

101 YEARS LATER, PEACE AT LAST FOR WORLD WAR ONE AVIATORS

In a moving ceremony near The Somme in France, the final resting place of two Royal Flying Corps (RFC) aviators has finally been marked exactly 101 years after their deaths, following painstaking research by a retired Royal Canadian Navy Officer.

The graves of Lieutenant Leonard Cameron Kidd MC and Second Lieutenant Fenton Ellis Stanley Phillips MC were rededicated with full military honours in a service today [Thursday, 12 October 2017] at the Caterpillar Valley Cemetery in France. The graves of Lieutenant Kidd (Pilot) and Second Lieutenant Phillips (Observer) were previously marked as 'A British Airman of the Great War'.



Lieutenant Kidd and Second Lieutenant Phillips were killed on 12 October 1916. They were members of 3 Squadron RFC, and had flown out of the RFC Aerodrome at La Houssoye at around 13:50 in a Morane Parasol reconnaissance aircraft. The pair did not return and were believed to have been shot down by anti-aircraft fire between Gueudecourt and Eaucourt L'Abbaye.

For a century their whereabouts remained unknown and the pair were commemorated by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission on the Arras Flying Services Memorial. However, thorough research by Lieutenant Commander Steve St Amant, a retired Royal Canadian Navy Officer, has revealed that the two plots at the Caterpillar Valley Cemetery do indeed belong to Lieutenant Kidd and Second Lieutenant Phillips (see Notes to Editors).

The service, organised by the Ministry of Defence's Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC) was attended by personnel from the current 3 (Fighter) Squadron Royal Air Force, based at RAF Coningsby in Lincolnshire. The service was conducted by Rev Fr Flight Lieutenant James Mealy, the RAF Coningsby Station Chaplain and Padre of 3 (Fighter) Squadron.



Also present was

Lieutenant Commander St Amant alongside other representatives from the Royal Canadian Navy, the UK Embassy in Paris, Standard Bearers from the Royal British Legion, local dignitaries, and the Head Teacher and pupils from Bromsgrove School in Worcestershire, which was attended by Lieutenant Kidd.

Rev Fr Flight

Lieutenant James Mealy said: "It is truly an honour and privilege to be part of this rededication service for Lieutenant Kidd and Second Lieutenant Philips. They are remarkable and brave young officers who gave their everything so we can enjoy our today.

"Also, as the 3 (Fighter) Squadron Padre, it is especially meaningful to me, to finally give these two men the honour and blessing that they deserve and give praise and thanksgiving to God for the sacrifice they gave for us. Their names will continue to live on."

Simon Bergg,

Second Lieutenant Phillips' great nephew who attended the ceremony, said: "We are extremely grateful for the opportunity to pay our respects to our great uncle at this Rededication Ceremony. It means a great deal to us that he no longer rests in an unmarked grave.



"We are also very thankful for the time and effort that Steve St Amant invested to unearth the history that has enabled this ceremony to take place.

"Through all of this we have learned so much about our Great Uncle and how he brought pleasure and joy to those around him during his short life, even during times of conflict."

Tracey Bowers, who

works for the JCCC, said: "It is only right and fitting that these two exceptionally brave men now have a named grave. It is humbling that so many people have travelled from so far away to attend today's ceremony"

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