

Great War soldiers' graves rededicated in France

On Tuesday 5 April and Wednesday 6 April, the graves of Rifleman (Rfn) Albert George Sleet, Lieutenant (Lt) Wilfrid Ashton Piercy and Serjeant (Sjt) James Gration DCM, who died during the Great War whilst serving with battalions of The London Regiment, were rededicated after more than a hundred years.

The services, which were organised by the MOD's Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC), also known as the 'MOD War Detectives', were held at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's (CWGC) Arras Road Cemetery, Dud Corner Cemetery and Lebusquiere Communal Cemetery Extension respectively, all in the Pas-de-Calais region of France.

The graves of all three men were identified after researchers submitted evidence suggesting that their graves had been located. After further research by CWGC, the National Army Museum and MOD JCCC, it was confirmed as part of MOD JCCC's adjudication that these men had in fact been found.

Rosie Barron, from MOD JCCC, said:

"It has been a privilege to work with The London Regiment to organise these rededication services and to meet the families of these men. Rfn Sleet, Lt Piercy and Sjt Gration all paid the ultimate sacrifice in the pursuit of our freedom and it is vital that their sacrifice is not forgotten."

Rfn Sleet was killed in at Hulluch, north of Loos-en-Gohelle, on 15 October 1915 aged 30. He was commemorated on the Loos Memorial which surrounds Dud Corner Cemetery. His family who attended the rededication service, had previously visited the memorial to pay their respects unaware that he was buried as an unknown soldier in the same cemetery.

The rededication service at Dud Corner Cemetery was attended by multiple generations of the Sleet family.

Rfn Sleet's great niece, Nancy Wright, who attended the service with her family, said:

"Albert Sleet was killed before he married or had a family of his own. As grandchildren and great grandchildren of Albert's brothers and sisters, who loved him dearly and who always remembered him, we are honoured to be representing his family.

"We wish to thank all those whose dedication and hard work enabled his final resting place to be identified and who have organised a such a fitting rededication service for him. It is a great comfort for us to know that he was never missing, but buried beside his comrades all along. May they all rest in peace."

Lt Piercy was killed aged 35, near Loos-en-Gohelle on 26 September 1915, the second day of the Battle of Loos. He was commemorated on the Loos Memorial. The rededication service at Arras Road Cemetery was attended by members of his family.

Angela Ridge, the great great niece of Lt Piercy, stands at his graveside.

Angela Ridge, a great great niece of Lt Piercy, said:

"We're proud to be able to represent Wilfrid's immediate family and are immensely grateful to those who did the research and enabled the rededication service to take place."

The Reverend Richard Terrado-Reardon CF, Chaplain to The London Regiment, leads the rededication service for Lt Piercy.

Sjt Gration was killed on 24 March 1918, shortly after the beginning of the German Spring Offensive as British forces were overwhelmed and in retreat. Sjt Gration was recorded as missing and commemorated on the Arras Memorial.

Following his death, Sjt Gration was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal. The citation published in the London Gazette of 21 October 1918 stated:

'For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty during an attack. When his officer had become a casualty, he led his platoon with great courage and determination, reaching his objective and personally killing three of the enemy. During the whole time he set a fine example to his men.'

The services were attended by serving soldiers of The London Regiment and The Rifles, and were conducted by the Reverend Richard Terrado-Reardon CF Chaplain to The London Regiment.

The Reverend Reardon said:

"In being asked to officiate at these rededication services for Rfn Sleet, Lt Percy and Sjt Gration, these men were family members of the London regiment. This reintegration into the family of the London regiment draws us evermore close to the sacrifice of all those who lost their life in World War One, and in doing so we enrich not only our sense of heritage, but our own identity as we recognise our shared values that inspired these men to serve.

"We cannot bring them home, but we can provide a home as we rededicate not only their lives but our own commitment to them and those personnel serving this day."

The headstones over their graves will now be replaced by the CWGC, who will care for their final resting places in perpetuity.

