
Funerary and memory sites of the First World War (Belgium, France)

No 1567rev

1 Basic information

Official name as proposed by the States Parties

Funerary and memory sites of the First World War (Western Front)

Location

Provinces of Liège, Luxembourg, Namur, Hainaut and West-Flanders
Belgium

Departments of Nord, Pas-de-Calais, Somme, Oise, Aisne, Seine-et-Marne, Marne, Ardennes, Meuse, Meurthe-et-Moselle, Moselle, Vosges, Haut-Rhin, Bas-Rhin
France

Brief description

The Funerary and memory sites of the First World War (Western Front) is a transnational serial property encompassing 139 sites located between the north of Belgium and the east of France, along the First World War Western Front where war was fought between the German and the Allied forces between 1914 and 1918.

The nominated component parts vary in scale from large necropolises, holding the remains of tens of thousands of soldiers of several nationalities, to tiny and simpler cemeteries, and single memorials. The component sites include different types of necropolises – military, battlefield burial grounds, hospital cemeteries and cemeteries where the remains were regrouped later – often combined with memorials.

Category of property

In terms of categories of cultural property set out in Article I of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a serial nomination of *monuments* and *sites*.

Included in the Tentative List

France: 7 April 2014
Belgium: 14 April 2014

Background

The present nomination has been evaluated by ICOMOS in 2018. However, at that time, due to fundamental questions posed by the nomination in relation to whether sites associated with negative and divisive memories belong to the scope of the World Heritage Convention and if so, how, ICOMOS recommended that *“the examination of the nomination [...] be postponed”*.

The World Heritage Committee decided (42 COM 8B.24) to adjourn the consideration of this property *“until a comprehensive reflection has taken place and the Committee [...] has discussed and decided whether and how sites associated with recent conflicts and other negative and divisive memories might relate to the purpose and scope of the World Heritage Convention and its Operational Guidelines”*. The same decision also indicates *“that the nomination of the Funerary and memory sites of the First World War (Western Front), Belgium and France, could only be considered by the Committee upon further review by the Advisory Bodies in light of Committee decision referred to above and upon receipt of additional information to be provided by the States Parties concerned”*.

An open-ended Working Group was established by decision 44 COM 8 of the World Heritage Committee. The Working Group elaborated the *Guiding Principles for the preparation of nominations concerning sites of memory associated with recent conflicts (Guiding Principles)*, which have been adopted by the World Heritage Committee at its 18th Extraordinary session. Pursuant to decision 18 EXT.COM 4, the World Heritage Committee also lifted *“the moratorium on the evaluation of sites of memory associated with recent conflicts”*.

ICOMOS has therefore revised its evaluation in the light of the additional information provided by the States Parties and the *Guiding Principles*.

The revised evaluation is presented in this text.

Consultations and technical evaluation mission

Desk reviews have been provided by ICOMOS International Scientific Committees, members and independent experts.

An ICOMOS technical evaluation mission visited the property from 28 September to 21 October 2017.

Additional information received by ICOMOS

ICOMOS sent a first letter to the States Parties on 28 July 2017 requesting further information about the justification of the selection of component parts for the nominated series; information about missing individual records; the logic behind the delineation of the boundaries of nominated component parts and their buffer zones; protection status of the component parts and of their buffer zones; and an update on the development of the management system.

ICOMOS sent a second letter to the States Parties on 29 September 2017, requesting further information about the explanation for the sites that have been excluded from the nominated series; protection mechanisms for the component parts and their buffer zones; management of the component parts and of the overall nominated series.

Finally, an Interim Report was provided to the States Parties on 24 January 2018, summarising the issues and

provisional findings of the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel during its November 2017 meeting.

The States Parties responded respectively on 13 September 2017, 7 November 2017 (with further integrations submitted on 17 November 2017) and finally on 28 February 2018. The additional information provided has been integrated into the relevant sections of this report.

Additional information was requested and received in 2023 as follows:

Further to a letter by the World Heritage Centre, dated 2 February 2023, recalling decision 42 COM.8B 24, the States Parties submitted, on 28 February 2023, additional information on how the *Guiding Principles* are met by the nomination, on the actualisation of protection, boundaries, as well as on commemoration and research.

A letter was sent by ICOMOS to the States Parties on 23 March 2023, requesting further information about the historic context, the selection of the component parts in relation to the criteria, conservation, management, and interpretation.

Additional information was received from the States Parties on 24 April 2023.

Following the extraordinary session of the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel held on 4-5 May 2023, a letter was sent to the States Parties on 17 May 2023, requesting further information about the selection of the component parts of the series and the justification for inscription and details concerning the modification to the boundaries made to some component parts in the French territory.

Additional information was received from the States Parties on 13 June 2023.

Date of ICOMOS approval of this report
5 May 2023

2 Description of the nominated property

Note: The nomination dossier and additional information contain detailed descriptions of this property, its history and its state of conservation. Due to limitations on the length of evaluation reports, this report provides only a short summary of the most relevant aspects.

Description and history

The Funerary and memory sites of the First World War (Western Front) are a nominated serial property formed by 139 sites and monuments located between the north of Belgium and the east and north-east of France. The sites are scattered throughout an area corresponding to what was the First World War Western Front, where war was fought between the German and the Allied forces between 1914 and 1918.

The nominated series is comprised of large necropolises preserving the remains of tens of thousands of soldiers of several nations, often enhanced by imposing or evocative monuments and landscape arrangements; cemeteries dedicated to the fallen of a single nationality; graveyards for the nations of the Commonwealth; tiny and simpler cemeteries and ossuaries collecting the remains of the fallen, as well as memorials. The series also includes two examples of cemeteries and monuments dedicated to civilian victims.

The nomination dossier presents the funerary models adopted by each State for the commemoration of their fallen and then provides a description of each component site.

The Commonwealth graveyard model was conceived under the coordination of the Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC), which engaged famous personalities, such as Rudyard Kipling, and renowned architects, sculptors and landscape architects to plan and lay out the cemeteries. As a rule, and differently from other States, the IWGC did not engage in the regrouping of the fallen of the nations under the British Empire, so the Commonwealth cemeteries are generally rather small. After the war, several architects were called upon to rearrange the burial grounds already in existence since the war, according to models defined by four main architects: Reginald Blomfield, Edwin Lutyens, Herbert Baker and Charles Holden. Blomfield adopted a classical language, and a landscaping approach closer to the art of gardening; he conceived the idea of a standard Cross of Sacrifice to mark the graves. Lutyens elaborated designs in a vernacular language inspired by the Arts and Crafts movement, inserted harmoniously into the landscape thanks to the work of garden designer Gertrude Jekyll; he conceived a religious remembrance symbol: the Stone of Remembrance, to respect the differing religions of the Commonwealth nationalities. Overall, the landscaping of Commonwealth cemeteries follows the English garden tradition, with different textures, colours, and densities.

The series includes forty-eight cemeteries of the Commonwealth.

Belgium:

- WA08 German and Commonwealth Military Cemetery of Saint-Symphorien
- WA09 Commonwealth Military Cemetery "Hyde Park Corner Cemetery"
- WA10 Commonwealth Military Cemetery and memorial to the missing "Berks Cemetery Extension" and "Ploegsteert Memorial to the Missing"
- WA11 Commonwealth Military Cemetery "Strand Military Cemetery"
- WA12 Commonwealth Military Cemetery "Prowse Point Military Cemetery"
- WA13 Commonwealth Military Cemetery "Mud Corner Cemetery"
- WA14 Commonwealth Military Cemetery "Toronto Avenue Cemetery"

- WA15 Commonwealth Military Cemetery “Ploegsteert Wood Military Cemetery”
- WA16 Commonwealth Military Cemetery “Rifle House Cemetery”
- FL08 Commonwealth Military Cemetery “Tyne Cot Cemetery” and Commonwealth memorial to the missing “Tyne Cot Memorial”
- FL09 Commonwealth Military Cemetery “Polygon Wood Cemetery”
- FL10 Commonwealth Military Cemetery “Buttes New British Cemetery”
- FL11 Commonwealth Military Cemetery “Essex farm Cemetery”
- FL12 Commonwealth Military Cemetery “Welsh Cemetery (Caesar’s Nose)”
- FL13 Commonwealth Military cemetery “No Man’s Cot Cemetery”
- FL14 Commonwealth Military Cemetery “Track X Cemetery”
- FL15 Commonwealth Military Cemetery “Buff’s Road Cemetery”
- FL18 Commonwealth Military Cemetery “Bedford House Cemetery”
- FL19 Commonwealth Military Cemetery “Larch Wood Cemetery”
- FL20 Commonwealth Military Cemetery “Woods Cemetery”
- FL21 Commonwealth Military Cemetery “1st D.C.L.I. Cemetery, The Bluff”
- FL22 Commonwealth Military Cemetery “Hedge Row Trench Cemetery”
- FL24 Commonwealth Military Cemetery “Spanbroekmolen British Cemetery”
- FL25 Commonwealth Military Cemetery “Lone Tree Cemetery”
- FL27 Commonwealth Military Cemetery “Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery”
- PC07 French National Necropolis of la Targette and Commonwealth Military Cemetery “La Targette British Cemetery”
- PC11 Commonwealth Military Cemetery and Memorials “Faubourg d’Amiens Cemetery”, “Arras Memorial” and “Arras Flying Services Memorial”
- PC12 Commonwealth Military Cemetery and Memorial “Dud Corner Cemetery” and “Loos Memorial”
- PC13 Commonwealth Military Cemetery “Etaples Military Cemetery”
- PC14 Commonwealth Military Cemetery “Wimereux Communal Cemetery”
- SE01 Commonwealth Memorials “Beaumont Hamel (Newfoundland) Memorial”, “29th Division Memorial”, Commonwealth Memorial Park “Beaumont Hamel (Newfoundland) Memorial Park” and Commonwealth military cemetery “Hunter’s Cemetery”
- SE02 Commonwealth Military Cemetery “Mill Road Cemetery”
- SE03 Commonwealth Monument to the missing “Thiepval Memorial” and French-Commonwealth Military Cemetery “Thiepval Anglo-French Cemetery”
- SE04 Commonwealth Military Cemetery and Memorial “Pozières British Cemetery” and “Pozières Memorial”
- SE05 South-African National Memorial “The South Africa (Delville Wood) National Memorial” and Commonwealth Military Cemetery “Delville Wood Cemetery”
- SE07 Commonwealth Military Cemetery “Rancourt Military Cemetery”
- SE09 Australian National Memorial “Villers-Bretonneux Memorial” and Commonwealth Military Cemetery “Villers-Bretonneux Military Cemetery”
- SE10 Commonwealth Military Cemetery “Noyelles-sur-Mer Chinese Cemetery” and Chinese memorial “Noyelles-sur-Mer Chinese Memorial”
- SE11 Commonwealth Military Cemetery “Louvecourt Military Cemetery”

France:

- ND01 Commonwealth Military Cemetery “Fromelles (Pheasant Wood) Military Cemetery”
- ND02 Commonwealth Military Cemetery and Australian Memorial “V.C. Corner Australian Cemetery and Memorial”
- ND03 Commonwealth Military Cemetery and Memorial “Louverval Military Cemetery” and “Cambrai Memorial”
- ND04 German Military Cemetery of la Route de Solesmes and Commonwealth Military Cemetery “Cambrai East Military Cemetery”
- ND06 Commonwealth Military Cemetery “Le Quesnoy Communal Cemetery Extension”
- PC01 Indian Memorial of the Commonwealth “Neuve Chapelle Memorial”
- PC04 Commonwealth Military Cemetery “Canadian Cemetery n°2”
- PC05 Commonwealth Military Cemetery “Givenchy Road Canadian Cemetery”
- PC06 Commonwealth Military Cemetery “Lichfield Crater”

Some of the above-mentioned component sites include also cemeteries of other nations and therefore are listed under their respective model of reference. To these cemeteries, two memorials are also added: the Nieuport Memorial and the Menin Gate.

