

[News story: Companies House shortlisted at UK Civil Service Awards 2018](#)



This year's [Civil Service Awards](#) were held on Thursday 8 November. These awards recognise and celebrate inspirational individuals and teams across government.

The wellbeing of our colleagues has always been a priority.

We were concerned to see employee absence rates increase in November 2017. The main cause of absence was mental health issues, such as stress and anxiety. This accounted for 155 lost days each month.

Our health and wellbeing team developed an action plan to address the issue. The main priorities were to:

- raise awareness about mental health issues
- make sure there was plenty of support available for employees
- provide training for managers

The team worked hard to put this action plan into practice. We gained [external accreditation](#) for our commitment and had positive feedback from our colleagues. Employee absence rates have reduced since the implementation of this action plan.

We're so proud to have been shortlisted for this award. We'll continue to work hard to provide the best possible working environment for our colleagues.

Published 9 November 2018

News story: Dstl recalls the contribution of the Civil Service during WW1

During the 1914-18 conflict, three Battalions of Infantry were formed from Civil Servant volunteers drawn from across the Government Departments.

Long before WWI, the Civil Service had recognised the benefits of military service and actively encouraged its employees to join. Following the outbreak of war, Civil Servants from across the capital were eager to exchange pens for rifles and be directly involved in the fighting. The Civil Service Rifles lobbied the Prime Minister and supporters in the House of Lords arguing that replacements for their day jobs should be urgently found, exclaiming that, 'Civil servants are burning to do something for this country in this hour of need.' In parallel, the Regiment prepared itself through a programme of drill, rifle training, route marches and practice attacks in the streets and parks of central London.

In the pre-war years, approximately eighty per cent of the population was employed in manual labour. With its meritocratic system of advancement, the Civil Service offered social mobility to those seeking to enter a white-collar profession. As a result, members of the Civil Service Rifles were well-educated, self-disciplined and used to working within a hierarchical organisation. New recruits would always begin as privates, regardless of Civil Service grade, with officers being promoted from the ranks. Relationships between the ranks were friendly and respectful, which proved a significant factor in maintaining morale during WWI, sustaining them through the most appalling experiences and losses.

The 1st Battalion won twelve battle honours in France, including Loos, Vimy Ridge, Ypres and the Somme. Life in the trenches in France was typically desperate; writing from a waterlogged section of the line near Vermelles, Lt Roberts wrote: 'Mud up to your eyes, incessant shelling, unceasing rain... we had a hell of a time.' The 2nd Battalion won a further eleven battle honours in places as far-flung as France, the Balkans and the Middle East. Meanwhile, the 3rd Battalion remained in London to train reinforcements. These were required not only to replace the many casualties, but also the hundreds of members of the Civil Service Rifles who were given officer training and commissioned into other Units.

As with all Regiments, the Civil Service Rifles were accompanied by Army Chaplains, who provided pastoral support and spiritual guidance, whilst sharing the dangers and hardships of battle. The Reverend Edward Beattie served with the 1st Battalion and was awarded the Military Cross in France in 1918. It is therefore fitting that after the war, Rev Beattie helped dedicate the Civil Service Rifles memorial.

If you walk from this church just 20 minutes north along the river, you will

find Somerset House, which was originally built for the Civil Service and became the Regiment's Headquarters and drill ground until its disbandment in 1921. There on the riverside terrace is a war memorial, designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens and unveiled by the then Prince of Wales, the Regiment's Honorary Colonel, in January 1924.

It commemorates the 1,240 members of the Civil Service Rifles who fell in the First World War. The Regiment held Remembrance Sunday services at the memorial until the late 1980s, by which time many veterans were in their nineties. A rededication ceremony in 2002 was attended by relatives of former members and ex-Private Walter Humphrys, the last known surviving veteran of the Regiment from World War I. A small, frail but alert figure in a wheelchair, Walter attended just a few weeks short of his 105th birthday to honour the men with whom he served. As he left Somerset House for the final time, he was heard to say of his former comrades, 'You never forget them, you know... you never forget.'

With acknowledgements to Jill Knight's book, 'The Civil Service Rifles in the Great War'.

[Press release: New Northumberland flood scheme complete](#)

The Environment Agency and Port of Blyth have worked together to build a £600,000 flood wall to protect homes and businesses in Blyth.

[Press release: New Northumberland flood scheme complete](#)

A major new £600,000 flood scheme which protects homes and businesses in a Northumberland town from tidal flooding is complete.

The previous 180m flood wall in the Cowpen area of Blyth has been upgraded and extended to create a 380m wall to reduce the risk of flooding to the town.

When taking climate change into account these new defences, from Crawford Street to Quay Road, will protect over 1,000 properties into the future while also offering immediate improved protection from tidal flooding to 58 properties.

The work has been funded by the Environment Agency but was built by Port of Blyth as part of their wider redevelopment of the adjacent Bates and Wimbourne Quay terminals.

While the Environment Agency has advised on the specifications and design of the flood wall, the Port of Blyth will own and maintain the wall. The Environment Agency will carry out annual inspections of the new structures.

‘Great example’ of effective partnership

Leila Huntington, the Environment Agency’s Flood Risk Manager for the North East, said:

We’re delighted this flood wall is now complete and hope it provides peace of mind to local residents that they have increased protection from tidal flooding now and into the future.

This is a great example of an effective and efficient partnership project and we have worked closely with the Port of Blyth to create something which means a greater standard of flood protection at a reduced cost.

I’d like to thank local residents for their patience throughout this work. We’re committed to increasing protection for our communities at risk of flooding and are continuously looking for opportunities to collaborate with our partners and provide the best possible solutions.

Alan Todd, Port Director at the Port of Blyth, added:

We’re delighted that these works are now complete and offer immediate improvements to the flood defences for the town, its residents and businesses.

We are now able to focus on further phases of the redevelopment which will see the Bates and Wimbourne Quay terminals become one terminal, offering increased opportunities for growth and significant inward investment.

A Flood Warning service is available for Blyth residents considered to be at risk of flooding, one for the North Sea at Blyth and another for the North Sea at Blyth Town Centre.

To check if you are at risk of flooding and to sign up for free flood warnings call Floodline on 0345 988 1188 or [visit the gov.uk website](#)

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