

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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[Press release: UKEF supports Angolan healthcare and power infrastructure development](#)

Baroness Fairhead announces €450 million in UK Export Finance (UKEF) support for UK firms to build three new hospitals and upgrade two power stations, improving healthcare and power provision in Angola.

Baroness Fairhead, Minister of State for Trade and Export Promotion, said:

I'm delighted that the UK Government, through UK Export Finance, is supporting these two projects. It enables a Scottish exporter to enter a global marketplace and deliver reliable power to millions of people in Angola. It also showcases how British expertise can assist the development of vital healthcare services.

This is a great example of how our ambition to grow exports, as set out in the Export Strategy, is helping British businesses break into overseas markets through support such as that provided through UKEF, our award-winning export credit agency, our teams led by HM Trade Commissioners in market and our GREAT.gov.uk website.

Opportunities for UK healthcare and construction suppliers

This is the first time UKEF, the UK's export credit agency, has supported projects in Angola.

€380 million will go to support a contract between Angola's Ministry of Health and ASGC UK, the UK branch of international construction firm ASGC, to build three new hospitals. The company will lead on the design, construction and equipping of the Mother and Child Hospital and Paediatric Haematology Institute, both based in Luanda, and the Cabinda General Hospital. The projects will create significant opportunities for UK healthcare and construction suppliers.

Once complete, the Mother and Child Hospital will have over 300 beds available, and the Cabinda General Hospital over 200, providing much-needed healthcare services to major population centres in Angola. The haematology unit will provide a range of specialist services including radiology, intensive care and a paediatric ward.

IQA Group, headquartered in Paisley, will upgrade two power substations in Viana and Gabela over the course of two years, significantly reducing North West Angola's dependence on oil-generated power. UKEF will provide a guarantee to support a €70 million loan issued to the Angolan Ministry of Finance for the project.

This is the first international contract for IQA Group, which was established in 2002 and is now the UK arm of Spanish multinational Elecnor, and which is leading a consortium to deliver the work for the Ministry of Energy and Water in Angola.

Supporting economic growth and development

The project will have a transformative effect on the region's power network, giving thousands of Luanda's residents, as well as industry in the region, improved access to electricity to support economic growth and development.

Baroness Northover, the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy for Angola and Zambia, said:

I have visited Angola regularly in the last two years in support of UK- Angola business co-operation, and am acutely aware of the growing opportunities there. It is wonderful that these important projects have come to fruition and I look forward to seeing more in the future.

Gregory Smyth, Managing Director, IQA Group, said:

IQA Group has ambitious plans for international growth, building on

our success in the UK, and we're pleased that UKEF, along with the DIT team at the British Embassy in Luanda, is supporting us as we enter new markets. Support from UK Export Finance is a central part of our international offer, and is supporting our operations and jobs in Scotland.

Paul Woodman, Managing Director, ASGC, said:

UKEF's support forms a crucial component of our strategy, enabling us to grow revenues and deliver value for clients such as the Angolan government. The government's commitment to the growth of UK exports is continuing to help us build confidence with overseas customers and with UK suppliers.

Background

[UK Export Finance](#) is the UK's export credit agency and a government department, working alongside the Department for International Trade as an integral part of its strategy and operations.

Our mission is to ensure that no viable UK export should fail for want of finance or insurance from the private market. We provide finance and insurance to help exporters win, fulfil and ensure they get paid for export contracts.

Sectors in which UKEF has supported exports include: aerospace, healthcare, infrastructure, telecommunications and transport.

UKEF has a [national regional network of 24 export finance managers](#) supporting export businesses.

Our range of products includes:

- Bond insurance policy
- Bond support scheme
- Buyer & supplier credit financing facility
- Direct lending facility
- Export insurance policy
- Export refinancing facility
- Export working capital scheme
- Letter of credit guarantee scheme

Our [country cover positions](#) outline our current cover policy and risk appetite for each country.