In France, the idea to develop burials for the fallen in war emerged from associations of combatants who wanted to honour their comrades but this was soon taken over by the State. Established on 25 November 1918, the National Commission for Military Graves adopted a symmetrical and rectilinear type-plan for all cemeteries, which was put in place repetitively, rarely modified to adapt to the setting. In line with Auguste Perret’s approach, the architectural language had to be classical but expressed through modern materials: concrete was the material selected for the built elements. The French cemeteries adopted four grave markers: the Latin cross for the Christians; stelaes engraved with a Crescent and

oriented East-West so as to ensure that the dead look towards Mecca for the Muslims; stelaes engraved with a Star of David for the Jews; and a simple stela for agnostics, atheists or those who adhered to other religions. The space of each grave was fixed at three square metres, each grave separated from the next by a ninety centimetres interval. Little vegetation was initially envisaged for the French cemeteries, although current rearrangements have brought in more elaborate landscaping.

The nomination dossier includes among the French-type cemeteries the following:

Belgium:

- WA03 Le Plateau French Military Cemetery
- WA04 L'Orée de la Forêt French Military Cemetery
- WA05 Le Radan French-German Military Cemetery
- WA07 La Belle Motte French Military Cemetery
- FL16 Saint-Charles de Potyze French Military Cemetery

France:

- PC07 French National Necropolis of la Targette and Commonwealth Military Cemetery "La Targette British Cemetery"
- PC10 Notre-Dame-de-Lorette National French Necropolis
- SE06 Rancourt National French Necropolis and Chapel of French Memory
- OI01 Cuts National French Necropolis
- OI02 Thiescourt National French Necropolis and Thiescourt German Military Cemetery
- OI03 Compiègne (Royallieu) National French Necropolis
- AI04 Le Sourd National French Necropolis and Le Sourd German Military Cemetery
- AI05 National French Necropolis of prisoners of Effry
- AI08 Craonnelle National French Necropolis
- MA03 Saint-Hilaire-le-Grand Russian Cemetery and Chapel
- MA04 National French Necropolis, German Military Cemetery and Polish Military Cemetery "le Bois du Puits"
- MA06 National French Necropolis and German Military Cemetery of la Crouée
- ME04 La Maize National French Necropolis
- ME05 Douaumont French Ossuary, National French Necropolis, Jewish Monument and Muslim Monument
- ME09 Le Faubourg Pavé National French Necropolis
- ME11 Le Trottoir National French Necropolis
- MM03 Pierrepont National French Necropolis
- MS01 Riche National French Necropolis
- MS03 L'Espérance National French Necropolis
- MS04 National French Cemetery of Sarrebourg war prisoners
- MS05 Chambière National French Necropolis
- MS06 Lagarde National French Necropolis

- VS01 La Fontenelle National French Necropolis
- VS02 La Chipotte National French Necropolis
- VS03 Les Tiges National French Necropolis
- HR01 Le Wettstein National French Necropolis
- HR05 Le Silberloch National French Necropolis, Hartmannswillerkopf National French Monument and Crypt
- HR09 Moosch National French Necropolis

It is noticed that the description ascribes the Plateau French Military Cemetery, the Orée de la Forêt French Military Cemetery and the French-German Military Cemetery of le Radan to the German type; however, they have been listed under the French type in the nomination dossier.

Some of the above-mentioned component sites include also cemeteries of other nations and therefore are listed under their respective model of reference.

Further component sites related to the French losses are included in the nomination. They comprise fourteen additional necropolises and cemeteries:

France:

- ND05 Assevent National French Necropolis and German Military Cemetery
- AI07 Cerny-en-Laonnois National French Necropolis, Cerny-en-Laonnois German Military Cemetery and Memorial Chapel of Chemin des Dames
- SM01 La Grande Tombe de Villeroy National French Necropolis
- MA07 L'Opéra National French Necropolis
- MA08 28th Brigade "La ferme des Wacques" National French Necropolis
- MA09 National French Necropolis of the Ossuary Monument of the Foreign Legion (Henri Fansworth)
- AR01 Chestres National French Necropolis with the German Military Cemetery of Chestres
- MA11 Saint-Thomas en Argonne National French Necropolis and National French Necropolis of the Gruerie Monument ossuary
- MA12 La Harazée National French Necropolis
- ME02 La Forestière National French Necropolis
- HR04 Duchesne National French Necropolis
- HR08 Germania French Military Cemetery
- AR03 French military plot of the dead of November 11, 1918 of Vrigne-Meuse

Two cemeteries of civilians:

France:

- MA05 Mondement-Montgivroux communal French Cemetery and French Chapel
- MM02 Gerbeviller French Square to the civilian victims

And five memorials and three ossuaries:

Belgium:

- FL23 Mount Kemmel French Ossuary

France:

- ME01 Haute-Chevauchée French Monument Ossuary
- MA10 Navarin French Ossuary and Monument to the Fallen of the Champagne Armies
- AI09 French Memorial “Les fantômes”
- MA01 French Memorial of the Battles of the Marne
- ME06 Douaumont Fort
- ME07 French Stelae to the Executed of Fleury-devant-Douaumont (civilians)
- ME08 High Memorial of the Trench of the Bayonets at Douaumont

The German model was developed rather late, since most of the graveyards formed during the war were either in France or Belgium. The association *Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge* (VDK) was established in 1919 with the mission to build or reorganise the war graveyards but its objectives could be achieved only after the Second World War. The German landscape architect Robert Tischler inspired the main principles for the arrangement of the German necropolises with the aim of preserving the sombre character of the cemeteries. The Christian cross, originally in tarred wood, was retained but replaced either by metal or stone, directly hammered into the grass; only trees adorn the graveyards, the light and shadow they create during the day aimed at providing a sense of mourning, meditation, and absorbed recollection. However, no unified design is imposed on the German cemeteries, which therefore enjoy a variety of arrangements. The dead soldiers are buried in groups of four, six or eight, sometimes up to 20 under the same cross. The vegetation is maintained in a natural way that gives the sense of ‘free nature’; the presence of trees also dictates the organisation of the graves, breaking up the rigid symmetry.

The series includes 22 German-type cemeteries. They are:

Belgium:

- WA05 Le Radan French-German Military Cemetery
- WA08 German and Commonwealth Military Cemetery of Saint-Symphorien
- FL02 Vladslo German Military Cemetery
- FL06 Langemark German Military Cemetery

France:

- ND04 German Military Cemetery of la Route de Solesmes and Commonwealth “Cambrai East Military Cemetery”
- ND05 Assevent French Necropolis and German Military Cemetery
- PC08 La Maison Blanche German Military Cemetery
- SE08 Rancourt German Military Cemetery
- OI02 Thiescourt French Necropolis and German Military Cemetery

- AI02 Saint-Quentin German Military Cemetery and French-German monument
- AI03 Veslud German Military Cemetery
- AI07 Cerny-en-Laonnois French Necropolis and German Military Cemetery and Memorial Chapel of Chemin des Dames
- MA04 French National Necropolis, German Military Cemetery and Polish Cemetery “le Bois du Puits”
- MA06 National French Necropolis and German Military Cemetery of la Crouée
- AR01 Chestres German Military Cemetery and National French Necropolis
- AR04 Apremont German Military Cemetery
- ME10 Consenvoye German Military Cemetery
- ME12 Gobessart German Military Cemetery
- MM04 Pierrepont German Military Cemetery
- MS02 L’Hellenwald German Military Cemetery
- MS07 Lagarde German Military Cemetery
- HR02 Hohrod-Bärenstall German Military Cemetery

Some of the above sites are also ascribed to other funerary models, as they encompass also cemeteries of other nations. The series also include the following German cemeteries or memorials that were not seen as reflecting the German model:

France:

- Le Sourd German Military Cemetery (part of AI04)
- HR03 Kahm German Military Cemetery in Lapoutroie
- HR06 Uhlans’ German Military Cemetery in Hartmannswiller
- AR02 German Monument of the Saint-Charles Cemetery in Sedan

The American model was developed by the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC), created in 1923, inspired by the French architect Paul Philippe Cret, who emigrated to the United States in 1903. He conceived a sober, classical language and a layout based on symmetry and perspective axes. The American cemeteries developed around the memorial, and include a chapel and a building for the manager of the site; the burials are grouped in sectors, each occupying 4 square meters. The stelae are in Carrara marble. Curtains of trees delimit the perimeter of the cemeteries and planted areas order their inner spaces. The gardening is inspired by geometry. The types of plants and species used were inventoried and respected in the case of replacement.

The series includes three American-type cemeteries. They are:

France:

- AI01 Aisne-Marne American Cemetery and Memorial
- ME03 Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery and Memorial
- MM01 St. Mihiel American Cemetery and Memorial

The Belgian cemeteries feature geometric and symmetrical layouts. As a rule, the remains are buried

individually but, in some cases, one can find the remains of two or more soldiers grouped together under the same stela. The stela model was conceived by the architect Fernand Symons and officially adopted in 1925; in stone, they were adorned by spirals, reliefs and a garland. The official stelae replaced the previous crosses in wood or the hero crosses, shaped as Celtic crosses and made out of concrete. The vegetation appears in the form of hedges and shrubs, tree species include evergreens, broadleaved trees, weeping willows, bay-trees and yews.

