid Ali's pro-Axis government and during the subsequent occupation of Iraq by what became known as Paiforce; this had the task of ensuring the flow of supplies to the Soviet Union via Iran.

Current Situation

The maintenance of the war cemeteries and memorials became difficult with the onset of the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980's and when, after the 1990 Gulf War, it was no longer possible to employ staff regular routine maintenance of the cemeteries was interrupted.

The effects of the wars, sanctions and the current security situation have left all of the cemeteries in need of considerable attention.

Some work has been carried out at [Baghdad \(North Gate\) War Cemetery](#), which has been cleared of undergrowth and in the south at Amara



[Baghdad \(North Gate\) War Cemetery](#) (2009)

and Basra there has been some general tidying, maintenance and boundary definition with the assistance of coalition forces. There is twenty-four hour watchman's surveillance at [Baghdad \(North Gate\) War Cemetery](#) and the Commissions representative is able to visit a number of sites on a regular basis.

It is the Commission's intention to carry out a programme of renovation in Iraq, which is expected to take at least five years to complete, but the Commission is reluctant to commence work until there is evidence of a sustained improvement in the situation.



It is also the view that the needs of the local people must come first and the renovation programme will proceed in pace with the improvements to the living conditions of the citizens of Iraq. The situation is under constant review.

Until it is possible to commence the programme of renovation a roll of honour for all those buried and commemorated in Iraq (including those commemorated by the [Basra Memorial](#)) has been compiled and is on display at the Commission's Head Office in Maidenhead (left).

Basra Memorial

The Memorial commemorates 40,676 1914-18 casualties whose graves are not known, of which over 33,000 are from undivided India.

It takes the form of slate panels mounted within a roofed colonnaded open building some 80 metres in length with a central obelisk 16 metres high.

It was located within an Iraqi naval base in Basra but enquiries by Commission visitors in August 1997 revealed that some months earlier it had been dismantled brick by brick and reassembled in a spot just off a desert road some 36 km north-west of Basra.



[Basra Memorial](#) (2008)

The work was not to a high standard. Erosion and war have taken their toll.
