

News story: Defence Minister's visit strengthens UK ties with South America

The Minister for Armed Forces has returned from Chile, Uruguay and Colombia, where he met senior military figures and politicians, and saw first-hand a range of ongoing projects.

Minister for Armed Forces Mark Lancaster said:

The UK has a proud and long-standing history with these nations, who are all playing their part to achieve prosperity and stability, at home and abroad.

It's vital that we keep all of our international friends close, particularly as we prepare to leave the European Union and reinforce our relationships across the globe.

In Chile, Mr Lancaster met with Defence Minister Alberto Espina, Undersecretary of Defence, Cristián de la Maza, and the commander-in-chief of the navy, Commander Admiral Julio Leiva, having recently laid a wreath at Westminster Abbey to mark the 200th anniversary of the Chilean Navy.

The minister also went to the Chilean Army Military Academy, in Santiago, which provided an opportunity to reinforce its links with the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst.

On the Uruguay leg of the trip, he also met and praised staff at the renowned Uruguayan National Peacekeeping School. The school has trained more than 900 personnel from the country to be deployed to one of the most challenging UN Peacekeeping missions, in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The Defence Minister also discussed a post-Brexit relationship and collaboration on joint exercises, including counter-terrorism training, with Uruguay's Minister for Foreign Affairs Rodolfo Nin Novoa and the Defence Minister Dr Jorge Menendez.

In Colombia, the minister met the Head of the Army, General Ricardo Gomez Nieto, the Deputy Defence Minister Anibal Fernández de Soto and the Chief of the Defence Staff General Alberto Mejia Ferrero. These meetings presented an opportunity to reaffirm defence ties between the two ties and demonstrate continued support to the Peace Process.

News story: Soldiers begin training on first sports facility delivered for Army Basing Programme

Soldiers at Perham Down are benefitting from a new sports facility, which has been delivered by Aspire Defence for the Ministry of Defence's (MOD) Army Basing Programme (ABP).

The ABP is a joint army and Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) programme, which is providing the facilities the British Army needs to live, work and train in the UK as it returns from Germany, rebases across the UK and restructures to its future Army 2020 formations.

Providing quality physical training facilities supports the army's commitment to training and sport. Alongside sports facilities, the ABP will also deliver modern, purpose built single living and working accommodation for soldiers, from dining facilities and offices to vehicle garaging, stores and technical buildings.

The new pitch was constructed by Aspire Defence Capital Works (ADCW) and is just one of many essential assets being delivered at Perham Down. A Regimental Headquarters, several Junior Ranks' single living accommodation (SLA) blocks and an Officers' SLA block have already been handed over. An Officers' Mess and gym are currently under construction.

Rhod McGregor, Project Director TidNBul (ADCW), said:

We're very pleased to hand over this pitch as part of our wider delivery of ABP infrastructure at Perham Down. We continue to maintain an efficient pace of build progress across all our construction sites, to ensure we deliver the right assets at the right time for the army.

All ABP infrastructure across Salisbury Plain Training Area (SPTA) and at Aldershot is being delivered under Aspire Defence's 35 year Project Allenby/Connaught (PAC) contract, held with the MOD since 2006.

Mark Duddy, ABP Programme Director, said:

As we near peak ABP construction phase this summer, we're delighted with the high standard of accommodation being delivered for soldiers across SPTA. The ABP is delivering real and lasting improvements across the defence estate, ensuring that British soldiers live, work and train in the best possible environments.

[News story: Ready for F-35s: runway resurfaced at RAF Marham](#)

This took place with little to no impact on operational activity.

The first F-35 Lightning aircraft are due to arrive at their new home at RAF Marham shortly. The game-changing aircraft, which will be operated by both the Royal Air Force and Royal Navy, will be based at RAF Marham. Preparations are on track for the aircraft to be able to deploy from RAF Marham to deployed operating bases by the end of the year. In due course they will also deploy to the Royal Navy's Queen Elizabeth Class aircraft carriers.

The resurfacing work was undertaken by the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) through its contractors, a joint venture of Galliford Try and Lagan Construction. It forms part of a £250 million DIO programme of investment at the station and involves resurfacing about 90% of the airfield operating surfaces; all of this while the Tornado Force maintained operations from the airfield.