The series includes three Belgian-type cemeteries. They are:

Belgium:

- WA02 Robermont Military plots in Liège
- FL04 Oeren Belgian Military Cemetery in Alveringem
- FL05 Houthulst Belgian Military Cemetery

The series includes also the following components that commemorate the Belgian losses:

Belgium:

- WA01 Fort de Loncin
- WA06 Enclosure of the Executed in Tamines (civilians)

Graveyards built by other nations or not ascribable to any of the above models include the following:

France:

- PC02 Portuguese Military Cemetery of Richebourg-l'Avoué
- PC09 Czechoslovakian Military Cemetery of Neuville-Saint-Vaast
- MA02 Italian Military Cemetery of "Bligny"
- HR07 Romanian Military Cemetery of Soultzmat
- AI06 Danish Military Cemetery of Braine
- BR01 Ensemble of stelae and ancient French and German tombs of le Petit Donon
- MA03 Saint-Hilaire-le-Grand Russian Cemetery and Chapel

The last is, however, also included in the dossier in the list of French-type cemeteries.

The series also includes monuments and memorials of other nations:

Belgium:

- FL07 Canadian National Monument "The Brooding Soldier"
- FL26 Irish Monument "Island of Ireland Peace Tower"
- FL03 Crypt of the Tower of Yser

France:

- PC03 Canadian National Memorial "Vimy Memorial"

It should be noted that some of the components are further fragmented into separate elements (e.g. FL11, FL15 (Belgium)).

The description of the individual component sites is provided according to their location: in Wallonia, Flanders or French Departments. Some sixty-nine components have been grouped in memorial sectors. They encompass the setting of the components in which battles were fought and form the buffer zones of the sites included in these sectors. However, a number of component sites enjoy independent buffer zones, not being explicitly associated with any memorial sectors (seventy in total, out of which five are in Wallonia, fourteen in Flanders and fifty-one in France).

The memorial sectors are presented below.

In Belgium:

- Tintigny (Wallonia - WA)
- Ploegsteert (WA)
- Polygon Wood (Flanders – FL)
- Pilkem Ridge (FL)
- Hill 60/The Bluff (FL)
- Spanbroekmolen (FL)

In France:

- Fromelles (Nord)
- Richebourg (Pas-de-Calais)
- Vimy (Pas-de-Calais)
- Neuville-Saint-Vaast (Pas-de-Calais)
- La Vallée de l'Ancre (Somme)
- Rancourt-Bouchavesne (Somme)
- Chemin de Dames (Aisne)
- Souain (Marne)
- Argonne (Marne, Ardennes, Meuse)
- Verdun-Douaumont (Meuse)
- Pierrepont (Meurthe-et-Moselle)
- Morhange / Riche (Moselle)
- Lagarde (Moselle)
- Le Linge (Haut-Rhin)
- La Tête des Faux (Haut-Rhin)
- Le Vieil Armand-Hartmannswillerkopf (Haut-Rhin)

In the additional information submitted in February 2018 in response to the ICOMOS Interim Report, the States Parties provided an account of the relationship between the memorial sectors and the development of the war and relevant battles with which the cemeteries are associated.

As presented in the nomination dossier, the area of the 139 component parts totals 879,99 ha, with buffer zones totalling 29.086,94 ha.

The nomination dossier first provides an account of the evolution from collective to individual burials in the 19th and 20th centuries and of the affirmation of the burial rite related to the First World War. It then proceeds to summarise the main historic milestones of each and every component site.

The extensive human losses caused by battles and trench war of the First World War triggered, already during the conflict, efforts to ensure the identification of the fallen, their individual burial whenever possible, and, subsequently, the transposition of the remains in individual graves in national necropolises or, after 1921, in the family tomb or in the military enclosures of the country of provenance, according to repatriation policies.

The nomination dossier sees this phenomenon as an unprecedented occurrence, both in terms of scale and organisation.

The dossier refers to precedents in this sphere, such as provisions adopted after 17 July 1862 in the United States following the Civil War for the individual burial of Union soldiers in cemeteries (Battle of Gettysburg – 1863, and Arlington Cemetery – 1864), or those taken after the 1870-1871 Franco-Prussian War.

At the dawn of the First World War, France still maintained collective burials, whilst Germany, America and Britain had already opted for individual burials of the fallen in combat. In particular, Britain adopted the principle of individual burials during the Boer War (1899-1902), to honour the volunteers who fought in that war.

The unprecedented scale of the losses in the first five months of the war made it urgent to address the issue of what type of funerary rite might be performed and what role the State had to play in responding to the requests of families to see the remains of their loved ones returned.

During the first weeks and months, initiatives were disparate in character but collective burials became more and more unacceptable, and the first regulations were issued for burial procedures that allowed for later identification of the buried soldiers.

After the war, the policy of identification of the fallen continued, in order to repatriate the remains, if possible, systematically.

The reburial in individual graves within regrouped cemeteries took place in the early 1920s. France favoured the regathering in large necropolises; Britain and the Commonwealth, on the other hand, preferred the rearrangement of the original burial grounds. By 1925 the majority of the regrouping necropolises were laid out and burials arranged.

In the following years, between the 1920s and 1930s, memorials and monuments were erected either as complementary commemorations to the cemeteries or independently. Examples of these include the Necropolis and Chapel of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette, the Chapel of the Reconnaissance of Dormans, the ossuary in Douaumont, the monument and ossuary of Hartmannswillerkopf (France); Thiepval, Richebourg-Neuve-Chapelle, the monuments at Nieuport, Ploegsteert, the Menin Gate, the Wall at Tyne Cot, and Dud Corner in Loos-en-Gohelle (United Kingdom). The United States inaugurated its

major necropolises of Argonne-Meuse, Aisne-Marne and Thiaucourt in 1937. German cemeteries and memorials were set up on the initiative of a private association (VDK): the four necropolises of Langemark, Hoogdele, Menin and Vladslo were partly built in the 1920s and then completed in the 1950s. Not all projects were carried out at the same pace, particularly when related to difficult memories (e.g. defeats).

The inauguration ceremonies of the 1920s-1930s were accompanied by celebrations in the presence of the highest State and institutional representatives.

The activity of identification of the fallen continued throughout the decades, although not as systematically as in the immediate post-war decades. Commemorative celebrations and rites began to be regularly carried out in the 1920s and continued regularly, particularly at certain sites, whilst in others the celebrations saw their scope reduced from national to regional or local level.

Important ceremonies took place at many cemeteries and memorials in the 1960s, for the 50th anniversary of the War. The 1990s witnessed commemoration ceremonies performed by former British Dominions as well as by States belonging to the former Soviet Bloc.

The commemorations for the centennial of the First World War began in 2014 and was completed in 2018.

State of Conservation

ICOMOS notes, and this applies particularly to French necropolises, that maintenance is governed essentially by practical, economic, memorial and aesthetic considerations, but is not necessarily linked to the proposed attributes with which each component part contributes to reflect the proposed Outstanding Universal Value.

Based on the information provided by the States Parties and the observations of the ICOMOS technical evaluation mission, ICOMOS considers that the state of conservation of the nominated property is uneven: for a number of component parts this has been found good, but several others lack sufficient maintenance.

Factors affecting the nominated property

Based on the information provided by the States Parties and the observations of the ICOMOS technical evaluation mission, ICOMOS considers that the main factors affecting the nominated property are different depending on the setting in which the component parts can be found.

Factors affecting the nominated component parts in agricultural and rural areas are mainly the development of energy infrastructure (e.g. wind turbines and power lines, e.g. in Nord, Aisne, Vosges, Moselle), of transport and of agricultural infrastructure, as well as agricultural activities. In the first case, the most significant impact would be on the setting and on the spirit of the place. Road upgrading often does not consider the presence of these sites, affecting their access and ceremonies. Agricultural

activities and related infrastructure may impact on the setting of these sites and in some cases also have direct impacts (e.g. damage by heavy machinery to the fences around some sites). Mechanisms to mitigate such impacts are not in all cases in place. There have been many situations of plaque theft that have been noted, particularly in German cemeteries. There is no specific mitigation measure in place or planned.

Factors that can affect the nominated sites in urban and peri-urban areas are real estate and infrastructure development. In any case, the proximity of unregulated roads, real estate, commercial, and industrial infrastructure will have an impact on the setting, the spirit of the place, and the form. The impact could be visual, auditory, and physical. Some of these sites already show unregulated construction impacts that have not considered their value. Examples include building dwellings whose mass, volume, materials and colours detract from the ability to appreciate the link between these sites and their environment. In the majority of cases, municipalities and cities have taken note and regulated in their zoning apparatus the type of construction. However, when there is no heritage protection status at the site, it is difficult to establish binding regulations that involve heritage experts.

In a large majority of cases, especially in the departments of Haut and Bas-Rhin, Moselle and Vosges, the sites are part of a forest environment governed by the forest code administered by the National Forest Bureau (ONF). Some of these forests are state-owned and wholly administered under the authority of the ONF and its mandate, whilst others are communal, and there the ONF mandate is to set specifications to exploit the forest. The forest code obliges ONF to develop exploitation plans, which may include the identification of sensitive areas. The major issues are related to the archaeological dimension of areas related to the First World War and to what extent the forestry regulations take this into account.

Some sites suffer greatly from high traffic pressure (this is reported especially for sites in Belgium).

ICOMOS considers that many component parts suffer from the impacts of transformations that have occurred in their vicinity.

ICOMOS considers that the main factors affecting a number of component parts of the property are urban pressures, energy and transport infrastructure, particularly windfarms and high-traffic roads. In forested areas, archaeological remains may fall under forestry management pressures. ICOMOS considers that the state of conservation of the component parts of the nominated series is uneven, with many sites in a good state of conservation but many others exhibiting a varied level of maintenance and conservation implementation. The main problem is the lack of a consistent approach to maintenance and conservation within the same management agency and across the different agencies. ICOMOS considers that both the factors affecting the

nominated property and the maintenance/conservation approach have a negative influence on the integrity of the component parts and also make the significance of the nominated property less legible. A comprehensive common approach to maintenance should be developed, to ensure that its outcomes are controlled *ex ante*, particularly with regard to impacts on the cemeteries, in order to preserve their conception.