Commemorations Case Manager at the CWGC, Mel Donnelly, said:

“The Commonwealth War Graves Commission ensures all those who served and fell are commemorated by name. It truly is a privilege to be able to mark the graves of these three brave men with headstones bearing their names, more than 100 years after they died in the First World War. We will care for their graves in perpetuity.”

National Highways funding gives the ‘green’ light to Cornwall eco improvements

The company, responsible for England’s major A roads and motorways, has secured over £ $\frac{3}{4}$ million to work with Cornwall Wildlife Trust to deliver environmental and biodiversity schemes bordering the A30 in mid-Cornwall.

As part of its Designated Funding programme, National Highways has confirmed £785,000 from its Environment and wellbeing fund for the Trust to restore and recreate 16.8 hectares of woodland, orchard, grassland and heathland around Ladock to Gwills and Benhaven to Lambourne Mill, north of Truro.

The Environment Agency is also providing £50,000 towards the ‘green ribs’ projects, which will help to tackle decreasing biodiversity within the county by:

- creating and enhancing habitat areas for wildlife
- improving the quality, condition and connectivity of landscape features in Cornwall
- mitigating severance impacts of the A30 by creating stronger habitat connections, safely channelling wildlife away from the road

Roads Minister Baroness Vere said:

It’s great to see Government money invested in boosting biodiversity in our beautiful Cornish countryside, alongside delivering these vital upgrades as we build on our commitments to build back both better and greener from the pandemic.

Tina Barrington, National Highways’ Environment Funding Manager, said:

We’re pleased to announce this additional funding for further environmental projects around the location of the scheme, and working with our partners on various enhancements which will bring long-lasting benefits for Cornwall.

We're delighted to be working with Cornwall Wildlife Trust and Cornwall Council on these projects – a glowing example of how this funding and partnership working can make life better for communities, wildlife and the environment around our roads.

We're really proud of the work we're undertaking to protect and enhance the ecology and environment in the area, and we're currently forecasting a net gain of over 10% in biodiversity as part of the work we're doing on the A30 Chiverton to Carland Cross scheme in the county.

The design of the road scheme is also being carried out in the most sympathetic way for both local people, the travelling public, wildlife and the environment.

The 'green ribs' work, to take place in the second roads investment period up to 2025, builds on previous design and construction work within the first roads investment, particularly between Benny Mill and Boswiddle.

This programme included tree works, planting of species-rich grassland and wet meadow, pond and wet habitat restoration and boundary works.

Cornwall Council and Natural England jointly funded initial technical work ahead of the National Highways investment and the council has also been steering development to align with its nature recovery, climate resilience and Forest for Cornwall ambitions.

Martyn Alvey, Cornwall Council's Portfolio Holder for Environment & Climate Change, said:

It's great news that the Green Ribs project has secured further funding to continue delivery, creating vitally important habitat down the spine of Cornwall.

Cornwall Council has declared an ecological emergency in a bid to tackle the decline of wildlife and nature, which works alongside the plan to help Cornwall become carbon neutral by 2030.

This project showcases how responding to the ecological emergency is best served by close partnerships to ensure that the recovery of nature is prioritised alongside efforts to reduce impact on the climate.

Tom Shelley, Conservation Manager for Cornwall Wildlife Trust, said:

The Green Ribs project provides continued investment from National Highways to the Cornish landscape to help grow habitats and protect existing nature networks.

This is helping restore biodiversity and also allows neighbouring landowners to have a combined positive impact in the long term. This is a key part of the Trust's strategic plan for at least 30% of Cornwall's land and sea to be connected, recovering and protected for nature by 2030.

National Highways manages four designated funds, allocated by the Government, to deliver benefits above and beyond building, maintaining and operating England's strategic roads.

From protecting the environment and enhancing the landscape around roads, to improving safety, reducing congestion, and supporting communities, the aim is to make a positive difference to people's lives.