Rob Dawson, DIO's Principal Project Manager, said:

The completion of the resurfacing of the secondary runway is one a series of milestones for the work DIO and our contractors are undertaking to prepare RAF Marham to be the main operating base for the new F-35B aircraft. Along with work being completed by our colleagues at Defence Equipment and Support, this investment will transform RAF Marham with a host of new and upgraded facilities for the aircraft and the men and women who will operate them.

RAF Marham Station Commander Group Captain Ian Townsend said:

It's fantastic to have the secondary runway handed back to the station after the completion of the resurfacing in preparation for the imminent arrival of the F-35 Lightning. To see the Tornado's take off from it for the first time was a real milestone in the programme and we look forward to the next historic event in the next couple of weeks when the F-35's will touch down on the new runway as it arrives at its home base for the first time.

James Aikman, Project Director, Galliford Try Lagan Construction, said:

The Galliford Try Lagan Construction joint venture is delighted to have successfully reached this important stage of the project. We

have a well-established relationship with DIO and this, combined with our experience of complex airside work, augurs very well for the remainder of the programme.

Resurfacing the 1,855m long runway required the construction of two batching plants to prepare the specific asphalt and concrete needed for the new surface. Preparing the materials on site increased efficiency.

RAF Marham is currently the home of the RAF's Tornado fleet, which will begin operating from the runway immediately before being joined by the F-35s in due course. With the aircraft currently on operations it was important that this activity could be maintained without restriction. During the work, flying was only halted for three weeks while construction teams resurfaced an intersection between the main runway and the secondary runway. This was completed a day early despite poor weather.

The remainder of the work being undertaken at RAF Marham continues, including construction of three vertical landing pads to enable the F-35s to use their vertical landing capability and a squadron headquarters for 617 Squadron (The Dambusters).

Other work includes a high voltage power upgrade, refurbishment of 12 Hardened Aircraft Shelters and a small gym and canteen as well as a hangar, offices and technical facilities for 207 Squadron.

[News story: Get the ship in shape innovation event](#)

Background

[HMS QUEEN ELIZABETH](#), and sister ship [HMS PRINCE OF WALES](#), are the new cutting edge UK Aircraft Carriers and the largest ships the UK has ever built for the Royal Navy. These ships are intended to be operated by an extremely small crew relative to the ships' size and the complexity of tasks that they undertake.

The operating environment and geographic dislocation of personnel will be creating new challenges in the way that work is managed and effectively delivered. Personnel tracking and communications can benefit from cutting edge technologies and it is not yet clear which technologies can best enhance working routines, feeding routines and organisational structure.

The following are key areas where efficiencies are required:

- tracking all our people and providing potential data sets for machine learning approaches to logistics and workflow analysis
- schedule maintenance, connect the maintainer, information and tools in the right place at the right time
- keeping such a large real-estate clean is a challenge. Every hour spent cleaning, is time away from training, operating or maintaining. Is there an efficiency/ automation/ novel tech for when, where, how and with what, we are cleaning?
- accounting for people, provisions, consumption and on-board purchasing is an obvious candidate for evolution

Are you a company working in any of the above areas? Would you be interested in discussing your ideas, technologies and solutions?

If the answer is “Yes” then our upcoming Innovation event could be of interest to you.

At the event, delegates will:

- get a chance to go on-board and see the context of the challenges upfront with support from the actual end users, if possible
- hear first hand the technical and procedural challenges faced by the current Ship’s Company
- have the opportunity to shape future Defence Innovation challenges on the ship and future R&D investments
- have the opportunity to offer/discuss both viable products and conceptual capabilities requiring funding

Register your interest to attend

If you would like participate in this event, please [register your interest](#) now and save the date.

The deadline for registering your interest is 5pm on 19 June 2018.

We will contact you between 20 and 21 June 2018 to notify you, if you’ve been selected to participate and will provide you with further information about the event.

Please note that places for this event are limited and if the event is oversubscribed, we will have to limit the number attending from a single organisation.

News story: Two World War 1 Majors have finally been identified a century later

The resting places of Major Alexander Henderson Soutar MC, Corps of Royal Engineers and Major Octavius Sidney Darby-Griffith MC, The Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, have been marked 100 years after their deaths in the great war. Two rededication services were held on Wednesday 30 May at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) Jonchery-sur-Vesle British Cemetery and La Ville-aux-Bois British Cemetery, both near Reims in the Champagne region of France.

