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 **BENSON BULLETING REPORT – DEC 2021**

When you read this Report we will have marked Remembrance Sunday with our undying gratitude to all those who died in past conflicts that have helped to give us the freedoms we enjoy today. So, it was fitting that our October illustrated Zoom talk was given by Martin Olney of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) on its work. I guess that many of us will have visited or seen pictures of the war graves in northern France, the breath-taking serried ranks of headstones – almost unbelievable in number and in beautifully tended graveyards that put many of our home graveyards to shame. I also suspect that we all know that they are tended by the CWGC but I wonder how many of us knew that they look after 23,000 locations in more than 150 countries and territories, including Benson’s War Graves in the south churchyard.

Initially it was called the Imperial War Graves Commission and was founded in 1917 thanks to one man, Fabian Hare. He had been shocked whilst working in France for the Red Cross. The number of casualties was without precedent and there was no system in place to bury the dead.

The principle he established was that the dead should be buried where they fell and not be repatriated, with a standard headstone of the same size and style for all, regardless of rank, being erected rather than a cross, recognising that many who had died were not of the Christian faith. Memorials were also erected to remember those with no known graves.

CWGC is a remarkable global organisation caring for the war graves of almost 1.7 million individuals and their work continues to grow as new records, giving new names, come to light.

Now from a global organisation to a very much local one The Bensington Society and our WELCOME BACK PARTY: I am afraid that we will not be able to hold it this year as we cannot find a venue large enough to hold the number of the members who said they and guests would attend. Both the Parish Hall and the new Community Hall are, for various reasons, not available and no other local venue is large enough. So thank you to all who responded to the attendance questionnaire and I’m sorry we can’t meet our joint aspirations. However, the situation is changing, and it looks very likely that we will be able to hold it in our newly refurbished Parish Hall at the end of January. Let’s hope this remains so and allows us to start our 2022 year on an upbeat note.

Another interesting, local, albeit incipient, organisation is the Benson Community Shed (previously called the Men’s Shed). It has been mentioned twice before in the bulletin and sounds like a really good idea that deserves widespread support. I’m sure we will be hearing a lot more about the plans to make it happen in the near future.

Looking a little further ahead, our AGM for 2021 will be held on the 25th of February and details of the Agenda along with all other relevant papers will be sent out in January. If any member has an item they would like placed on the Agenda, please let me know at - david@nythecot.co.uk

As this is the last Bulletin before Christmas, the Committee would like to wish all members and Bulletin readers a very happy Christmas and a 2022 that will bring more happiness into our lives and the freedom to enjoy those lives which during the last couple of years have been somewhat restricted.

David McGill