

News story: Schools to support teachers' return to the classroom

Schools from across the West Midlands and the South East are being asked to take part in a government programme designed to help teachers return to the classroom after a career break, the School Standards Minister Nick Gibb has announced today [14 March].

Together with schools in these areas, the Department for Education will test the best approach to supporting teachers who have taken time out of their careers, providing funding to help them after they return to the classroom. It's part of the drive to help schools attract and keep the best and brightest people working in their classrooms, and follows the Education Secretary's recent [announcement of a strategy to drive recruitment and boost retention of teachers](#).

The pilots, which will start in May, will build on existing evidence and help teachers re-acclimatise to the classroom and support continuous professional development through a range of measures, including funding for National Professional Qualifications.

Thanks to a hardworking and incredibly talented generation of teachers, alongside the government's bold reforms, there are now 1.9 million more children in good or outstanding schools than in 2010.

School Standards Minister Nick Gibb said:

There are a record number of teachers in our classrooms – 15,500 more than in 2010 – but we want to build on that. Many of us will need to take time out from our careers at some point, and teaching is no different – but it can be hard to return to the classroom.

We want to support teachers by giving them more options on how to return to the workplace. As well as helping to keep experienced and valued teachers working in our schools, this pilot will help make sure teaching remains attractive to the next generation and regarded as a profession that is flexible to the demands of the modern world.

Once the lead schools are confirmed the pilot itself will be launched later in the year, with the recruitment of the returning teachers due to take place in the summer term.

The pilot has a budget of £298,000, which will be adjusted depending on the number of returning teachers supported by the lead schools. Up to 10 lead schools are being sought across the two regions to deliver the pilot.

Today's announcement will build on measures already helping to support

teachers' development and attract the best, brightest recruits into the profession, including:

- the consultation to strengthen Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and improve career progression for teachers by ensuring the right structures are in place at the beginning of teachers' careers and improving access to high-quality professional development;
- a Flexible Working Summit with business and education leaders to explore how the profession can be more flexible – including through part time roles – which resulted in a number of pledges; and
- developing a free website for schools to publish vacancies to help reduce costs and make it easier for aspiring and current teachers to find new posts.

Last summer, the Government Equalities Office announced a broader £5million package of support for those returning to or wanting to work in the public sector after career breaks.

Further details of today's announcement can be found [here](#).

[News story: World war one Durham light infantry soldier finally given military burial a century after his death](#)

Riflemen from the 3rd Battalion, the Rifles, carrying the coffin of Private Edmundson, Crown Copyright, All rights reserved

Private (Pte) Thomas Telford Edmundson has been laid to rest over 100 years after he died on 26 April 1915 fighting during the Great War. Since his death aged just 20 years old, he has remained in a shallow grave in a field near the town of Zonnebeke, Belgium and today (Wednesday 14 March) he was given a ceremonial burial with full military honours at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) Perth (China Wall) Cemetery in Belgium.

Sergeant Gareth Forrest, 3rd Battalion, the Rifles, reads a passage from the Order of Service, Crown Copyright, All rights reserved

The service, organised by the MOD's Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC), part of Defence Business Services, was conducted by The Reverend John Swanston, CF, Chaplain to the 1st Battalion the Rifles.

Riflemen from the 3rd Battalion, the Rifles, prepare to lower the coffin of

Private Edmundson, Crown Copyright, All rights reserved

It followed the discovery, in November 2014, of remains of a British world war 1 casualty were discovered in Zonnebeke. Artefacts discovered included a single Durham shoulder title. Following forensic samples being taken from the remains in December 2016, extensive research was undertaken by the JCCC and the Durham Light Infantry Museum/Durham County Council had narrowed the number of potential candidates to 8. Further work including genealogy was conducted by JCCC who successfully traced descendants for all 8 soldiers, all of whom provided DNA samples for comparison.

A positive match with a second cousin once removed of Pte Thomas Edmundson confirmed the identification.

Louise Dorr, JCCC said:

Pte Edmundson was one of only 8 Durham Light Infantry soldiers still missing from the Second Battle of Ypres, which is why it has been possible to identify him by means of DNA.

I'm delighted that Thomas' family have been very involved in the planning of today's service. It's been a huge pleasure to get to meet them, some of whom have travelled from Canada. Thomas Edmundson made the greatest sacrifice for his country and it's humbling to be here today with his biological and military family to honour him.

Pte Edmundson was born in Sunderland in 1894 to George and Mary Edmundson. He enlisted into his local regiment, the Durham Light Infantry.

Riflemen from the 3rd Battalion, the Rifles, carefully fold the ceremonial Union Flag in honour of Private Edmundson, Crown Copyright, All rights reserved

The 1st/7th Battalion of the Durham Light Infantry was involved in the second Battle of Ypres which was fought from 22 April to 25 May 1915 for control of the strategic Flemish town of Ypres in western Belgium. The Battalion's war diary records them as camping beside the Ypres-Zonnebeke road on 25 April 1915 before advancing over open fields towards Zevenkote and Gravenstafel in the afternoon of 26 April, taking up a position north of Zonnebeke. The Battalion lost 8 soldiers in action on 26 April 1915. None of them have a known grave and their names are recorded on the Menin Gate Memorial in Ypres.

Riflemen from the 3rd Battalion, the Rifles, stand alongside dignitaries, officials, family members and members of the public during the burial service of Private Edmundson, Crown Copyright, All rights reserved

Family members who paid their respects to Pte Edmundson included several second cousins twice removed, some of whom had travelled from Vancouver,

Canada for the ceremony. Current members of the 3rd Battalion, the Rifles paid tribute to their former colleague by providing a bearer party for his coffin.