The A30 Chiverton to Carland Cross scheme has also been designed to protect the environment and as part of construction, a total of 33 multi-species crossing points, including a 'green bridge' at Marazanvose, are being constructed to assist the habitats and journeys of animals such as otters, badgers, bats and reptiles.

The scheme will also see over 28 miles of new drainage to protect the local area and water courses, new filtration ponds, native tree planting, the creation of new landscape boundaries and the construction of earth barriers and sound-absorbing fencing.

Further information on environmental mitigation and other details are available on the [A30 Chiverton to Carland Cross scheme webpage](#).

Read more information on [funded projects around the A30 upgrade](#).

Learn more about National Highways' wider [designated funds programme](#).

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the National Highways customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the National Highways press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

[**UNECE Regional Forum on Sustainable**](#)

Development: UK statement

The Regional Forum on Sustainable Development provides an opportunity to look back at the sum of our collective efforts to advance Agenda 2030. In this 'Decade of Action', progress has never been more critical – especially as we have heard that the region is on track to achieve only one quarter of SDG targets by 2030.

So it is with heavy hearts that we meet today. The attainment of peace, and of societies free from fear and violence, is a central pillar of the 2030 Agenda. Russia's attack on Ukraine is an attack on our shared vision for a safe, prosperous and sustainable world. It shows contempt for international peace and security, and the UN Charter.

The Deputy Prime Minister of Ukraine has set out starkly the impact of the conflict on Ukraine's sustainable development. The cost to human lives will be profound. The destruction of essential infrastructure, including schools and hospitals, cannot be ignored.

The United Kingdom stands in solidarity with the people of Ukraine and condemns Russian actions in the strongest terms.

Chair, while we face this tragedy and outrage, we must also maintain momentum on tackling the other key challenges facing our region. Over the past year, the UK has strived for accelerated progress on the Sustainable Development Goals, notably through our presidencies of the G7 and COP26.

Nearly 200 countries signed the Glasgow Climate Pact, which completes the Paris Rulebook and keeps alive the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees.

The Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use has now been signed by over 140 countries, covering over 90% of the world's forests. Through the Global Forest Finance Pledge, countries announced that they will provide USD12 billion of public climate finance between 2021-2025.

Our ambitions for SDG5, Gender Equality, are higher in 2022 than ever. We are taking action to educate girls, empower women, and end violence against women and girls. At the Human Rights Council, the UK is leading the charge to ensure that every girl has the right to 12 years of quality education.

We are working to shatter the culture of impunity around sexual violence in conflict, and to champion sexual and reproductive health and rights. Our women and girls strategy launching this year will place gender equality at the heart of our foreign and development policy.

Finally, SDG17 reminds us that partnerships are vital to achieving the goals. Under the UK's Presidency in 2021, G7 members agreed to deliver a step change in their approach to infrastructure finance.

British Investment Partnerships represents the UK's commitment to build

stronger, more transparent economic partnerships, facilitating high-quality investment in Low and Middle Income Countries. We aim to mobilise up to £8bn pounds of UK-backed financing a year by 2025, partnering with capital markets and Sovereign Wealth Funds to provide scale.

UNECE and its membership have a responsibility to foster peace and sustainable development within our region. In so doing, we also have an opportunity – to lead global efforts towards a green, fairer, more sustainable global economy that leaves no one behind.

Thank you chair.

[Russia's war in Ukraine is also an attack on the security and freedom of Europe: UK statement to the OSCE, 6 April 2022](#)

Thank you Mr Chair. Usually, the Closing session of a Forum for Security Cooperation (FSC) is a time for reflection. A time to consider our work as a forum for security cooperation, our discussions, our challenges but also our progress. Unfortunately that is not possible today.

Ambassador, when we met for the Opening Session, we recognised that you assumed the FSC Chair at a critical time for Euro-Atlantic Security. As we watched Russia amass the large concentration of military force along Ukraine's borders and in illegally annexed Crimea we feared the worst and the worst came true. Russia's unprovoked, premeditated and barbaric attack on Ukraine and its peaceful civilians has horrified the world.