3 Proposed justification for inscription

Proposed Justification

The nominated property is considered by the States Parties to be of Outstanding Universal Value as a cultural property for the following reasons:

- The nominated series attests to a completely new approach to the fallen in combat, recognised individually.
- The nominated series reflects an entirely new cult of the dead brought forth by the massive human losses caused by the First World War and as a response to the inhumanity of war.
- The nominated series illustrates a completely new architectural movement that responds to the commemoration needs brought about by the immense scale of the conflict, and that is specific to each fighting party.
- Altogether the nominated series illustrates a living tradition aiming to perpetuate the individual memory of the disappeared and a cult of the dead based on humanistic and civil values which invite recollection, reconciliation and peace.

In February 2018, based on an expanded comparative analysis, the States Parties proposed a reworded justification for inscription which revolves around the following axes:

- The nominated series expresses the immense trauma of societies and grief of survivors and families caused by a war waged at an unprecedented industrial scale which mobilised civilians across the world and caused enormous losses that shattered families and societies for decades.
- The nominated property attests to a new way of dealing with the fallen, based on the identification of the dead, systematic individual burial irrespective of nationality, rank, culture, class, confession or philosophical conviction. Initially practiced by comrades or inhabitants near battlefields, it became institutionalised.
- The nominated series represents a remarkable architectural ensemble reflecting mourning and recollection through their arrangements and elements and illustrating different aesthetic models.
- The nominated series is associated with a century long living tradition that mobilise local people, national organisation and people from all over the world.

Comparative analysis

The comparative analysis has been developed around two levels: firstly, comparisons to justify the selection of component parts; and secondly, a comparison with other properties considered similar to the nominated property, in order to justify the nominated series as a whole.

The first level of comparison is based on the following parameters: historic value of the place as a testimony of funerary rites and of the emblematic war events; the presence of landscape and architectural elements (monumental architecture of high quality, specific spatial organisation, presence of landscape and horticultural elements, insertion in a memorial landscape); identity and cultural elements (the site is representative of a nation, of a people, of a specific role in the war, or the site is connected with a specific tradition); the intangible and artistic elements (the site witnesses regular commemorations, is enriched by artistic achievements); and elements of originality (the site is unique, representative of a typology or it presents several attributes); an assessment of integrity and authenticity is also taken into account.

In 2018, ICOMOS noted shortcomings in the rationale for the selection of the component parts and requested additional information and clarifications from the States Parties. Despite the efforts deployed and the additional explanations provided by the States Parties, the selection of component parts for the nominated series remained unconvincing. In particular, ICOMOS found that the inclusion of a number of sites did not appear to reflect the parameters indicated by the States Parties for their selection, nor did they contribute to illustrate the justification for the criteria under which the series is nominated. On the one hand, for example, the cemeteries and monuments to the civilians did not match the justification proposed for the potential Outstanding Universal Value or criteria (iii) and (iv), which focus on the commemoration of the fallen in combat. On the other hand, the cemeteries built in recent times (e.g., Fromelles) did not enjoy a sufficient time-depth to be able to justify criteria (iii) or (vi). Many component parts did not offer a convincing reflection of criterion (iv) and, overall, only a very limited number of them were able to reflect all three criteria, which is what is required for the component parts of a series. Despite the apparently limited focus of the proposed justification, the selection of the component parts of the nominated series did not appear fully consistent with this focus. This lack of clarity relates to the fact that the definition of the nominated property was somehow confused. The understanding of what funerary and memory sites might be is implicitly addressed in the justification for nomination where a focus is put on the necropolises. However, this definition conflicted with the reality of many component parts, in particular regarding planning intent, the presentation of attributes and cultural expressions, and it was not adequately reflected by the selected component parts of the nominated series.

Therefore, when the evaluation of this nomination resumed in January 2023, ICOMOS requested additional

information from the States Parties on how the component parts of the nominated series had been selected in relation to the identified attributes supporting the justification for inscription and the selected criteria. ICOMOS also requested a synoptic table that tied the parameters of the selection and the criteria, in order to further the initial work done during the evaluation procedure in 2018.

In their reply, the States Parties explained that the selection has considered the ensemble of the parties involved in the conflict, the nationalities and origins of the combatants, and the different statuses of the deceased: in combat, following injuries, in detention, executed, military and non-military. The component parts include cemeteries, necropolises, ossuaries and mass graves as well as monuments and memorials erected to commemorate the fallen in the First World War. The selection includes component parts that were created during or immediately after the conflict but also more recently.

The explanation is complemented by a table linking the attributes and the criteria, as well as another table which ties each attribute with the specific contribution of each proposed component part.

The additional information and tables have allowed ICOMOS, in conjunction with all the documentation submitted previously and in light of the *Guiding Principles*, to understand more clearly the scope of the nomination and the rationale for the selection of the nominated component parts, as well as to identify more precisely where weaknesses in the composition of the nominated series reside, as not all the selected component parts contribute to make up a robust series.

In particular, the *Guiding Principles* define the sites of memory as “places where an event happened that a nation and its people [...] or communities want to remember. Sites associated with recent conflicts are specific sites with material evidence, in conformity with Articles 1 and 2 of the Convention, or landscape features which can be linked to their memorial aspect and that commemorate the victims of these conflicts. These sites, accessible, or made accessible, to the public, represent a place of reconciliation, remembrance, peaceful reflection, and must play an educational role in order to promote a culture of peace and dialogue.” Hence, only sites with tangible evidence of the events that happened can be understood as “sites of memory” under the World Heritage Convention.

The above paragraph of the *Guiding Principles* led ICOMOS to question the inclusion within the nominated series of memorial sites purposely created to memorialise the victims, but which do not contain tangible evidence of the event being commemorated and are not part of funerary sites.

In other words, it is the funerary sites, for their association with the First World War and the immense loss it caused,

that might be considered for inscription on the World Heritage List, as they contain tangible evidence of the event being commemorated.

The comparison of the nominated series with other comparable properties is based on two aspects: the specificity of the funerary practices and the historic interpretation context. The comparison notes that many World Heritage properties – namely 117 according to the research – include funerary sites from ancient to more recent times but only a limited number expresses a memorial value; this type of survey is extended to the tentative lists. The nomination dossier then mentions the World Heritage properties related to the Second World War: Auschwitz Birkenau – German Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camp (1940-1945), Poland, 1979, (vi), Hiroshima Peace Memorial (Genbaku Dome), Japan, 1996, (vi), and Bikini Atoll Nuclear Test Site, Marshall Islands, 2010, (iv) and (vi).

The key elements of the comparative analysis focus on two First World War sites on the Tentative Lists of States Parties: “The Walk of Peace from the Alps to the Adriatic – Heritage of the First World War” (Italy, Slovenia) and the sites of Çanakkale and Gelibolu (Turkey), as well as the Balkan and the Eastern Fronts. The Eastern Front preserves several cemeteries, but they are said to play a role as national emblems rather than as international commemorative places; additionally, according to the nomination dossier, the awareness of the heritage significance of these sites occurred rather late, many being left in abandonment in the interwar period, suffering also intentional damage. The nomination dossier concludes that none of these fronts presents the density of testimonies, in terms of funerary sites, as the Western Front; however, both the ‘Walk of Peace’ and Çanakkale and Gelibolu would preserve funerary and memory sites that might complement the nominated series.

In 2018, despite the additional argumentation and the expansion of the comparative analysis, ICOMOS considered that it remained unconvincing in its conclusions as the nature of the proposed justification, that the attributes and the composition of the nominated series were unclear, and that the fundamental issues raised by the nomination in relation to the scope of the World Heritage Convention needed to be addressed by the World Heritage Committee.

The reflection developed since 2018 on sites of memory associated with recent conflicts, the additional information and explanation provided by the States Parties, particularly in attempting an appraisal of the magnitude and scope of the war in relation to the value of the nominated property, have assisted ICOMOS in considering the nominated series as a tangible reflection of an event of outstanding universal significance which also determined a significant period of human history with long-lasting impacts on individuals, communities and societies across the world.

Hence, despite the weaknesses of the comparative analysis, ICOMOS came to the conclusion that the proposed series could be considered for inscription on the World Heritage List, but on different grounds than those proposed by the States Parties and in a reduced configuration.

ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis justifies consideration of this property for the World Heritage List.

Criteria under which inscription is proposed

The property is nominated on the basis of cultural criteria (iii), (iv) and (vi).

Criterion (iii): *bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared;*

This criterion is justified by the States Parties on the grounds of the installation and generalisation of a new tradition of the cult of the fallen, in which each victim is commemorated and recognised individually without distinction of social or cultural affiliation. Each body is buried in an individual grave in military cemeteries or in dedicated enclosures in civilian cemeteries, and unidentified remains are collected in ossuaries. Monuments to the Missing are erected for those who do not have an identified individual grave.

In 2018, ICOMOS observed that commemorating the individual soldiers that died in the war and providing them, wherever possible, with individual graves and headstones was an achievement, but it could not be seen as an exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition.

Additionally, the memorialisation of the fallen dates back to the end of the 18th century. An essential condition for the development of the latter was the transition from a cult of the religious and famous dead to secular and citizen worship. The device of mass conscription converts the citizen into a soldier. Previously, being a soldier was a profession, but then it became a duty and a condition for the establishment of citizenship in the 19th century. As a result, death and burial in a mass grave were no longer accepted as an occupational hazard. From then on, the Nation was obliged to recognise individually its dead regardless of their social background (for example: order of the King of Prussia, Frederick William III, in 1813).

The additional information submitted in February 2018 contained a revised justification for this criterion, which focused on the fixing and full establishment of principles related to individual burial and recognition of the fallen combatants which had emerged in previous conflicts but which only were undertaken systematically and on a massive scale during the First World War.

However, ICOMOS considered that the application of this criterion remained too narrow and not adequate to justify it.

For ICOMOS it remains difficult to consider the individual burial of fallen soldiers, in the first decades of the 20th century, as an exceptional testimony to a civilisation or a cultural tradition, although it was certainly a massive endeavour, made necessary by the scale of human losses caused by the war.

In the additional information provided in 2023, the States Parties confirmed the original wording proposed to justify criterion (iii).

In the context of the nomination, ICOMOS considers that the nominated property is first and foremost evidence of a period of upheaval in world history rather than evidence of the establishment of a tradition for the burial of soldiers killed in action.

