

Remembrance Sunday 2019, Diego Suarez in Madagascar: Phil Boyle's speech

Today, Remembrance Sunday, is a day on which we unite to remember and honour those who have sacrificed themselves to secure and protect our freedom.

The UK's National Service of Remembrance will be held today at the Cenotaph on Whitehall, in London to honour the service and sacrifice of our Armed Forces community, the British and Commonwealth veterans, the Allies that fought alongside us and the civilian servicemen and women involved in the two World Wars and later conflicts.

Every year the nation unites to make sure that no one is forgotten and to remember and honour those who have sacrificed themselves to secure and protect our freedom.

Remembrance honours those who serve to defend our democratic freedoms and way of life. We unite across faiths, cultures and backgrounds to remember the sacrifice of the Armed Forces community from Britain and the Commonwealth.

We remember the friends, allies, and Commonwealth nations who joined Britain in defending its freedoms, values, and way of life. We ask the nation to commemorate their contributions to our liberty and to "Remember Together".

And we do this around the world, wherever the fallen are to be found. In 154 countries, Commonwealth War Grave Cemeteries serve as a lasting tribute to those who died. The collaboration of Britain with our Commonwealth friends and Allied nations in 1944 continues to shape our society today. Many communities, whose ancestors served alongside each other, now live side by side in a multicultural Britain.

So thank you for joining us here today at the beautiful Commonwealth War Grave Commission Cemetery of Antsiranana. Today I have the honour to represent Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in remembering in particular those brave men and women who died during the Second World War in Madagascar.

In addition to the 315 service people buried here, we also remember the thirty-four African troops who are now commemorated on the East African memorial in the War Cemetery in Nairobi.

I'd also like to use this occasion to pay tribute to the work of many years of our dear friend, Alex Totomarovario, who did so much for this cemetery and for Anglo-Malagasy relations in Antsiranana. He was taken from us by illness last year, and is greatly missed.

And I'd like to welcome Martin Bihay to the Commonwealth War Grave Commission, and thank him for his excellent work in preparing his first Remembrance Sunday ceremony here.

I hope that you will have the time to wander the rows of the fallen here,

each grave telling the story of a brave soldier fighting under the tropical sun on an island distant from their own, far from loved ones. Amongst them were...

Captain Llewellyn Palmer, of the Royal Armoured Corps, whose tank was hit as he and his men made for the cover of a wood. As they made a run to safety one of Palmer's men fell and the Captain ran back to help him. Both were hit by a high explosive shell. Captain Parker was recommended for the Victoria Cross.

And Fusilier Edwin Carson Bunyan, of the Scots Fusiliers, who was sitting in a ditch with his Section Commander Corporal Bell when a grenade landed between them. Bunyan grabbed the grenade and shouted to his comrades who were able to dive for cover. Bunyan saved the section but was killed himself. He was also recommended, posthumously, for the Victoria Cross.

In our collective act of remembrance today we remember those who fought not only in World Wars, but the more than 12,000 British Servicemen and women killed or injured since 1945.

We ask communities to come together, join together and remember together the service and sacrifice, friendship and collaboration of the men and women of Britain, the Commonwealth and Allied nations who fought together 75 years ago.

We pay tribute to the special contribution of families, as well as the emergency services. And we acknowledge those innocent civilians who have lost their lives in conflict and acts of terrorism.

We are here to honour those who served, to remember those who died and all those affected by conflict and to ensure that the lessons learnt live with us forever. May we not wait to witness the horrors of war to become advocates of peace.

We will remember them.

Thank you.