

[News story: Britain remembers the heroes of Passchendaele with community ceremonies](#)

Forty-three brave British soldiers will be remembered in special ceremonies, 100 years to the day after they were awarded the Victoria Cross (VC).

Starting on 31 July 2017 until 10 November 2017, these events will honour them for their acts of valour at the Battle of Passchendaele, the soldiers' name for the Third Battle of Ypres.

Fourteen VCs – the nation's highest military honour – were awarded in recognition of the action on the first day of the campaign, more than on any other single day in the First World War. On Monday 31 July 2017, communities across England, Scotland and Wales will come together to honour their home town heroes with a commemorative paving stone laid in their memory.

Comprising 8 separate battles, beginning with the Battle of Pilckem, the 3 month campaign for the control of the ridges to the south and east of Ypres, West Flanders, was to claim the lives of between 240,000-275,000 British and Allied soldiers.

Lord Bourne, Minister for Faith, said:

From private soldiers to Brigadier Generals, Passchendaele saw acts of outstanding courage displayed by exceptional men from all ranks and backgrounds.

Those fighting endured unimaginable hardship from the endless shelling to the torrential rain and mud. To simply survive what the great war poet Siegfried Sassoon described as 'hell' was heroic.

It remains vitally important that we remember their sacrifice. So these stones being laid across the country over the coming months will provide a lasting legacy to these brave men.

British soldiers did not fight alone. Together with Belgian and French forces they were joined by soldiers from Australia, Canada, India, pre-partition Ireland, Newfoundland, New Zealand and South Africa.

A further 18 VCs were awarded to soldiers from Canada, Ireland and South Africa. Those overseas-born soldiers awarded the Victoria Cross, including at the Battle of Passchendaele are honoured with a permanent memorial at the [National Memorial Arboretum](#) in Staffordshire, which was unveiled in 2015.

The majority of the Victoria Crosses were awarded for 'offensive' acts, bold raids on fortified farms and enemy posts. However Passchendaele also saw

awards for the saving of lives.

Captain Noel Chavasse, a medical officer with the Liverpool Scottish regiment known to his comrades as the 'doc' became the most highly decorated soldier of the First World War when he received a posthumous second Victoria Cross for his actions at Wieltje, Belgium.

His citation in the London Gazette, September 1917 reads: 'By his extraordinary energy and inspiring example was instrumental in rescuing many wounded who would have otherwise undoubtedly succumbed under the bad weather conditions. This devoted and gallant officer subsequently died of his wounds'.

Not only was he awarded the Victoria Cross twice, Chavasse was also earlier awarded the Military Cross for action at Bellewaarde near Ypres, Belgium, on 16 June 1915 following his regiment's first serious battle. More than 1,000 men had died and he spent 12 hours helping to treat and rescue the injured in No Man's Land. Following his actions at Bellewaarde, in June 1916 he was later promoted to Captain.

The story of Noel Chavasse is a remarkable one. Not only did he gain a First-Class Honours degree in philosophy from Oxford, but as a young man he also ran for Great Britain alongside his identical twin brother in the 1908 Olympics. He later studied medicine, joining the Royal Army Medical Corps in 1913, going to France as a Surgeon-Lieutenant when the war broke out. He was one of the first doctors to use a new anti-tetanus serum and when the Germans began using chlorine gas for the first time he arranged for his father to send a gramophone to raise morale.

A commemorative paving stone will be unveiled at Abercromby Square, Liverpool on Tuesday 29 August 2017, followed by a re-creation of his Memorial Service at Liverpool Parish Church, a century to the day after it took place.

Noel Chavasse's Victoria Cross medals will also go on public display at the Museum of Liverpool from 31 July 2017. To mark the Passchendaele centenary, DCLG is also working with the Big Ideas Company on a new research-and-remember project for schools and communities called Passchendaele at Home. The project is a challenge to discover the graves that belong to British soldiers who were brought back to the UK for hospital treatment but went on to die of their wounds in this country.

There is no central register of their graves. Through the project, previously unknown local history will be uncovered and the lives of extraordinary soldiers will be remembered within local communities. For more information including a Passchendaele at Home 'Action Map' – an A1 Poster designed by leading graphic artist Nick Hayes giving a step-by-step guide to research and also potential funding for local research projects see: [Passchendaele at Home](#) or contact the Big Ideas Company athome@bigideascompany.org.

1. As part of the government's First World War Centenary Programme, the Department for Communities and Local Government launched the campaign to

remember and honour all those awarded the Victoria Cross during the First World War with a commemorative paving stone.