Therefore, ICOMOS considers that, even in light of the additional information provided by the States Parties and of the intervening reflection on sites of memories associated with recent conflicts, this criterion remains unjustified.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has not been demonstrated.

Criterion (iv): be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;

This criterion is justified by the States Parties on the grounds that the creation of a new typology of decorative, architectural and landscape elements reflect cultural sensitivities or national styles, large-scale constructions and organised sites for the memory of all combat deaths and, being located around major combat sites, they are associated with the presence of elements that directly reflect the conflict.

In 2018, ICOMOS considered that the justification proposed in the nomination dossier, which focused solely on the fact that soldiers received a decent burial and well-designed funerary monuments, was far too narrow and somehow overlooked the tragedy that made necessary this massive undertaking.

In the additional information provided in February 2018, the States Parties proposed a revised justification for this criterion, focusing on the notion of a new architectural, decorative and landscape typology developed purposely as a response to the heavy loss of life caused by the First World War. Although ICOMOS considered that the new wording was more appropriate than the original justification, it also noted that the definition of the nominated property remained unclear. ICOMOS further noted that it would be difficult to apply to the nominated series the notion of a memorial landscape, as this would need to encompass other aspects, such as the topographical changes to the landscape (trenches, shell holes, etc.), defensive constructions (bunkers and war

infrastructures), and many others, which are not considered in the nominated series.

The additional information provided by the States Parties, the reflection developed since 2018 on sites of memory associated with recent conflicts and the adoption of the *Guiding Principles* by the World Heritage Committee in January 2023, have provided orientation and insights to clarify the definition of the nominated series which should focus essentially on funerary sites as a response to the inhumane scale of losses caused by the conflict.

ICOMOS therefore considers that this criterion could be appropriate for a reduced series of funerary sites in so far as the outstanding scale, scope and dignity of the ensemble could be seen to illustrate an extremely significant stage in human history, namely the First World War and its aftermath, through the way it reflects both the scale and immense tragedy of a dehumanising war and the desire for peace and human dignity that it generated in communities and States traumatised by their losses.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion could be demonstrated through a revised justification and a more confined series focused on funerary sites.

Criterion (vi): be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance;

This criterion is justified by the States Parties on the grounds that funerary and memory sites respond to the desire to perpetuate the individual identity of the war victim and to re-humanise societies traumatised by the disappearance of a large part of their population. The shared memory of the fallen has a current and dynamic dimension, which is reflected by collective commemorations, institutional or associative events, international, national or local, as well as private pilgrimages, individual or family visits.

Whilst in many cemeteries and memorial sites on the Western Front there is an active tradition of repeated rituals for the memory of the dead that goes back to the post-First World War period, ICOMOS considers that the nomination lacks a comparative analysis which shows how this tradition is distinguished from other rituals such as those associated with the Second World War or the memory of the Unknown Soldier. The argument of a tradition of memorial rituals still present after nearly 100 years would appear more appropriate to justify criterion (iii), in so far as cemeteries and memorial sites were built in order to carry out this tradition.

The additional information provided in February 2018 by the States Parties in response to the Interim Report sent by ICOMOS, included a revised justification for this criterion that focused on the commemorative intent of these sites and the active visits that continue to this day.

ICOMOS however noted that not all the nominated component parts exhibit the same level of temporal perspective and continuity in commemorative terms that would be necessary for this criterion to be demonstrated.

Following the reception in 2023 of additional information concerning the composition of the nominated series, the scope of the war and its impacts, and based on further reflection by ICOMOS in conjunction with the adoption of the *Guiding Principles*, ICOMOS considers that criterion (vi) could be relevant to the nominated series because of its association with the First World War which can be considered as an event of outstanding universal significance.

The definition of the nominated property would need to be clarified by focusing on the funerary sites, in accordance with the *Guiding Principles*. In this sense, an ensemble of funerary sites erected in a relatively short time, in a large but confined area in which a large number and a diversity of soldiers who fell in the First World War were buried, could be considered to be tangibly and directly associated with an event of outstanding universal significance, so that the nominated property could be seen as an outstanding reflection of the global scope, scale and devastation of the war as well as the human loss.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion could be demonstrated, but through a revised justification and a reduced series focused on funerary sites.

ICOMOS considers that criterion (iii) has not been demonstrated, while criteria (iv) and (vi) could be demonstrated through a revised justification and a reduced series focused on funerary sites.

Integrity and authenticity

Integrity

It is explained in the nomination dossier that the integrity of the nominated series is based on different axes: the will of governments to commemorate individually the soldiers killed in action; the reflection of the geographical scope of the Western Front; the multinational scope of the belligerents and their cultural references; and the stylistic and typological diversity of the cemeteries and memorials, the different periods of construction and their symbolic meaning.

In 2018, ICOMOS considered that, overall, the integrity of the nominated series was not demonstrated, because of the unclear definition of the nominated property and because it was not evident what component parts really contributed to the series and to the illustration of the proposed justification for inscription. Inconsistencies between what is commemorated in the revised justification for the proposed Outstanding Universal Value, the criteria, and what is included in the nominated series were identified. This had a negative impact on the overall integrity of the nominated series.

The additional information and explanations provided in 2023 by the States Parties, the in-depth reflection of ICOMOS on the sites of memory associated with recent conflicts and on this nomination, as well as the guidance provided by the *Guiding Principles* approved in January 2023 have assisted ICOMOS in identifying which component parts would need to be removed from the nominated series, so that it can represent an ensemble that would convey a revised justification for inscription revolving around the idea that the nominated property illustrates in an outstanding manner, through the density, variety and design quality of the component parts, the endeavour to regain a sense of humanity as a response to a cataclysmic event and a period of history of global importance, based on criteria (iv) and (vi).

After careful examination of the component parts, the additional information provided by the States Parties, the observations of the ICOMOS technical evaluation mission, and the in-depth exchanges within the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel, ICOMOS considers that the following component parts would need to be removed from the nominated serial property:

- Memorials purposely constructed to commemorate the fallen during the First World War which are not included or not clearly linked with cemeteries and their design. These are:

Belgium:

FL01 Monument to the disappeared of the Commonwealth "Nieuport Memorial"
FL07 Canadian National Monument "The Brooding Soldier"
FL26 Irish Monument "Island of Ireland Peace Tower"

France :

AI09 French Memorial "Les fantômes"
ME07 French Stelae to the Executed of Fleury-devant-Douaumont
MA01 French Memorial of the Battles of the Marne

- Component parts that only reflect national values. These are:

Belgium:

WA01 Fort de Loncin
FL03 Crypt of the Tower of Yser

- Component parts that were created for and are associated with different events than the First World War and for which the message is unclear in relation to the justification for inscription. These are:

France:

AR02 German Monument of the Saint-Charles Cemetery – the monument was built as an act of defiance and not of peace in an existing cemetery

linked to previous conflict and so bearing a confusing message.

- Component parts that offer a message similar to other component parts but their qualities in relation to the proposed attributes are minor or absent and therefore do not contribute to expressing the attributes supporting the justification for inscription. These are:

Belgium:

WA10 Commonwealth Military Cemetery and memorial to the missing "Berks Cemetery Extension" and "Ploegsteert Memorial to the Missing"

WA11 "Strand Military Cemetery"

WA12 "Prowse Point Military Cemetery"

WA13 "Mud Corner Cemetery"

WA14 "Toronto Avenue Cemetery"

WA15 "Ploegsteert Wood Military Cemetery"

WA16 "Rifle House Cemetery"

FL09 "Polygon Wood Cemetery"

FL12 "Welsh Cemetery (Caesar's Nose)"

FL13 "No Man's Cot Cemetery"

FL14 "Track X Cemetery"

FL15 "Buff's Road Cemetery"

FL20 "Woods Cemetery"

FL21 "1st D.C.L.I. Cemetery, the Bluff"

FL22 "Hedge Row Trench Cemetery"

FL24 "Spanbroekmolen British Cemetery"

FL25 "Lone Tree Cemetery"

France:

ND01 "Fromelles (Pheasant Wood) Cemetery"

ND05 Assevent National French Necropolis and Military German Cemetery

PC14 "Wimereux Communal Cemetery"

SE02 "Mill Road Cemetery"

OI03 Compiègne French National Necropolis

AI04 Le Sourd French National Necropolis and Le Sourd German Military Cemetery

AI05 National French Necropolis of prisoners of Effry

AI08 Craonnelle National French Necropolis

SM01 French National Necropolis "La Grande Tombe de Villeroy"

MA04 National French Necropolis, Military German Cemetery and Military Polish Cemetery – it is noted that the Polish burials date back to the Second World War

MA05 Mondement-Montgivroux communal French Cemetery and French Chapel

MA06 National French Cemetery and Military German Cemetery of la Crouée

AR01 Chestres Military German Cemetery and National French Necropolis

MA11 Saint-Thomas-en-Argonne National French Necropolis and National French Necropolis of the Gruerie Monument ossuary

MA12 La Harazée National French Necropolis

ME02 La Forestière National French Necropolis

ME04 La Maize National French Necropolis

ME09 Le Faubourg Pavé National French Necropolis

MM02 Gerbéviller French Square of the civilian victims

MM03 Pierrepont National French Necropolis

MM04 Pierrepont German military cemetery

MS03 L'Espérance National French Necropolis

MS06 Lagarde National French Necropolis

VS02 La Chipotte National French Necropolis

VS03 Les Tiges National French Necropolis

HR02 Hohrod-Bärenstall German military cemetery

HR03 – Kahm German military cemetery

HR08 Germania French Military Cemetery

HR09 Moosch National French Necropolis

- Component parts whose integrity is affected by factors that prevent their significance from being properly conveyed. These are:

Belgium:

WA03 Le Plateau French Military Cemetery

FL19 Larch Wood Cemetery.

In addition to more conceptual problems, component parts FL01 Nieuport Memorial (Belgium), AI04 Le Sourd French National Necropolis and Le Sourd Military German Cemetery, AI05 National French Necropolis of prisoners of Effry, AI09 French Memorial "Les fantômes" (France) and those from FL12 to FL15 (Belgium) also have significant integrity issues due to negatively impacting factors in their immediate setting.

Component parts PC03 Canadian National Memorial "Vimy Memorial", PC04 Commonwealth Military Cemetery "Canadian Cemetery n°2", PC05 Commonwealth Military Cemetery "Givenchy Road Canadian Cemetery" are all included in the Vimy Ridge Site of Canada (France) and are therefore protected. To justify consideration of these three component parts for inclusion in the nominated series as a site of memory, the boundaries of the component parts should be modified and encompass most or the entirety of the Vimy Ridge National Historic Site of Canada.