The services, organised by the MOD's Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC), part of Defence Business Services, were conducted by the Reverend Andrew Earl CF, Senior Chaplain HQ NW & Chaplain 2nd Battalion The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment.

Rosie Barron, JCCC said:

It has been a privilege and an honour to organise these 2 rededication services today. Both Major Soutar and Major Darby-Griffith were killed during the Third Battle of the Aisne. It is important that these courageous men, who fought tirelessly to halt the German Spring Offensive in 1918, are remembered.

The Reverend Andrew Earl CF, said:

It is a great privilege to be asked to rededicate the headstones of these 2 former comrades who paid the ultimate sacrifice in the service of their country and to see the ongoing work of the MOD's JCCC. It is important that when we say 'We will remember them', it is more than words, it's an ongoing commitment. May they both rest in peace.



Major Alexander Henderson Soutar MC, Copyright Soutar family, All rights reserved

On 28 May 1918 98th Field Company, Royal Engineers, were involved in fighting around Hermonville. They were forced to withdraw southwards but had to leave Major Soutar behind as he was wounded. It is believed that he succumbed to his wounds having been taken prisoner of war. He was 30 years old.



Members of the Soutar family with military representatives and local attendees, Crown copyright, All rights reserved

James Soutar, the great nephew of Major Soutar said:

The Soutar family is extremely moved by the dedication of David Tattersfield and the Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre of the British Ministry of Defence in locating the final resting place of our ancestor, Major Alexander (Alastair) Henderson Soutar. Major Soutar sacrificed his life for his country 100 years ago, and has lain here unrecognized ever since.

We are all immensely grateful that we are able to come to France to pay him our respects and to thank him for his sacrifice. We are also relieved that his final resting place is now marked and may be known unto all who visit this beautiful place. We feel his soul is finally at peace.

On 9 September 1914 Major Darby-Griffith was commissioned into The Loyal North Lancashire Regiment. He was awarded the Military Cross, which was published in the London Gazette on 25 April 1918. His citation reads:

For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty when in command of a company which took over a sector of the line after an unsuccessful

attack. He quickly reorganised the line, which contained large gaps, and steadied his men under constant shell fire. When, after being relieved, 2 of his platoons were caught by an enemy barrage he distributed them in shell holes, and by working from shell hole to shell hole, got them clear without many casualties. After getting them clear he returned through the barrage and attended to his wounded, remaining with them till the last had been evacuated.



Major Gary Turner from The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment laying a wreath for Major Darby-Griffith, Crown copyright, All rights reserved

On 27 March 1918 Major Darby-Griffith was killed whilst in command of 9th Battalion, The Loyal North Lancashire Regiment. He was 46 years old.



The Standard being lowered as the Last Post is played during the service for Major Darby-Griffith, Crown copyright, All rights reserved

Both Majors were casualties of the Third Battle of the Aisne, a now often forgotten battle in the late stages of the German Spring Offensive. With no known graves, they were both commemorated on the Soissons Memorial in Soissons, France.

The final resting place of these 2 Majors came to light after a researcher, David Tattersfield, submitted evidence to the CWGC to suggest that they had been found. Further research by the MOD's JCCC and the National Army Museum was undertaken to corroborate the evidence that Mr Tattersfield had provided, and the identification of the 'Unknown Soldier' graves were both confirmed by the JCCC.

The service for Major Soutar was attended by 10 members of his extended family who had travelled from as far away as Canada, the USA and Hong Kong to pay their respects. Despite the limited information available, the JCCC traced Major Darby-Griffith's 91 year old granddaughter. As she lives in British Columbia she was unable to make the journey.

Members of the Corps of Royal Engineers and The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment were present at both services.

Mel Donnelly, CWGC said:

For almost a century Major Soutar and Major Darby-Griffith were commemorated on the Soissons Memorial to those with no known grave.

They were both decorated officers who had served on the Western Front for more than 3 years and we are honoured to be able to acknowledge their sacrifice and re-dedicate their graves today.

Two new headstones bearing Major Soutar's and Major Darby-Griffith's names have been provided by the CWGC, who will now care for their final resting place in perpetuity.