2. There were 627 individuals who received the VC during the First World War, although in total 628 VC's were awarded. This is because Noel Chavasse, was awarded the VC twice during the First World War. Of these individuals, 361 were born in England, 70 were born in Scotland and 16 were born in Wales. 35 were born in pre-partition Ireland and 145 were born in other countries overseas.
3. The design of the stones was selected from a public competition and includes the name of the soldier and regiment, along with the marking of the Victoria Cross. They are made of Scoutmoor Yorkstone, a hard-wearing British stone that is quarried near Ramsbottom and are sited in locations visible to the public to inspire viewers to 'pause and remember'.
4. Although, there are no set guidelines, it is widely accepted that each VC recipient must have undergone a 90% risk of death as a result of their actions.
5. You can also follow the laying of the commemorative stones on Twitter [#VCpavingstones](#).

[News story: Farmers and vets gain easy access to cattle disease information](#)

Following the successful launch of the [sheep disease surveillance dashboard](#) in June, APHA has now launched a new [cattle disease surveillance dashboard](#).

It displays diseases diagnosed in cattle across Great Britain and contains all the same useful features as the sheep dashboard, with the addition of being able to select dairy or beef.

A map is used to allow selection of diseases by county, country or across GB and filters can also be used to show diagnoses by time period and age group of cattle.

Farmers and vets can now quickly and easily access information on the most common diagnoses in an area, or learn where specific diseases have been diagnosed. Once a view has been selected, it can be downloaded as an image to use in a document or presentation.

The data behind the dashboards are derived from diagnoses made by APHA's Veterinary Investigation Centres (VICs) across England and Wales, from the network of universities and other surveillance partners working with APHA, and from Scotland's Rural College Disease Surveillance Centres in Scotland operated by SAC Consulting Veterinary Services.

For further information on the ruminant disease surveillance dashboards, see the [APHA Vet Gateway](#).

An avian dashboard, a dashboard for pigs and another for wildlife will be available over the coming months.

APHA has also refreshed the surveillance and diagnostics web pages on its [Vet Gateway](#). They provide a wealth of easily accessible information on the diagnostic and post-mortem services network provided by APHA and its partners.

To find out more contact your nearest [APHA's Veterinary Investigation Centres](#).

[News story: Thousands of new roles to be created in mental health workforce plan](#)

Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt today (31 July 2017) [launched a plan](#) to expand the mental health workforce. The plan sets out measures to tackle the 'historic imbalance' in workforce capacity and fulfil ambitions to improve mental health services.

The government committed £1.3 billion to transform mental health services, with a pledge to:

- treat an extra 1 million patients by 2020 to 2021
- provide services 7 days a week, 24 hours a day
- integrate mental and physical health services for the first time

The plan has been developed by Health Education England (HEE) together with NHS Improvement, NHS England, the Royal College of Psychiatrists and other key mental health experts.

It shows how the health service will dramatically increase the number of trained nurses, therapists, psychiatrists, peer support workers and other mental health professionals to deliver on this commitment and tackle the 'burning injustice' of mental illness and inadequate treatment.

By 2020 to 2021 local areas will need to create 21,000 new posts in priority growth areas to deliver the improvements in services and support set out in the NHS's Five Year Forward View for Mental Health.

Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt said:

We want people with mental health conditions to receive better treatment, and part of that means having the right NHS staff. We know we need to do much more to attract, retain and support the mental health workforce of the future. Today is the first step to address this historic imbalance in workforce planning.

As we embark on one of the biggest expansions of mental health services in Europe it is crucial we have the right people in post – that's why we're supporting those already in the profession to stay and giving incentives to those considering a career in mental health.

These measures are ambitious but essential for delivering the high performing and well-resourced mental health services we all want to see.

All major specialisms will see an expansion in numbers, with the plan targeting areas where there are forecast to be particular shortfalls as demand on services increases. It concludes that there should be:

- 2,000 additional nurses, consultants and therapist posts created in child and adolescent mental health services
- 2,900 additional therapists and other allied health professionals supporting expanded access to adult talking therapies
- 4,800 additional posts for nurses and therapists working in crisis care settings, with the majority of these (4,600) being nursing positions

Perinatal mental health support, liaison and diversion teams and early intervention teams working with people at risk of psychosis should also see significant increases.

Among the groups expected to grow most in the planned expansion are:

- professionals working in child and adolescent mental health services
- therapists delivering expanded access to adult talking therapies
- nurses working in crisis care settings

It will be funded in part by the government's commitment to an extra £1 billion for mental health services by 2020 to 2021.

