

CORPS MEMORIAL GARDEN

at the National Memorial Arboretum

Patrons:

Baroness Harris of Richmond DL : Air Marshal Sir Graham Stacey KBE CB : Rt Hon Colonel R Stewart DSO PC MP

President:

Air Vice Marshal M J Smeath CBE RAF Regt

Honorary Vice-President:

Air Commodore S M Miller MA RAF Regt (Retd)



MISSION: The Mission of the Corps Memorial Garden shall be to provide the principal, RAF Regiment-wide Memorial and Commemorative focus for the Corps.

The RAF Regiment **Corps Memorial Garden** (CMG) is situated within the **National Memorial Arboretum** (NMA) at Alrewas in Staffordshire. The NMA's inspiration was, in fact, driven by the concern of the late Group Captain Sir Leonard Cheshire VC, who felt that something positive should be done to remember forever our debt to those gave so much to defend our freedom.

It then fell to a retired Royal Naval officer, Commander David Childs CBE, to address that concern and his inspiration was the US Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington County, Virginia, just across the Potomac River from Washington DC. While the NMA is not, and never will be, a cemetery, it was established formally in 2001 as a British site of national remembrance, whose objective is to honour the fallen, recognise service and sacrifice, and foster pride in the British Armed Forces and civilian community. The NMA is now run by the Royal British Legion (RBL) with

its main funding provided principally by the Ministry of Defence, the RBL and public donations. Entry to the NMA is free, although donations on departure are clearly welcome and needed. The NMA is a 'must-do' visit for any involved with the Services.

The **Corps Memorial** was dedicated on 5th April 2001 as one of the first Service Memorials at the NMA and thus has 'Founder' status within the organization. The Inauguration Day was exceptionally wet and windy, with the NMA site – bereft of trees in the beginning – pictured as a sea of mud. However, it failed to dampen the Dedication Service attended by the then Commandant General, Air Commodore Richard Moore, and some 300 serving and veteran Corps members, together with their partners and friends. And so the Corps Memorial Garden was born.



Since the muddy inception of the CMG, the NMA has grown and matured beyond recognition. The initial 90-acre site has nearly doubled in size and there are literally hundreds of dedicated Memorials now in place, with more being added on most months. The **Corps Memorial** remains one of the more impressive memorials there; although there are bigger and more ornate memorials now present, the **Corps Memorial** has a quiet, understated but imposing dignity befitting the Corps' history, recognising the part played by the tens of thousands of its members since 1942, together with the RAF Regiment's antecedents in the RAF Armoured Car Companies (1921-46) and the RAF Ground Gunners (1940-42).

Since the CMG was established, the lawn, trees and hedges have matured, a new Drystone Wall – replacing an early brick backdrop and reminiscent of the vista on the Catterick Training Area in North Yorkshire - has been built. Immediately in front of the Wall is an evocative '**Fallen Gunner**' Memorial, reminding us of the ultimate sacrifice paid by Corps members over the decades since it was established in 1942.

The original T-shaped pathway has been extended by a '**Hollow Square**' from the Corps Memorial up to the Drystone Wall, where significant RAF Regiment and RAF Armoured Car Companies' Theatres and campaigns - and the associated 27 Battle Honours, are commemorated. There are also developing 5- and 10-Year Plans to enable further improvements to be made in the coming years to



enhance the whole CMG experience and to educate and inform the visitors, many of whom have little or no previous knowledge of the Corps.



Another facility is that of the **Memorial and Commemorative Stones**, placed in the pathway of the CMG, on which inscriptions record individuals, Corps formations and events. Individual Memorial Stones may be commissioned for any former (ie RAF Regiment Flash-badged) and passed member of the Corps. A list of those individuals so honoured are on the CMG Webpages on the *Centurion Fund* and RAF Regiment Association websites. A recent provision has been the addition of 'Reserved Placement' stones, whereby an individual may 'plan ahead' and reserve a particular position in the pathway – perhaps with old friends, comrades or in a unit cluster?

Although the CMG is the venue for many Corps and individual-related commemorations and celebrations each year, its principal event is the **Annual Corps Memorial Commemoration Service** held on **Armed Forces' Day** on the last Saturday of June. This is a highly popular event, normally attended by the Commandant

General of the RAF Regiment and graced with the presence of **The Queen's Colour for the RAF Regiment**. One for the Diary each year!



Recognising the need to put the CMG on a more formal footing, it was decided to incorporate the CMG within the RAF Regiment's registered charity arm, *The Centurion Fund*. From the 1st May 2020, an **Executive Council** (Exco) was established, through its Constitution, as a sub-committee of the Fund, "to formulate the CMG policy, execute facility management, ensure its efficient running and maintenance, and maintain at all times the dignity and gravitas required of the Corps' dedicated Memorial and its environs".

The Exco comprises a Chairman, Vice Chairman and Secretary-Treasurer, with further members representing Memorials, Grounds, Historical Advice, Serving and Veteran Members and the various RAF Regiment-related associations. It is also affiliated to the *RAF Regiment Heritage Centre* with its Curator also a member of the Exco. Primary funding of the annual maintenance costs fall to *The Centurion Fund*, while the various projects may be funded, variously, by *The Centurion Fund*, the associations, through crowd-funding and by private subscription within and beyond the Corps family. Further details of the CMG Constitution and its Exco will be found on the *Centurion Fund* website*.

Details of the Individual Memorial and Unit Commemorative stones – and how to order - may be found and downloaded from the *Centurion Fund*/CMG webpages** and from the *RAF Regiment Association Website* (see *Associated Websites & Webpages* below).

The CMG and NMA is located at: Croxall Rd, Burton-on-Trent, Staffordshire, DE13 7AR.

[SatNav: DE13 7AR]

The CMG itself is located near the end of Giffard Avenue, on the left, close to the Far East Prisoners of War (FEPOW) building.

ASSOCIATED WEBSITES & WEBPAGES:

- CMG is at: <https://www.centurionfund.co.uk/> **
- NMA is at: <http://www.thenma.org.uk/>
- Centurion Fund is at: <https://www.centurionfund.co.uk/> **
- RAF Regiment Heritage Centre is at: <https://rafregimentheritagecentre.org.uk/>
- RAF Regiment Association is at: <https://www.rafregt.org.uk/>
- Association of RAF Regiment Warrant Officers and SNCOs is at: <http://www.rafregtwoandsnco.org.uk/>



** Some webpages under development and some facilities may not yet be available.

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