In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that since the criteria for justifying the proposed Outstanding Universal Value have not been demonstrated at this stage, attributes of Outstanding Universal Value cannot be confirmed and integrity, as defined by the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, is not demonstrated at this stage but could be by a reduced series focusing on funerary sites that exclude the above-mentioned component parts on the basis of a revised justification for inscription and on a revised wording for criterion (iv) and (vi). ICOMOS considers that a reduced and refocused series as suggested above would suffice to convey the proposed Outstanding Universal Value.

Authenticity

The nomination dossier holds that the nominated component parts express their function as places of worship for the dead. They attest to the endeavour of providing to each fallen in combat an individual burial and a recognition of their sacrifice. The layout, arrangements, shape and materials reflect the cultural references of each nation and the way in which an individual fallen in combat is commemorated.

In 2018, ICOMOS considered that the problem of an unclear definition of the nominated series had an impact on authenticity, particularly with respect to cultural diversity. Not all component parts contained attributes expressing the three proposed criteria: the lack of clarity in the nomination and the inconsistencies between what appeared to be the aim of the commemoration and the reality of what was nominated harmed the overall credibility of the nomination.

ICOMOS also considered that the whole series as presented suffered from shortcomings deriving from the way in which justification for inscription has been built, from the lack of sufficient historical perspective and from the inconsistencies in the selection of the component sites, which was not clear and did not appear to reflect the rationale proposed for the selection. This lack of clarity also had repercussions on the way the boundaries of the nominated component parts and particularly of their buffer zones have been designed.

Management constraints impacted on the authenticity of the component parts: for instance, the layout of the vegetation has been simplified, materials (e.g., small walls, doors, crosses) and layouts (new alignment of the crosses) changed, and in the same cemetery crosses made of different materials are found, impacting on their overall visual impression. Maintenance strategies do not seem to take into consideration the design and the layout of the component parts, and historic documentation does not seem to be referred to or used for the implementation of these strategies.

In summary, in 2018 ICOMOS considered that since the criteria for justifying the proposed Outstanding Universal Value were not demonstrated at that stage, the authenticity of the whole series, as defined by the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, could not be confirmed.

The additional information provided by States Parties in 2023, along with the reflection carried out by ICOMOS on sites of memory associated with recent conflicts, and the guidance provided by the *Guiding Principles* adopted by the World Heritage Committee in January 2023, have assisted ICOMOS in understanding how a reduced series focusing only on funerary sites might have the potential to justify criteria (iv) and (vi) through a revised justification, and hence how authenticity as defined by the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* might be met. Issues concerning the

conditions of authenticity of individual component parts in terms of their ability to convey attributes supporting justification for inscription are parallel to those of integrity and can be addressed by removing the component parts identified previously from the nominated serial property.

In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that the conditions of authenticity of the whole series have not been met but could be if a reduced series, focusing only on funerary sites, was nominated for inscription on the basis of a revised justification and criteria (iv) and (vi).

Boundaries

The nomination dossier does not provide much detail on how the boundaries of the nominated component parts and of their buffer zones have been defined. ICOMOS noted that the approach for the delineation of the boundaries of the buffer zones is not clear – in some cases, they are very tight, and in others quite wide. ICOMOS, therefore, requested additional information on this aspect on 28 July 2017. The States Parties responded on 13 September 2017, explaining the main objectives pursued through the buffer zones and providing explanations on what mechanisms ensure the protection of the nominated component parts. In the case of France, a detailed table explaining the rationale for each component was provided. On the other hand, Belgium provided some examples of how the buffer zones guarantee the protection of the property.

Based on the observations of the ICOMOS technical evaluation mission, ICOMOS considers that, in many instances, the boundaries of the nominated component parts excluded relevant features related to the proposed justification for inscription. In other cases, the buffer zones were drawn too tightly.

In 2018, ICOMOS considered that both the delineation of the boundaries of the nominated component parts and of the buffer zones suffered from inconsistencies and lack of clarity in the nomination due to a confused definition of the nominated property as a whole and because of a lack of effective protection mechanisms.

In February 2023, the State Party of France provided updated information on the delineation of boundaries of the buffer zones for several of component parts, namely MA06, MA07, MA08, MA09 and MA10, ME05, ME06, ME07, ME08, ME10, HR01, HR02, HR03, HR04.

Furthermore, the *Guiding Principles* adopted by the World Heritage Committee in 2023 in conjunction with further reflection and analysis on the present nomination, have allowed to clarify what could be a clearer definition of the series and of the potential reasons for its eligibility for the World Heritage List. In turn, this has also made it possible for ICOMOS has got more clarity about specific recommendations on how to modify the boundaries of some nominated component parts and of some buffer zones. These are presented below.

Belgium:

The component part WA02 Robermont Military plots should also include the burial grounds and tombs of the German soldiers, as this is the only site where the fallen of all parties are represented.

For component part WA06 Enclosure of the Executed in Tamines, ICOMOS considers that only the cemetery should be retained in the nominated series.

France:

The boundaries of the nominated component parts PC03 Canadian National Memorial “Vimy Memorial”, PC04 Commonwealth Military Cemetery “Canadian Cemetery n°2”, PC05 Commonwealth Military Cemetery “Givenchy Road Canadian Cemetery” should be modified and merged into one single component part to include the Vimy Ridge National Historic Site of Canada.

For component part ND04 German Military Cemetery of la Route de Solesmes and Commonwealth “Cambrai East Military Cemetery”, ICOMOS recommends including only the two military cemeteries and excluding the civil cemetery.

For component part PC09 Czechoslovakian Military Cemetery of Neuville-Saint-Vaast, ICOMOS recommends that it be included in the same buffer zone as component parts PC07 French National Necropolis of la Targette and Commonwealth Military Cemetery “La Targette British Cemetery”, and PC08 La Maison Blanche German Military Cemetery, as they seem part of the same memorial sector.

In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that the boundaries of the nominated serial property and of the buffer zones could be adequate if they are modified as recommended above.

ICOMOS further considers that mechanisms for the protection of the wider setting of the component parts should be envisaged to preserve them from the visual impacts of the wind farms, as well as to safeguard and enhance the visual connections among component parts.

Evaluation of the proposed justification for inscription

In summary, when ICOMOS first evaluated the nominated property in 2018, it considered that its definition was confused as it was unclear what was to be commemorated through the proposed series. It also remained unclear how funerary and memory sites were defined or understood as the reality of many component parts conflicted with the implicit definition that emerged from the justification for inscription. The comparative analysis remained unconvincing and not able to support the nominated series under the proposed justification for inscription. ICOMOS expressed fundamental reserves in the way the nominated series was conceived and on the overall narrow arguments proposed to justify inscription and the criteria. On the one hand, ICOMOS considered

that criterion (iii) was not justified and difficult to demonstrate. Criterion (vi) was not demonstrated either by the proposed arguments and by the nominated series. On the other hand, the revision of the proposed justification for criterion (iv) proposed by the States Parties was an improvement, but the lack of a clear definition of the nominated property compromised the possibility of justifying the criterion. The in-depth reflection on sites of memory associated with recent conflicts carried out by the Open-ended Working Group established by the World Heritage Committee, and the reflection carried out by scholars and organisations, including ICOMOS, as well as the adoption by the World Heritage Committee of the *Guiding Principles*, have offered guidance to evaluate under what conditions this nomination could be seen eligible for inclusion on the World Heritage List. In particular, the *Guiding Principles* have provided a definition of what should be understood as a “site of memory” within the framework of the World Heritage Convention. This definition assists in clarifying the definition of the nominated series and supports a refocusing on funerary sites, as they contain tangible evidence of the event that is being commemorated. Whilst the States Parties have not provided further revised wording for the justification for inscription or the proposed criteria, nor has the nominated series been revised, the States Parties have made an additional effort to clarify the nature of the component parts included in the nominated series, and in responding to the additional questions that ICOMOS asked in March 2023. The additional information provided by the States Parties, particularly the attempt to contextualise more widely the First World War, its underlying reasons, its consequences, clarified the reasons that led to building these sites and how the nominated property could tangibly reflect all this.

ICOMOS is grateful for the additional information and reflection on the conflict, on the origins and nature of the component parts forming the nominated series, as this has contributed to further ICOMOS reflection on the nomination and to understand it as a tangible reflection of an event of outstanding universal significance which also determined a significant period of human history with long-lasting impacts on individuals, communities and societies across the world.

Based on the above, ICOMOS considers that a revised and reduced series focusing only on funerary sites, as identified by ICOMOS, has robust potential to justify consideration for inscription on the World Heritage List under criteria (iv) and (vi). The outstanding scale, scope and dignity of an ensemble of funerary sites could be seen to illustrate an extremely significant period in human history, namely the First World War and its aftermath, through the way it reflects both the scale and immense tragedy of a dehumanising war and the desire for peace and human dignity that it generated in communities and States traumatised by their losses. Such an ensemble, erected in a relatively short time, in a large but confined area in which a large number and a diversity of soldiers who fell in the First World War were buried, could be considered to be tangibly and directly associated with an

event of outstanding universal significance so that the nominated property could be seen as an outstanding reflection of the global scope, scale and devastation of the war and the human loss.

4 Conservation measures and monitoring

Documentation

ICOMOS considers that the inventory process has been well developed by the different organisations involved in the management of the nominated property.

The inventories appear to be complete, to varying degrees. These inventories generally meet the specific needs of each type of site, but the resources deployed vary considerably from one site to another. These differences in resources are not necessarily linked to administrative status (state, municipality or association). The nomination includes sources and a wealth of information that is not immediately available to site managers. This information should be made available to support their management and maintenance work as well as interpretation.

ICOMOS considers that it would be desirable to adopt a more coherent approach to documentation and to develop it on the basis of the experiences of the management agencies in a more systematic way.

Conservation measures

Maintenance, conservation measures and interpretation are carried out by the agencies responsible for the management of the component parts. Municipalities are in charge of the conservation and management of the surrounding areas outside the nominated component parts.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) manages individually all sites under its responsibility and carries out maintenance, cleaning, conservation interventions, including restoration and reconstruction. Conservation follows a 5-year cycle; structural maintenance is done every 5 years based on previous on-site inspection. The policy for the conservation of headstones is based on four steps, reconstruction being the last option. Despite the existence of a policy, ICOMOS found its application not always consistent.

