

News story: Iraq and Afghanistan Memorial unveiled in London

The new Memorial recognises the contributions of the UK Armed Forces and all UK citizens who deployed in the Gulf region, Iraq and Afghanistan from 1990-2015, and those who supported them back home.

At 1100 am, a Service of Dedication was conducted from a specially constructed Drumhead on Horse Guards Parade with The Queen, Prime Minister Theresa May and the Defence Secretary, Sir Michael Fallon, in attendance. They were joined by His Royal Highnesses The Duke of Edinburgh, The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, Prince Henry of Wales and other Members of the Royal Family. Readings were given by Prince Henry and a Ministry of Defence Civil Servant Victoria Whittaker who deployed to Afghanistan in 2014.

Following the Drumhead Service, the Memorial was formally unveiled at a short ceremony in Victoria Embankment Gardens, in front of the Ministry of Defence, where Her Majesty The Queen met a small number of civilian and military guests who contributed to the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts, and Memorial Trustees. Prior to leaving, Her Majesty was presented with a posy by two-year-old Alfie Lunn whose father Serjeant Mark Lunn, 29, deployed to Iraq in 2007 and was awarded a Military Cross for his actions during a fire-fight in Basra. Alfie's mother, Corporal Michele Lunn, deployed to Afghanistan in 2014/15.

Speaking after the event, Alfie's father Serjeant Mark Lunn said:

I'm incredibly honoured to be here today and especially proud to see our son Alfie present a posy to The Queen. This memorial is a wonderful way to recognise the duty and service of so many military and civilians.



HM The Queen presented with a posy by two-year-old Alfie Lunn. Crown Copyright.

Designed by sculptor Paul Day, the Iraq and Afghanistan Memorial is positioned nearby monuments to the Second World War and the Korean War.

The new Memorial features two large stones – one representing Iraq and the other Afghanistan – linked by a giant, two-sided bronze tondo depicting the Memorial's theme of "Duty and Service". The Memorial gives equal prominence to military and civilian contributions, including, amongst others, the delivery of healthcare and humanitarian work. It is specifically intended to be inclusive of all those who contributed and therefore bears no names.

Between 1990 and 2015, thousands of British citizens put themselves in harm's way, protected our nation's interests, helped those in danger and worked to improve the lives of those in other countries. 682 Service personnel lost their lives in the three conflicts. Civilians from a vast breadth of organisations worked for more than two decades in areas such as aid distribution, education, healthcare and governance to help the citizens of both Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Queen was joined by over 2,000 people for the event, and guests were representatives of the many groups, military and civilian, including current Service personnel, veterans, Civil Servants and aid workers, whose efforts are marked by the Memorial, and also families of the fallen.

Prime Minister Theresa May said:

The missions in Iraq and Afghanistan called on hundreds of thousands of our military and civilian personnel to put their lives on the line in a heroic effort to help secure greater peace and stability in some of the most hostile environments that we have ever known. Today we honour the extraordinary courage and dedication of every one of those British men and women who stepped forward to answer that call. We pay tribute to those families who spent long periods apart and we stand with the friends and families of all who lost loved ones.

Secretary of State for Defence Sir Michael Fallon said:

It is vital that we recognise our Armed Forces and civilians who contributed, both abroad and at home, to the campaigns in the Gulf, Iraq and Afghanistan. Today's service is an appropriate occasion to honour their immense efforts and sacrifices. We should also reflect on the continued service of the men and women of our Armed Forces deployed around the world today to help make us safer at home.



The Queen, Prime Minister Theresa May and the Defence Secretary, Sir Michael Fallon, were in attendance. Crown copyright.

The idea of creating a national Memorial commemorating the UK's military operations and reconstruction efforts, from the liberation of Kuwait in 1990 through to the end of combat operations in Afghanistan, originated in spring 2014 and was supported by the Government. A board of Trustees, whose Chairman

is former Chief of the Defence Staff, Lord Stirrup, ran the project, which has Government backing and financial support from LIBOR funding and Sun readers. The unveiling was organised by the Ministry of Defence, on the Trustees' behalf, in partnership with The Royal British Legion, which hosted a reception after the service.

The combined events that the memorial covers represent the longest post-war continuous overseas deployment of UK forces (excepting garrison duties), and the most intensive extended period of operations undertaken since the Second World War.

[Tories' broken promise on jail for knife thugs putting public at risk](#) [– Richard Burgon](#)

Despite promising a mandatory 'two strikes and you're out' minimum six-month prison sentence for carrying a knife, new figures from Ministry of Justice reveal that more than 2,000 people with one or more convictions for knife possession escaped an automatic prison sentence.

In response, Shadow Justice Secretary Richard Burgon, said:

"The Tories are letting down the victims of crime by making promises they know they cannot keep.

"Knife crime is on the rise and the public want to be confident that people carrying knives face tough sentences.

"Ministers promised 'two-strikes-and-you're-out' for knife possession, but a third of adult repeat offenders are still not being sent to prison.