To achieve this, the measures set out in the plan include:

- improvements in how employers retain their existing mental health staff, including targeted support for 20 Trusts with the highest rates of

clinical staff exits – alongside a national retention programme to be run by NHS Employers and initiatives to improve career pathways

- a major “Return to Practice” campaign led by HEE to encourage some of the 4,000 psychiatrists and 30,000 trained mental health nurses not substantively employed by the NHS to return to the profession. NHS Employers will also work with providers to develop more flexible and supportive working environments and help more of them to draw on the skills of recent retirees
- a new action plan to attract more clinicians to work in mental health services and psychiatry, including a targeted campaign next year to encourage more trainees to specialise in mental health, as well as encouraging more junior doctors to experience psychiatry as part of their foundation training – either through a new ‘2-week’ taster programme, or through increased availability of rotation placements in psychiatry
- the development and expansion of new professional roles in mental health to help create more flexible teams and boost capacity, enabling clinical staff to spend more face-to-face time with patients, by providing more support staff to take on the non-clinical tasks – for example updating patient records
- co-ordinated action to tackle the high attrition rates among psychiatry trainees, with the Royal College of Psychiatrists working with higher education institutions to improve on-the-job training and support, encourage greater flexibility and develop a new Accelerated Return to Training programme for those who have abandoned training previously
- the plan also pledges action to improve the mental health and resilience of its own workforce; HEE will deliver a programme to improve awareness of mental health amongst NHS staff, including encouraging more GPs to undertake further formal training in psychiatry; HEE will also explore how to support Trusts in recruiting and training staff from abroad to meet short-term recruitment needs

Professor Ian Cumming, Chief Executive, Health Education England said:

Mental health is a key priority for HEE. The Five Year Forward View for Mental Health laid out an ambition to see an additional one million people being treated by mental health services by 2021, including 70,000 more children and young people. This is something the whole system is committed to working on to make sure patients get the best possible care.

The workforce plan we have agreed with our partners across the system is based on the most comprehensive and robust study of the mental health workforce to date. We do not underestimate the scale of this challenge. To deliver the improvements we have said are required will require concerted action and focus from everyone working across the health and care system – this document lays out a plan to create that workforce.

I am confident that the NHS can rise to this challenge and that this plan is a significant step to make the improvements to care we all know are needed a reality.

[News story: MAIB Annual Report 2016 published](#)

This Annual Report provides information on the branch's activities during 2016.

MAIB has published its Annual Report highlighting the work of the branch during 2016 and includes:

- a report from the Chief Inspector of Marine Accidents
- overview of accidents reported
- summary of investigations started
- details of investigation reports published
- responses to recommendations issued
- marine accident statistics

[Read the full MAIB Annual Report for 2016](#)

[News story: Defence Secretary pays tribute to wartime sacrifice at Passchendaele](#)

The battle in Flanders began on 31 July 1917 and was a major engagement in

the First World War, claiming the lives of around 275,000 British and Commonwealth military personnel and around 200,000 German lives.

Sir Michael Fallon joined Prime Minister Theresa May, the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, The King and Queen of Belgium and other dignitaries last night for the playing of the Last Post ceremony at the Menin Gate in Ypres, Belgium. Music and readings were added to the traditional nightly service which has happened for over 90 years.

The UK Government, in collaboration with the Belgian Government, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, and the Royal British Legion is hosting a series of events to mark one of the defining battles of the First World War. The Chief of the Defence Staff, Joint Force Commander and heads of the Royal Navy, British Army and Royal Air Force are in Belgium, where today visitors will gather to pay their respects at Tyne Cot cemetery near the village of Passchendaele. It is the largest Commonwealth War Grave in the world.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

These services provide us with the time to reflect on the sacrifice not just of the thousands of British and Commonwealth troops who gave their lives, but of the men on all sides who did not return home. This was a battle which touched communities across Europe and it is a privilege to be here in Belgium to stand as friends with the representatives of all the countries who took part in the Battle – friends who continue to be strong allies.

Members of the UK Armed Forces took part in the event with the Pipes and Drums of the Royal Irish Regiment and The Band of the Welsh Guards providing music. The bands will also take part in an evening light show where images from the War will be projected onto the town's Cloth Hall.

The Menin Gate is one of four memorials to the missing which covers the area known as the Ypres Salient. The site of the Menin Gate was chosen because of the hundreds of thousands of men who passed through it on their way to the battlefields. It bears the names of more than 54,000 casualties from the forces of Australia, Canada, India, South Africa and United Kingdom who died in the Salient whose graves are not known.

The full programme of commemorative events includes:

30 July: A traditional Last Post ceremony at dusk at the Menin Gate, Ypres, Belgium.

30 July: Sunset Ceremony at the Cloth Hall, Ypres Light projections onto the Cloth Hall in the Market Square will provide the backdrop to an evening of storytelling and music about the experience of soldiers during four years of war on the Ypres Salient

31 July: A ceremony at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's Tyne Cot

Cemetery will take place on 31 July

31 July: A Welsh National Service of Remembrance will take place at the Welsh Memorial in Langemark.