The German War Graves Commission (*Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge* – VDK) maintains the elements of the cemeteries through subcontracting, whilst its staff carry out inspections and manage activities with municipalities and volunteers.

The French Ministry of Defence carries out maintenance and conservation work. ICOMOS has found that no consistent approach to the reality on the ground in the various cemeteries is applied. A more rigorous conservation management approach with reference principles and recommendations would assist in the task.

The Belgian Ministry of Defence is responsible for the maintenance of the Wallonian and Flemish sites. Also in this case, ICOMOS noted inconsistencies in maintenance approaches across cemeteries.

Agreements exist among States to ensure that tombs of soldiers belonging to a different nation than the hosting cemetery are maintained. However, this does not apply in all cases, and this results in an uneven state of conservation of headstones.

ICOMOS notes that the most visited sites enjoy more careful conservation and maintenance compared with less-known sites.

Monitoring

The nomination dossier reports that monitoring is carried out in each country according to the respective legal framework.

ICOMOS considers that a monitoring system needs to be set up in order to ensure the periodical assessment of the state of conservation and of the effectiveness of the conservation/maintenance measures at each component part based on the same set of indicators, for the purpose of comparability. ICOMOS also considers that a monitoring system to assess the effectiveness of management objectives would also assist in their implementation.

ICOMOS considers that a more consistent approach is necessary in addressing conservation and maintenance within the same management agencies and across agencies. Expertise in the maintenance and conservation of heritage properties should be sought in order to address more adequately and coherently the conservation and maintenance needs of the funerary sites as an ensemble that has been nominated to convey the same message and the same values.

ICOMOS also considers that a common monitoring system needs to be developed and agreed upon between the two States Parties in order to ensure a common approach to periodical evaluation of the state of the nominated property and of its component parts.

5 Protection and management

Legal protection

Legal protection differs in Belgium and France. In Wallonia the protection of immovable cultural properties is regulated by the Decree 1 April 1999. Protection mechanisms for buffer zones include the *sites classés* or the protection zones. The Decree 11 April 2014 has modified the Code of Urban Planning, Territorial Management, Heritage and Energy strengthening the status of the buffer zones of World Heritage properties within the planning system in Wallonia.

In Flanders the nominated component sites enjoy the strongest level of protection available under the Decree 5

June 2009 as amended by the Decree 12 July 2013 and the Order 16 May 2014. For the protection zones, legal protection (according to the decrees quoted above), the Sector Plan, and the buffer zone of World Heritage sites as per the revised Flemish Code of Territorial Management, provide for the required protection measures. The World Heritage buffer zone implies that within a 100 metres radius from the property, any intervention needs to be given a binding opinion by the Agency for Cultural Heritage, whereas over 100 metres only buildings taller than 15 metres require such an opinion. Finally, two executive spatial provincial plans – Plan Palingbeek, Hill 60 and surroundings and Mount Kemmel – contain provisions preserving the setting of some of the component sites.

In France, the protection of the component parts relies on different norms. They include the Heritage Code, the Environment Code, the mechanisms envisaged by the CAP Law (July 2016) with the Significant Heritage Sites (SPR) and the amendments inserted into the Urban Planning Code.

Additionally, cemeteries enjoy protection from development within a 100 metres radius in rural areas and a 36 metres radius in urban areas (SUP).

In 2018, buffer zones were protected or planned to be protected as follows: falling within the protection zone – *abords* – of a historic monument, falling within a *site classé* or *site inscrit*, earmarked in the local urban plan (PLU) or in the Territorial Coherence Scheme (SCOT); for the component parts located in rural areas, buffer zones are usually covered by protection for natural values or as managed forests.

ICOMOS noted that the legal protection was complex and differed between component sites, particularly in France, and that many component parts were still awaiting protection under heritage legislation. ICOMOS also noted that some of the protection measures, such as the SUP for cemeteries or the protection under the National Forestry Bureau, did not address specifically the protection needs of the proposed value or the attributes of the component parts.

The nomination dossier mentions several sites in Wallonia and France for which legal protection was under development. During the evaluation procedure carried out in 2018, ICOMOS noted that for a number of component parts the protective designation under heritage legislation was completed.

The States Parties also clarified in their response transmitted in February 2018 that the Wallonia, Flemish and French legal frameworks apply to all component parts, none of which enjoys extraterritorial rights. The soil where these cemeteries are located was given in perpetual concession to other States for the purpose of the burial and memorialisation of their fallen.

In February 2023, the States Parties provided updated information with regard to the progress in establishing legal protection. In Belgium all component parts enjoy legal protection and buffer zones have been enhanced.

Similarly, in France, legal protection at the national level has advanced and, in February 2023, the number of component parts that enjoy national designation as heritage properties has increased to eighty-three, while twenty-seven are protected through urban planning instruments (*Plans Locaux d'Urbanisme*); the completion of some heritage designations is awaited in 2023.

Management system

The management of the component parts of the nominated property is divided into two distinct areas, the responsibilities of which fall to different institutions. The first concerns the conservation and maintenance of the component parts, which are entirely under the responsibility of the *Direction de la Mémoire et du Patrimoine* (DMPA), the *Office national des anciens combattants et victimes de guerre* (ONAC-VG), the *Souvenir Français*, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC), the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) and the *Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge* (VDK), and the States of Canada, Australia, South Africa, Italy, Portugal and Denmark.

On the other hand, enhancement and protection of the areas surrounding the component parts are the responsibility of local and regional authorities. The management plans are defined at the departmental level, responding to directives issued by the transnational steering committee and at the national level. Then each departmental action plan is composed of local action plans. Municipalities and departments can organise conservation and maintenance actions around the funerary and memory sites, but it is not their role to intervene themselves in these places.

The overall transnational management in Belgium and France is coordinated by the Transnational Steering Committee for the Funerary and memory sites of the First World War (Western Front). This Committee is articulated into two committees: the Coordinating Body that ensures the transnational coordination, and the Transnational Scientific Council.

The Flemish Coordination, the Wallonia Coordination, and the French Coordination form the Coordinating Body. The Flemish Coordination is composed of a Steering Committee and a Municipal Coordination. The Wallonia Coordination is composed of a Steering Committee, a Management Committee and a Scientific Committee. The French Coordination is composed of a Scientific Committee, a Territorial Conference, and a Departmental Coordinations.

In Flanders, heritage management is carried out via means of multiple consultation and information sessions with different actors. A declaration of intent was signed in Nieuport on 11 June 2015. Working groups will be

established in each commune to follow the implementation of the decisions of the Steering Committee. The working groups will be composed of all actors concerned (for each site) and will be chaired by the Heritage Agency of Flanders. The working groups will be convened at least once a year. Flanders Heritage has developed since 2002 an integral strategy to preserve and protect the heritage of the First World War. This strategy is implemented by specialists from Flanders Heritage who function as a centre of expertise for the sites of Flanders.

The Steering Committee in Wallonia brings together decision-makers for the component parts: site managers (VDK, CWGC, DMPA), mayors, and ambassadors of the other countries concerned. It approves the management plan prepared by the Management Committee, and adopts policy and budget decisions, as part of the management plan and the multi-year action plan.

The Management Committee is composed of the site managers, services and local actors concerned with the site and its development. Its mission is to prepare the management plan, ensure the day-to-day management, draw up an annual program of actions and establish the budget estimates that are related to its implementation.

The French Coordination is based on a two-tiered structure involving a Territorial Conference, supported by a Scientific Committee, and a Departmental Coordination. The coordination is supported by the Association "Landscapes and Memorials of the Great War" (*Paysages et sites de mémoire de la Grande Guerre*). A technical team is dedicated to the operational part of the management.

The Scientific Committee represents the scientific reference body for the Territorial Conference or for the Departmental Coordination. One member represents France in the Transnational Scientific Council. The Departmental Coordination, on the other hand, plays a role at the local level, as it works on the ground with the local administrations.

The management plan annexed to the nomination dossier explains that transnational management will become effective if the nominated property is inscribed on the World Heritage List.

No overall management plan is mentioned. The component parts in Wallonia are covered by one single regional management plan, and the same goes for the component parts located in Flanders. In France, management plans exist at the departmental level. Action plans developed to implement the management plans are based on different themes in Wallonia, Flanders or France.

In France, departmental plans aim at involving the local actors around the national main management actors. Management guidelines are developed around four axes: protecting, conserving, knowing, enhancing.

Visitor management

The nomination dossier does not provide much information on approaches to interpretation, although at some of the nominated component parts, an updated interpretation of the Western Front is provided. Updated information was provided by the States Parties in 2023, in particular on activities carried out in France with regard to educational activities and raising awareness among the younger generations, as well as activities aimed at the general audience, including transnational twinning activities, and thematic visits.

With regard to tourism, walking and biking itineraries have been developed to discover funerary sites and related monuments or memorials. Actions to promote intermodality in transport and support the network of public transportation systems have also been implemented.

Community involvement

Since 2018, the Association "Landscapes and Memorials of the Great War" (*Paysages et sites de mémoire de la Grande Guerre*) has expanded the scope of international cooperation to involve and raise awareness among the national communities from former colonised countries which suffered human losses during the conflict. Two international conferences on the nominated property and the First World War were organised, and scholars from the nations involved in the war were invited to be part of the Scientific Committees. A research programme has been conceived to involve representatives from all continents. At the local level, educational activities have been conceived for all age groups.

Effectiveness of the protection and management of the nominated property

ICOMOS notes that the legal protection has been strengthened: in Belgium, all the nominated component parts are covered by heritage designations, and in France the majority of the nominated component parts are now protected under the heritage legislation. Nonetheless, a few component parts remain only protected by local planning instruments (*Plan Local d'Urbanisme*, PLU) or because they are included in protected areas or protection zones of historic monuments. It is crucial to protect under the national heritage legislation all the component parts of the nominated property to ensure adequate protection, and provide a basis for conservation and maintenance based on heritage considerations and value.

