

News story: Grave of Kent born WW2 Pilot Officer finally rededicated after 77 years

Verifying the research submitted was crucial in identifying the final resting place of Pilot Officer (P/O) Hector Garman Webb of the 224 Squadron, Royal Air Force (RAF), who was killed during WW2. A rededication service was held on 8 August 2017 at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) Åndalsnes Church Cemetery, Norway 77 years after he fell.

The service, which was a fitting tribute to the sacrifice made by P/O Webb, was organised by the MOD's Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC), part of Defence Business Services, and was conducted by The Reverend Dr David Richardson, RAF Station Chaplain, RAF Halton.

Reverend David Richardson, said:

As someone serving at RAF Halton today, it is such a privilege to be here at this beautiful cemetery to remember the courage and sacrifice of Hector who graduated from Halton nearly 80 years ago.

P/O Webb was just 16 years old when he joined the RAF as an apprentice engine fitter. He later volunteered to train as a pilot and in 1937 he joined 224 Squadron as a Sergeant. He finally received his commission to become a Pilot Officer in 1940.

In the early stages of WW2, 224 Squadron were assigned to provide air cover in support of Operation Primrose – the landing of British troops near Åndalsnes, Norway. On 23 April 1940 P/O Webb's aircraft (Hudson N7249) was approaching Åndalsnes when he was hit by friendly fire and crashed into a nearby mountain. His 3 crew members ejected and parachuted to safety, however, P/O Webb was sadly killed. He was aged just 24.

P/O Webb's burial place had remained unknown, until the grave of an unknown airman buried in Åndalsnes Church Cemetery, Norway was brought to the attention of the Ministry of Defence by Hector's nephew, Ben Sharp. Further research was undertaken by the MOD JCCC to corroborate the evidence and the identification of the "Unknown Airman" grave was found to belong to P/O Hector Garman Webb, meaning his grave could finally be marked with his name.

Ben Sharp who travelled to Norway from the USA to attend the service of his uncle, Hector, said:

It was a very touching ceremony and we were so pleased to see the people of Åndalsnes here to remember him with us.

It is very important for us to take a break in our busy lives and spend time to remember the sacrifices these men made for our freedom. We are especially thankful to the JCCC, CWGC and the local community who have looked after Hector's grave so well for all these years.

Nicola Nash, JCCC said:

It has been a privilege to work on this case and today's ceremony was a fitting commemoration for P/O Hector Webb and the ultimate sacrifice he made.

A new headstone bearing P/O Webb's name was provided by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

News story: 33 employers awarded gold for supporting the Armed Forces

The Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) Gold Awards is the highest badge of honour for organisations which have signed the Armed Forces Covenant and demonstrated outstanding support for those who serve and have served.

The ERS Gold Awards recognise employers who actively support the Armed Forces community in their workplace and also encourage others to follow their lead. The award scheme, which attracts entries from companies in every part of the country and in the private and public sectors, has seen a rapid increase in participation since it launched in 2014.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

These companies have shown the gold standard of commitment to supporting members of the Armed Forces, veterans, and their families. They have taken meaningful steps to ensure the Defence community are not disadvantaged by the sacrifice they make in helping keep this country safe. The actions of these employers make it crystal clear that regardless of size, location, or sector, employing people with military skills is good for business.

Commenting on their Gold status, Mark Carne, Chief Executive of Network Rail said:

Network Rail has a long tradition of supporting our armed forces and in employing ex-service personnel and Reserve staff. There are plenty of similarities between Network Rail and the Armed forces – the challenges and pressures, where every day is different, requiring a professional can-do attitude and strong teamwork ethos.

A large number of our workforce come from an Armed Forces background and have thrived in our organisation providing the skills that are critical to our Railway Upgrade Plan and helping us to build a bigger, better railway for Britain.

We are extremely proud to have received this recognition of our work and continued commitment to support the Armed Forces community.

Royal Marines veteran Chris Girdwood, Technician at Gold Award winner Combat Pest Control, added:

It has been great working with Combat Pest Control, not only because they have trained and supported me in my career but also because they do so much supporting the wider military community

The Ministry of Defence also announced today that following a stringent assessment, seven recipients of the 2014 ERS Gold Awards have retained their Gold status:

BAE Systems Hewlett-Packard Enterprise (HPE)
Barclays NHS Nottingham University Hospitals Trust
BT NHS Scotland
Carillion

The 2017 Employer Recognition Scheme Gold award winners are:

Airbus	Hull City Council	Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
Balfour Beatty	Inverclyde Council	Shropshire Council
City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust	Kuehne + Nagel	Skanska UK Plc
Combat Pest Control	Laing O'Rourke	Sodexo UK & Ireland
DHL	Liverpool City Council	Mabway Ltd
DXC Technology	ManpowerGroup UK	South Central Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust
ER Systems Global	Metropolitan Police Service	Transport for London
FDM	Morson Group	West Midlands Fire Service

Forth Valley Chamber of Commerce	Network Rail	Wiltshire Council
General Dynamics UK	NHS Golden Jubilee Foundation	Wolferstans Solicitors
Hampshire Hospitals Foundation Trust	NHS North West Ambulance Service	X-Forces

News story: Armed Forces celebrate Raksha Bandhan with the Hindu Community

In the run up to today's festival, the Armed Forces Hindu Network organised Raksha Bandhan celebrations across the country, including at the Ministry of Defence in London, marking the strong bonds of protection between the community and the Armed Forces. The network has also hosted in recent weeks a Raksha Bandhan tour across a number of temples in Newcastle, Swindon, Liverpool, and London.