Ukraine has taken up the fight to defend their homeland and shown the world the meaning of bravery and courage. An out-manoeuvred and out-classed Russian military has taken its frustrations out on civilians, unleashing horrendous amounts of violence. In recent days we have watched in horror as reports have emerged of men, women and children killed and mutilated. This is a great moral stain upon the Russian military, and one which will never be forgotten.

Mr Chair, the Russian government's attempt to redraw the map of Europe in blood, and conquer an independent and democratic state by force of arms is an attack on the security and freedom of Europe. It is also an attack on the Euro-Atlantic Security Architecture that was designed to increase security and stability in the region and, through trust, help prevent such appalling acts.

For their part, our Russian colleagues have "weaponised" the OSCE confidence

and security building mechanisms which underpin this organisation and have lied to this forum, and indeed continue to lie to this forum. They have shattered the trust and the belief that all of us in this room seek a secure and stable region in respect of one and other – that we work in good faith for a mutual goal.

Trust is a hard thing to rebuild. It is clear that normal business cannot resume whilst President Putin wages his horrific and barbaric war of choice on our Ukrainian friends. Our primary focus must remain to work together – for however long it takes – to ensure that the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the independence of Ukraine is restored. The UK stands with and will continue to support the Ukrainian people in their fight for their homeland.

Against all of this, we must do our utmost to ensure the integrity of this Forum, such that it is able to fulfil its mandate. In this we regard we trust it will continue to be stewarded in a professional and proper manner.

May I conclude by thanking you Ambassador and your team for your forbearance as Chair of the FSC in these unprecedented times. We also thank our Austrian colleagues who leave the troika and welcome our Belgium ones.

Slava Ukraini!

Thank you. And I ask that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.

Council fined for undertaking work without a marine licence

Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council appeared in court charged with carrying out a licensable marine activity other than in accordance with a marine licence granted by the Marine Management Organisation.

The court heard how the offence took place at Hilbre Island, located in the mouth of the Dee Estuary, off the coast of the Wirral peninsula. It is an environmentally sensitive area and part of a local nature reserve.

Following a partial cliff collapse in 2016, Wirral MBC commissioned a report to investigate the stability of the area. The report set out several options to prevent further collapsing and the council chose the option of infilling a cave in the cliffside. The report noted at this time that a marine licence would be required for these works.

On 24 July 2019 contractors, under the instruction of Wirral MBC, began a construction project to shore-up the cave. The project involved the infilling

of the cave with a combination of polyurethane slabs and polyurethane expanding foam.

On 17 August 2019 a storm hit the island. The resultant action of the sea washed parts of the foam away over several days and a quantity of this entered the marine environment. On 23 August 2019 the contractors reapplied expanding foam. The foam then caught fire and burned for three days until the entire contents of the cave filling (polyurethane slabs and foam) were burnt out. A quantity of this entered the marine environment. Clean-up efforts were made by the Council, the contractors, and local volunteers.

The works associated with the cave infilling were not carried out under a marine licence, in that neither the Council nor the contractors applied to the MMO for a marine licence. This is contrary to Section 65 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. The foam used was not designated safe to use in the marine environment.

In sentencing, District Judge (Magistrates' Court) Clark found the actions of the Council to have been negligent.

A representative from the council pleaded guilty to the charge. They were fined £8,000, ordered to pay £3,894.22 in costs and a £150 victim surcharge. The District Judge gave the council credit for an early guilty plea, noted the council had been cooperative with the MMO's investigation, had taken steps to rectify the damage that had been caused and said he recognised imposing a larger fine would negatively impact the service the Council provides for the public.

An MMO spokesperson said:

This case shows the importance of applying for a marine licence before works are undertaken. Had marine experts been able to look at the proposals before works were undertaken these substances would not have been approved for use and would not have entered the marine environment.

In cases like these, MMO will always take proportionate and appropriate action, including prosecution, to ensure the marine environment is protected.