An overall transnational coordinated management structure has been established but so far this has not led to coordination of approaches in the management of the nominated component parts by responsible entities. In principle, the management institutions for the funerary sites must be integrated into management systems, at international, national and local levels, due to their responsibilities in the matter. The management approach appears still fragmented and varies according to the bodies responsible for management, but also according to the size and relevance of the sites for visitors. The overall management structure developed by the Transnational Steering Committee operates in parallel

and is somewhat separated from the management systems in place for each nominated cemetery, monument and ossuary. These management systems do not appear to be influenced by the fact that all the nominated component sites, despite management practices developed over decades, are now part of an ensemble and should also be able to reflect this through a management approach that is based on shared principles and directions, grounded on the common proposed Outstanding Universal Value and message that the nominated serial property aims to convey. The absence of a common approach to conservation and management results in considerable differences in the way the nominated cemeteries and sites are dealt with. The main structuring elements for the management plans in Wallonia, Flanders and in the French departments differ from one another and it seems difficult to achieve a comprehensive transnational vision and approach. ICOMOS also observes that most of the nominated component sites do not enjoy an individual management plan providing principles and approaches to be followed; at best, specifications are provided for each and every work to be carried out. This has an impact on the quality of interventions undertaken to maintain the component sites and also sustain the overall unevenness in the management approach. The announced Framework Agreement, mentioned in the additional information sent in April 2023, if signed and implemented, would represent an important advancement that can form the basis for more effective coordination in the management of the French section of the nominated property that could also have a positive impact on the overall transnational coordination and cooperation.

The lack of an explicit common approach to interpretation that goes beyond the celebration of the individual burials of the soldiers who died in action appears as one of the weaknesses of this nomination. The additional information provided by the States Parties in 2023 on this matter does not indicate that a significant advancement has been achieved since 2018 in conceiving a common interpretation strategy for the nominated property, which, in accordance with the *Guiding Principles*, is a fundamental requirement for all sites of memory associated with recent conflicts.

In summary, ICOMOS considers that legal protection and protective measures have improved and will be adequate when all the nominated component parts will be covered by designation under heritage legislation. With regard to management, ICOMOS considers that an overall and coherent management and conservation approach needs to be developed and agreed upon among all actors, particularly those responsible for the daily management and maintenance, that would be able to respect the specificity of each component part and at the same time to provide a common framework.

A common shared strategy for the interpretation of the nominated property and of what it means in relation to the scale and impacts of the First World War on individuals, communities, societies, nations and states, which can

coordinate and update the presentation of the nominated property is urgently required to ensure that a concerted and shared narrative is offered at the component parts of the nominated series. Such a strategy should incorporate narratives related to the role played by the nations formerly colonised by European countries and the tribute they paid in the conflict.

6 Conclusions

In 2018, when ICOMOS first evaluated the nomination of the Funerary and memory sites of the First World War (Western Front), it considered that the nomination raised fundamental issues and several questions related to the scope and requirements of the World Heritage framework. Above all, ICOMOS noted fundamental issues with regard to the purpose and scope of the World Heritage Convention and its relevance to celebrate properties that commemorate aspects of wars and conflicts. Then, issues were identified in relation to the understanding of the cultural significance of the nominated series and its context, and therefore in relation to what the States Parties aimed to commemorate through this nomination.

On one hand, the scope of the nomination appeared extremely broad, and on the other hand, far too narrow and limited when it came to the definition of the potential Outstanding Universal Value of the nominated property and the underlying issues of its manifold cultural significance. The lack of clarity in the definition of the nominated series and of its commemorative aim affected the way in which the series was configured, the rationale for the selection of the component parts and the delineation of their boundaries. ICOMOS also considered that a broader understanding and reappraisal of the First World War would have contributed to bringing into focus the way in which memorialisation has interpreted and sometimes even altered the actual events, thus allowing to reach a more comprehensive and multifaceted understanding of the meaning and significance of the nominated property. Other important issues concerned conservation, protection and management.

Further to Decision 42 COM 8B.24 of the World Heritage Committee, a series of reflections on sites of memory associated with recent conflicts and the challenges they pose in relation to the World Heritage Convention was undertaken. An Open-ended Working Group was established by the Committee to reflect on this matter. The Working Group developed the *Guiding principles for the preparation of nominations concerning sites of memory associated with recent conflicts (Guiding Principles)* which were adopted in January 2023 at the 18th Extraordinary Session of the World Heritage Committee. The adjournment of consideration of this nomination was lifted and ICOMOS therefore resumed the evaluation of the nominated property as submitted in 2017.

This means that the nomination that ICOMOS evaluated in 2023 maintains the same configuration in terms of

component parts, the same justification for inscription and the same criteria.

The *Guiding Principles* have provided useful orientation and, in conjunction with the additional information provided by the States Parties, have allowed ICOMOS to understand how the lack of clarity in the definition of the nominated property could be addressed and under what conditions an ensemble of nominated component parts could be seen as a tangible reflection of and response to an event of outstanding universal significance and a significant period in human history.

In 2018, ICOMOS considered that the justification for the selected criteria ((iii), (iv) and (vi)) was not demonstrated. However, criterion (iv) and (vi) could have been justified, but through different arguments than those proposed by the States Parties. The *Guiding Principles*, the additional information provided by the States parties and further reflection on this nomination has led to bring into focus potential arguments to demonstrate criteria (iv) and (vi) in conjunction with one another.

The *Guiding Principles* define the sites of memory, within the framework of the World Heritage Convention, as places that contain material evidence of the event being commemorated. The World Heritage Convention recognises cultural heritage as monuments and ensembles, which exhibit Outstanding Universal Value from the point of view of history, art, or science, and sites also from aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological points of view. These views have led ICOMOS to consider that a clarification of the definition of the nominated property could be achieved by focusing the nominated series on funerary sites. Confusion was also generated by the selection of the component parts, which often contradicted the arguments put forward to justify the selection and the attributes of the nominated property. Therefore, ICOMOS carried out a close analysis of the nominated component parts and identified those which did not appear to contribute to the justification for inscription, which were similar to other component parts but exhibited less attributes, integrity or authenticity, or exhibited essentially national values.

Therefore, ICOMOS considers that a reduced series that focuses on funerary sites has the potential to justify criterion (iv) and (vi) as an ensemble that illustrates a hugely important period in human history – World War I – and represents an outstanding response and effort to an event of outstanding significance through establishing and practicing human values aimed to rehumanise societies following the immense tragedy of that dehumanising war.

A number of adjustments to the boundaries of a few nominated component parts have also been identified by ICOMOS as necessary, to ensure their integrity and authenticity.

A common approach to conservation and maintenance is still lacking and the approaches implemented at this stage

are still fragmented, resulting in an uneven state of conservation of the nominated component parts and in maintenance activities which are often not based on consideration of the heritage value of these component sites.

The legal protection of the nominated component parts has significantly improved and, when this evaluation was approved, only a few component parts in France were still awaiting heritage protection designations. It will be important to finalise this process for all the component parts retained in the nominated series.

Transnational management coordination on the other hand, does not appear to have advanced since 2018 and need to be significantly strengthened and operationalised. The information that in France a Framework Agreement, gathering all responsible actors, from the State institutions, site managers, and representatives of local administrations, is planned to be signed to strengthen coordination and collaboration on key projects and management axes, is welcomed and encouraged.

A coordinated and shared interpretation and presentation strategy for the whole series and for each component parts nominated for inscription, as well as for its significance and meaning in relation to a comprehensive understanding of the impacts of the First World War should be developed and implemented as a matter of urgency.

7 Recommendations

Recommendations with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that the nomination of the Funerary and memory sites of the First World War (Western Front), Belgium, France, be **referred back** to the States Parties to allow them to:

- Reduce the selection of component parts of the nominated series to focus on funerary sites and exclude the memorials which do not include tangible evidence of the event being commemorated, and are not clearly linked with cemeteries and their design; the component parts that only reflect national values; the component parts that were created for and are associated with different events than the First World War; the component parts that do not contribute to the justification for inscription; and the component parts that exhibit less attributes, or which do not meet the conditions of authenticity and integrity;
- Refocus the justification for inscription on the way the ensemble of funerary sites represents a tangible and outstanding response to an event of outstanding universal significance, the First World War, a significant period of human history with long-lasting impacts on individuals, communities, societies and nations across the world, under revised formulations for criteria (iv) and (vi);

- Protect all component parts through national designations in accordance with the current heritage legislation;
- Adjust the boundaries of the following nominated component parts as follows:

Belgium:

- Enlarge the boundaries of component part WA02 Robermont Military plots to also include the burial grounds and tombs of the German soldiers;
- Reduce the boundaries of component part WA06 Enclosure of the Executed in Taminés to include only the cemetery;

France:

- Revise the boundaries of component parts PC03 Canadian National Memorial "Vimy Memorial", PC04 Commonwealth Military Cemetery "Canadian Cemetery n°2" and PC05 Commonwealth Military Cemetery "Givenchy Road Canadian Cemetery" and merge them to form one single component part to cover part or the entirety of the Vimy Ridge National Historic Site of Canada;
- Exclude the civil cemetery from component part ND04 German Military Cemetery of la Route de Solesmes and Commonwealth "Cambrai East Military Cemetery" and retain only the two military cemeteries;
- Modify the buffer zone of component parts PC07 French National Necropolis of la Targette and Commonwealth Military Cemetery "La Targette British Cemetery", and PC08 La Maison Blanche German Military Cemetery to include also component part PC09 Czechoslovakian Military Cemetery of Neuville-Saint-Vaast, as it is part of the same memorial sector;

- Sign and operationalise the Framework Agreement prepared by the State Party of France among all relevant actors for the management of the French section of the nominated serial property;
- Adopt a common conservation and management approach that safeguards the specificity of each component part and reinforces their capacity to convey the proposed Outstanding Universal Value of the nominated serial property;
- Strengthen the transnational coordination and cooperation in management;
- Develop a common transnational interpretation strategy for the nominated serial property that incorporates narratives related to the tribute paid during the First World War by the nations formerly colonised by European countries.

Additional recommendations

ICOMOS further recommends that the States Parties give consideration to the following:

- a) Involving in the conservation and maintenance of the nominated component parts heritage experts and conservators to align maintenance activities with heritage good practices,
- b) Establishing protection mechanisms for the wider setting of the nominated component parts to prevent or reduce impacts from energy and transport infrastructure development,
- c) Regulating the speed of vehicles where roads run close to nominated cemeteries to reduce risks and disturbance to the experience of these sites,
- d) Improving the monitoring of the nominated serial property to reduce and avoid vandalism or theft,
- e) Improving collaboration on documentation to develop a coherent system of documentation,
- f) Developing a common transnational monitoring system, based on the attributes of the nominated property and on the same set of indicators, that would allow for a joint periodical evaluation of the state of conservation of the nominated serial property;