Raksha Bandhan, colloquially known as Rakhi, is an age-old Hindu festival that celebrates brotherhood and love. For the Hindus serving in the Armed Forces, the festival holds special significance as it symbolises the duty of the Armed Forces in protecting their society.

At an event at MOD Main Building in London recently, serving personnel from the Armed Forces and MOD civil servants had a Rakhi (a knot of protection) tied to their wrist. Defence Minister Earl Howe participated in the event and later gave a speech to everyone gathered at the event.

Highlighting the ties and values shared between the Hindu community and the Armed Forces, Defence Minister Earl Howe said:

As we exchange our multi-coloured bands, it's a unique opportunity to remind ourselves of the multifaceted ties that bind our great Hindu community and our Armed Forces together.

To defend ourselves we must unite: speaking up for those beliefs of tolerance, fairness and dignity, that make us who we are.

Embracing the importance of diverse communities, the Minister also added:

Knowing what our diverse communities bring, only makes us ambitious for more. Indeed, this Government is committed to recruiting 10 per cent of personnel from minority communities, by 2020.

Members of community forums, including the Hindu Council UK and the Hindu Forum of Britain, came together to celebrate the occasion, along with the Chief of Defence People, Lieutenant General Richard Nugee, and the Director of Submarine Capability, Rear Admiral Tim Hodgson.

Hindus have time and again contributed to the defence of the UK. During the First World War, 1,750,000 Hindus deployed overseas. In the second World War, over 1.25 million Hindus played a pivotal role in the allied victory.

Last week the Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon and senior Defence leaders paid their respects to those who fell during the First World War, at the commemorations of the centenary of the Battle of Passchendaele.

A ceremony was held at the Menin Gate in Ypres which bears the names of hundreds of Indian troops whose graves are unknown. Located nearby to Menin Gate is The Indian Forces Memorial which is dedicated to the 130,000 troops of the Indian Forces who served in Flanders.

News story: Britain's flagship Carrier could arrive home as early as next Thursday, Defence Secretary announces

The 65,000-tonne Carrier, the biggest warship ever to be built in Britain, has been undergoing sea trials since setting sail from Scotland's Rosyth dockyard in June. She is now set to make her historic arrival into Portsmouth, where she will be the latest in a long line of famous Royal Navy ships to call the port home.

Whilst weather conditions mean the exact date of the historic moment is yet to be confirmed, the window for entry will open next Thursday (17/08), with her arrival expected to be no later than the following Tuesday (22/08).



The Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon visited HMS Queen Elizabeth during sea trials last month.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

In just two weeks' time, the most powerful warship ever built for Britain's famous Royal Navy is set to sail into her proud new home in Portsmouth.

HMS Queen Elizabeth will be the Royal Navy's flagship for the next 50 years, keeping us safe by deploying across the seven seas, using her strike power to deter our enemies.

With only three other countries in the world building aircraft carriers, HMS Queen Elizabeth will give Britain the capability to lead the way in tackling global issues in an increasingly uncertain world, from providing humanitarian relief to high-end warfighting.



The Defence Secretary addressed the Royal Navy crew and industry personnel on the deck of the new aircraft carrier last month.

And with the state-of-the-art F-35B Lightning fighter jets on track to make their first trial flights from the Carrier's deck next year, the UK is now building towards delivering Carrier Strike capability.

Both aircraft carriers are being delivered by the Aircraft Carrier Alliance.

[News story: DIO awards overseas consultancy framework contract](#)

The Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) on behalf of the Ministry of Defence along with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office have worked together to develop an overseas principal support provider (PSP) framework.

Six companies have been selected as suppliers for the framework to deliver multi-disciplinary design and project management services, advisory services, construction technical services, specialist surveys and clerk of the works duties.

The 6 companies that have been awarded a place on the framework are:

- AECOM
- Atkins
- Mott MacDonald
- Ramboll
- Ridge & Partners LLP
- WYG

The successful suppliers will deliver services overseas for the next 4 years and will work on key international projects across the globe. The framework has an estimated spend value of £60 million and demonstrates a commitment across government departments to work together on overseas procurement.

DIO worked with the Foreign Office, the Permanent Joint Headquarters and other government stakeholders on this innovative approach. The framework helps to deliver the Cabinet Office initiative to ensure consistency and value for money across overseas government projects.

The framework will use mini-competitions among the 6 companies as the primary way of selecting the most appropriate contractor to deliver a project. This will allow departments to share good practice and deliver value for money by ensuring they are all working to the same standards on large overseas projects.

David Graham, Deputy Head of International Projects at the Defence Infrastructure Organisation, said:

We are pleased to welcome these suppliers on board following a successful procurement process. We look forward to working with them, the Foreign Office and other areas of government to lead on projects that support our military personnel who live, train and work overseas.

As the key government departments which manage overseas projects it's essential that we continue to work together to ensure a consistent approach to procurement of project management and other support for our overseas estate.