"Rather than warm words and empty promises, the Tories need to make sure those who carry these weapons are properly punished."

Press release: Work completed at Tetney Haven to reduce flood risk and benefit the environment

The Environment Agency has de-silted a section of the Tetney Haven, helping reduce flood risk and boosting the area's ecology.

The work, part of the EA's regular maintenance programme, saw excess silt removed from approximately a kilometre of the Louth Canal and from around the sluice gates at Tetney Lock.

Silt builds up naturally at the sluice as it settles when the flowing water in the channel loses momentum at the sluice gates. Removing it means water can continue to flow easily from the canal into the Haven.

Along with other routine maintenance on the channel, removing the silt helped reduce flood risk to approximately 500 local homes and businesses.

The nutrient-rich silt was then spread on the salt marsh adjoining the banks of the channel, and work was also done to improve drainage on the salt marsh. These improvements help the natural wetting and draining cycles of the soil that encourage vegetation to grow.

The plants help prevent erosion and stabilise land which serves as a front line of flood defence by absorbing much of the force of tidal waves.

This work has also helped improve, preserve and extend the salt marsh's ecology, made up of salt-tolerant plants and up to 300 species of invertebrates, half of which are unique to this environment. These conditions, in turn, provide valuable habitat for migrating birds, some of which are endangered.

Andy Charlesworth, Asset Performance Advisor with the Environment Agency, said:

This is a perfect example of how we aim for the most benefit for people and the environment from everything we do.

We have a regular programme of inspection and maintenance on our flood defences, and we're always looking for ways to achieve extra benefits at the same time. In this case, while we had our equipment on-site, we were able to use it in another way to give a boost to ecological conditions in the surrounding area at no extra cost.

De-silting Tetney Haven took just over seven weeks and cost £127k. It was last de-silted 10 years ago, and the Environment Agency's modelling shows it is unlikely to be needed again for another decade.

De-silting is not always the best solution for reducing flood risk; we carefully consider each situation on a case-by-case basis to determine whether de-silting is cost-effective and will have the desired result of reducing risk.

In the next financial year, the Environment Agency will spend approximately £12m on flood defence maintenance to reduce risk to local communities.

Although the Environment Agency continually invests in maintaining and improving flood defences, no defence can ever completely remove the risk of flooding; therefore we'd encourage people to sign up for our free flood warnings by calling 0345 988 1188 or visiting www.gov.uk/flood.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

- The Environment Agency is required to prioritise funding for asset maintenance and repair where it will have the most benefit in reducing flood risk.
- Saltmarsh provides vital habitat including food and roosting opportunities for over-wintering birds such as seed-eating twites, which are on the [Birds of Conservation Concern 'red list'](#), and waders such as redshank. Saltmarshes support around half of the UK's breeding redshank population.

[These NHS performance statistics are a damning indictment of Theresa May's neglect of our NHS – Jonathan Ashworth](#)

Responding to the latest NHS monthly performance statistics, Jonathan Ashworth MP, Labour's Shadow Health Secretary, said:

"These NHS performance statistics are a damning indictment of Theresa May's neglect of our NHS. She's overseen an unprecedented winter crisis, in which almost a thousand people waited over twelve hours on trolleys, compared to just 17 in January 2011. The Government once again missed its four hour A&E target and seems content with a 504 per cent increase in the number of patients waiting over four hours for admission since January 2011.

“Speaking

to the Reform think tank earlier, Jeremy Hunt joked at his dislike of targets.

This is no laughing matter: patients in this country have faced the worst winter crisis in the history of our NHS and it is shocking that Jeremy Hunt has

indicated he doesn't expect to hit the A&E target until 2018. The Health Secretary has been in position for four and a half years and this simple isn't good enough.

“Yesterday's

Budget announcement should have been an opportunity to genuinely place the NHS on

a sustainable footing. And yet the Chancellor's mere offer of £100 million for

capital funding simply isn't enough, meaning the NHS will continue facing its biggest financial squeeze in history and head-for-head investment will fall again next year.

“The Tories are overseeing a startling collapse in standards and Theresa May is

still in complete denial as to the sheer scale of the crisis. Jeremy Hunt must

be clearer about what action he's going to take to make sure patients and their

families never have to go through a winter like this again.”

[These statistics demonstrate the total failure of Tories' punitive social security regime – Debbie Abrahams](#)

Debbie

Abrahams MP, Labour's Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary, commenting on the Social Security and Child Support tribunal statistics, said:

“These

statistics show that two thirds of contested PIP and ESA assessment decisions are being overturned by the courts, demonstrating the total failure of the Tories' punitive social security regime.

“This

follows the news last week that the Government is ignoring a court ruling and denying 160,000 disabled people the support they need.

“We cannot allow disabled people to bear the brunt of failing Tory austerity. Labour will transform the social security system to ensure that, like the NHS, it is there for us all in our time of need.”