

Long Lost Family: The Unknown Soldiers

Following the success of the first special shown on ITV1 in October 2017, the extraordinary work of the MOD's 'War Detectives', part of Defence Business Services (DBS), will be appearing on the small screen once again as part the current series of Long Lost Family. Long Lost Family: The Unknown Soldiers, will broadcast on ITV1 at 21.00 on Monday 18 July.

The second episode, presented by Davina McCall and Nicky Campbell, follows what the War Detectives have described as a "once in a lifetime case": nine soldiers of the Great War found buried on a roadside in Belgium. The hour long special will also feature soldiers from the 1st Battalion of the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers and members of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and Cellmark who were also involved.

Each year the remains of British service personnel killed in both World Wars are found by farmers, builders and archaeologists worldwide. Davina and Nicky follow the team, who are based in DBS Innsworth House in Imjin Barracks, Gloucester, as they use military and historical research to investigate these finds and work to trace surviving families so that a DNA comparison can be made that hopefully confirms an identity.

Behind the scenes of Long Lost Family filming MOD War Detectives (Crown Copyright)

Nicky and Davina meet the families of the fallen heroes, helping them to form a picture of their relative and finally laying them to rest with a poignant full military burial at Tyne Cot Cemetery in Ypres, Belgium.

Davina spoke positively of the continued efforts of the JCCC Commemorations Team when she said:

"It's such a privilege to witness the amazing work that the MOD War Detectives does. To be able to answer people's lifelong questions about what happened to their missing soldiers is incredible and to lay these soldiers to rest in named graves, after more than a hundred years, is extremely moving."

The programme follows the team's journey through the frustrations and breakthroughs as they attempt to piece together the life of the soldiers, from the time they left British shores to their final steps on the battlefield.

Caseworker Nicola Nash from the MOD War Detectives, said:

"The work we do in identifying these brave men is extremely important not only to us, but to the British Armed Forces as a whole, which I think this episode portrays so beautifully.

"It has been an amazing experience filming with Long Lost Families. From

meeting Davina McCall and Nicky Campbell for the first time to watching the final edit, it has been an experience I will never forget.”

Behind the scenes of Long Lost Family filming MOD War Detectives (Crown Copyright)

Tracey Bowers, MOD War Detectives team lead, said:

“When ITV asked to work with us again, I was delighted and proud but also apprehensive knowing what additional work this entailed, not just for the team but colleagues across DBS and wider MOD who’s help and assistance we rely upon, such as the Commercial Team who helped write the filming contract.

“Having been through the process once things were slightly easier but adding Covid into the mix, not being able to travel and therefore film things in a chronological order, made for interesting times!”

Brigadier Caroline Hull, Head of DBS’s Armed Forces and Veterans Services, said:

“It is a privilege to support all UK Armed Forces Personnel, whether they are serving in uniform today or have previously given loyal service.

“It is also important for the families of those who died in both World Wars, and for the nation, to know that the Ministry of Defence continues to provide for support for individuals in the Military Community who might otherwise be forgotten. I am delighted that through close cooperation with all our partners, we can provide a dignified, military burial to those who died in World War 1 and 2, and wherever possible, with the family in attendance.

“I am grateful that this programme shines a bright light on one of the unique roles we as part of Defence Business Services deliver, and will continue to deliver, for years to come.”

Follow @wardetectives on Facebook for regular updates on cases, appeals for relatives and details of future services.