David Hall, a cousin of Pte Edmundson on behalf of the Edmundson family said:

There was fascination and great interest at the news that human remains found in Zonnebeke, Belgium, had been positively identified as a relative of ours, Thomas Telford Edmundson. He died in the First World War, but had no known grave. We were unaware of this branch of the family, and sadly this part of Edmundson line died out, as Thomas had been the sole surviving son, a younger brother of Thomas' died in infancy. There was also a sister, but we have no information about her. Our branch of the Edmundson family is widely scattered, with some still living in Sunderland, and others living in Canada and Australia.

We have been greatly impressed by the painstaking work organised by the Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC) of the Ministry of Defence. They had to identify descendants of 8 Durham Light Infantry soldiers who were killed in fighting around Zonnebeke on 26 April 1915 and had no known grave. Then they had to arrange the collection of samples for DNA testing, and this led to the identification.

Sub Lieutenant Harry Lewis, British Embassy said:

It is an honour to be involved in this service. After so much time, Pte Edmundson has been given the military funeral that he deserves. It is important that he receives a final and proper resting place, after having made the ultimate sacrifice during the first world war. This occasion is especially poignant as his family has joined us here today to remember him.

It is important that we continue to commemorate these soldiers, who 100 years ago gave their lives for freedom. Although we may not know everything about who they were, we honour their immense courage, conviction, and service. We give thanks for these extraordinary acts made by ordinary people.

Mel Donnelly, CWGC said:

More than 100 years after his death, Private Thomas Edmundson has been laid to rest at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's Perth (China Wall) Cemetery with the honour and dignity his sacrifice

deserves. Today's ceremony is an opportunity for us to give thanks for this brave man's service, to understand the effect his loss had on his family and his community, and to renew our determination to remember him and his fallen comrades forever.

Captain Patrick Keating, Adjutant 3 Rifles, successor regiment to the Durham Light Infantry, said:

It is an immense honour for the Riflemen of 3 RIFLES to be involved in the burial of Pte Edmundson of the Durham Light Infantry who faithfully served his country over 100 years ago. It is humbling to think of this sacrifice and the debt which the country owes him and we are proud that we in the RIFLES carry on the traditions of the Durham Light Infantry and our other antecedents to this day.

A new headstone bearing Pte Edmundson's name has been provided by the CWGC, who will now care for his final resting place in perpetuity.

Press release: Military grade underwater cameras working to end illegal fishing for eels in the Fens

Fisheries enforcement staff at the Environment Agency have been working with new underwater sonar technology to assess fish populations, especially where it's hard to use classic methods like netting and electric fishing. The technology is also being put to excellent use elsewhere and giving us eyes underwater as well as above.

Our fisheries enforcement work helps to protect the environment and ensure fisheries income is generated through rod licence sales. All anglers require an Environment Agency rod licence to fish in England and Wales. The Environment Agency also lead on the enforcement of permits for migratory species like eels, smelt and lamprey. Regular auditing of these fisheries is essential to ensure protection of these iconic and in the case of eel – a critically endangered species; but also to ensure that the activity is regulated and sustainable.

Illegal eel fishing is a priority for the Environment Agency who are the lead organisation responsible for the conservation of this now endangered species. The eel stock is in decline, recruitment is at an all-time low, and exploitation of the stock is currently unsustainable. We regulate the fishing industry, which is carried out by only a handful of licensed fishermen. We

also protect eel habitat, improve passage allowing ore access for eels further upstream and regulate other activities that might impact on each life stage of the species. While the West of England has issues with elver fishing – the capture of tiny juvenile eels returning from the America’s for a global market, in the East the fens provide excellent habitat for mature eels, vital in supporting this European species. Adult “silver” eels will return to the Sargasso Sea as their final life stage to spawn and much of our enforcement work protects this phase.

Our new sonar equipment has allowed us to see, with amazing clarity, where we’ve never been able to before – under the water.

This makes checking for nets, especially illegal equipment, much easier and makes us more efficient and in some cases 100% effective. A recent audit of a river near Kings Lynn resulted in a record illegal eel net seizure; 16 nets in total capable of significantly impacting an emigrating eel population – hundreds of eels were released. The nets were removed and we worked with Norfolk police to investigate the case.

Using boat mounted sonar equipment we can travel up to 10km per day, checking every inch of channel for illegal and submerged equipment. This is our greatest weapon in halting the illegal exploitation of eels and gives us a chance to completely rid waters of illegal instruments. We are using this technology to regulate other areas of illegal fishing including poaching, netting and trapping. You can see from the images how easy it is for us to spot illegal equipment, here both ends of an eel “fyke” net can be clearly seen stretching across the river channel. We use boats and specially trained enforcement staff to check traps and remove any illegal ones we find.

Anyone fishing for eels should be permitted, be fishing within the conditions of the licence, and nets must include visible and valid tags, as well as being equipped with otter guards too.

Any suspected illegal fishing activity should be reported to the Environment Agency’s Incident Hotline on 0800 80 70 60.

Anyone wishing to fish for migratory species including eels should visit [Permission to trap crayfish, eels, elvers, salmon and sea trout](#).

All anglers need a valid Environment Agency rod licence which can be bought using a credit or debit card by calling the Environment Agency’s telesales line on 0344 800 5386. Alternatively, they can be obtained from any Post Office or visit: [Buy a rod fishing licence](#)

[Press release: Military grade](#)

underwater cameras working to end illegal fishing for eels in the Fens

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Policy paper: Unlocking the River Severn: Powick and Knightsford

This document provides information about work being carried out on Environment Agency owned weirs (Powick Weir and Knightsford Bridge Weir) as part of the Unlocking the River Severn partnership project.