

News story: Graves of 2 north west soldiers killed in the great war rededicated a century later

The resting place of Lieutenant (Lt) Charles Stonehouse and Private (Pte) Frederick William Birks, have both been rededicated more than a century after their deaths. The rededication services took place today, Tuesday 3 July, at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) Serre Road Cemetery No. 3 on the Somme and Perth Cemetery (China Wall) near Ypres respectively.



New headstone for Lieutenant Charles Stonehouse with Regimental Wreath from the Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, Crown Copyright, All rights reserved

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.

Rosie Barron, JCCC said:

It is an honour to have organised both rededication services for these 2 men and to have, after more than 100 years, given them their names back. It is important that the sacrifices of men such as Lieutenant Stonehouse and Private Birks are not forgotten and their stories are told to future generations.

The Reverend Andrew Earl, said:

It is a privilege to be asked to honour these 2 men who died in the service of their country as we gather and say, 'We will remember them'. We once again recall all those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice and give thanks for the freedoms we enjoy. May they rest in peace.



Five great nephews of Lieutenant Charles Stonehouse who attended today's ceremony in France, Crown Copyright, All rights reserved

Lt Stonehouse was a member of the 11th Battalion, The East Lancashire Regiment, better known as the Accrington Pals. On 1 July 1916, the first day of the Battle of the Somme, he led W Company into the battalion's attack on Serre, he was killed during the attack aged 34. With no known grave Lieutenant Stonehouse was commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial in the Somme region of France.

The rededication service at Serre Road Cemetery No. 3 was attended by members of Lieutenant Stonehouse's family.

Statement on behalf of those family members attending:

Twelve members of the Rowntree and Hoyle families, descendants of Charles Stonehouse's brother, Harry, and sister, Nellie, were very pleased to be able to attend the rededication service and felt a

great sense of humility and pride in the sacrifice made by our great uncle.

Pte Birks was killed on 2 July 1917 whilst serving with 17th Battalion, The King's (Liverpool Regiment) near Ypres. He was aged 36.



Attendees including representatives from the British Embassy and the Regiment at Private Frederick William Birks ceremony, Crown Copyright, All rights reserved

Pte Birks was buried in a small battlefield cemetery until after the great war when he was moved to Perth Cemetery (China Wall). However, by this point the wooden cross marking his grave had been damaged and his name was lost. New research found that this grave of an unknown soldier was in fact that of Private Birks and his name has now been added to his headstone. He was previously commemorated on the Menin Gate in Ypres.



Attendees including representatives from the British Embassy and the Regiment at Private Frederick William Birks ceremony, Crown Copyright, All rights reserved

The final resting places of these two soldiers came to light after researchers submitted evidence regarding their whereabouts. Further research was undertaken by the JCCC and the National Army Museum to corroborate the submitted evidence and the identification of the 'Unknown Soldier' graves were finally confirmed by the JCCC.

Mel Donnelly, CWGC said:

Commemorated on memorials to the missing for almost a century, it is now known that Lieutenant Stonehouse had been buried in Serre Road No 3 Cemetery and Private Birks in Perth Cemetery (China Wall). Thanks to the dedicated efforts of many, they have now been identified and today the Commonwealth War Graves Commission are honoured to be able to mark their graves with headstones bearing their names.

Two new headstones bearing the names of Lieutenant Stonehouse and Private Birks have been provided by the CWGC, who will now care for their final resting places in perpetuity.

[News story: Defence Secretary cuts ribbon on Bolton-based missile factory](#)

An opening ceremony saw the Defence Secretary unveil a plaque to mark the completion of five years of work and £50 million worth of investment into the high-tech site, which has been labelled 'the jewel in the crown' of weapons firm MBDA.

It marks a major milestone for the new site, where design, engineering and manufacturing experts are producing state-of-the-art equipment and systems. Complex weapons being built there will go on to do everything from arming F-35 fighter jets to protecting British troops and Royal Navy ships, whilst the move to the site has seen 100 new jobs created.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

This £50m factory supports 700 jobs in Bolton, showing how central strong British defence industry is to our national prosperity.

MBDA's investment has created more than 100 new jobs, and this has been supported by a £400m contract from the Government helping to create a further 100 roles within the company.

You can't have prosperity without security. MBDA in Bolton is keeping Britain safe while creating highly-skilled jobs and opportunities, demonstrating our commitment to the people of Bolton and the North West.

MBDA has a history in the Lancashire region stretching back for more than 80 years when the Lostock site was first opened to build propellers for the war effort. The new facility will now replace that site and provide a truly cutting-edge solution, designed to meet the modern requirements of the MOD and worldwide export customers. It will significantly improve the company's manufacturing and test capabilities, as well as making them a more agile outfit whilst improving value-for-money for the taxpayer through contributing further cost reductions to the £1.4 billion in savings already generated by the innovative partnership approach to complex weapons between the MOD and MBDA.

Work at the site was given a boost just last April when the [Defence Secretary signed a £400 million deal](#) with MBDA to upgrade the ultra-accurate Brimstone missile to become compatible with Typhoon jets. That contract created around 130 new jobs and sustained a further 270 existing jobs at MBDA's sites in Bolton, Stevenage and across the supply chain.

The Bolton factory also works on the Sea Ceptor missile, which entered service on the Type 23 frigates in May and provides a powerful shield against airborne threats for Royal Navy ships. Land Ceptor, from the same family [completed its first successful firing trials](#) in April 2018 as the future battlefield barrier launched from a vehicle on a Swedish test fire range.

Other missiles the site works on include:

- Meteor – world-class air-to-air, radar-guided missile able to defeat fast-moving manoeuvrable targets at long range. It will enter service on Typhoon with the RAF in 2018 and the F35 from 2023
- ASRAAM – Advanced Short Range Air-to-Air Missile enabling UK pilots to engage and defend themselves against other aircraft ranging in size from large multi-engine aircraft to small drones. In service with the Royal Air Force on the Tornado and Typhoon aircraft
- Sea Venom – primarily anti-ship missile designed to destroy small, medium and large vessels, using an imaging infrared seeker that offers full ‘fire and forget’ capabilities in all environments will equip the Royal Navy’s Wildcat Helicopters
- Spear 3 – weapon powered by an innovative miniaturised turbojet engine instead of a rocket motor being developed to meet the F-35’s ground attack requirement

Chris Allam, Managing Director of MBDA UK, said:

I am delighted that the Secretary of State for Defence has today opened our brand-new facility in Bolton. This new site builds on 80 years of illustrious company history down the road at Lostock and prepares us for the challenges of the future. The significant investment placed by MBDA into Bolton is testament to our commitment to our people, to the area, and to delivering on our order book for our customers.

The new facility will also support the Anglo-French “One Complex Weapon” Centres of Excellence initiative – a cross Government scheme which will allow MBDA to develop cutting-edge technology in both the UK and France, while driving new ways of working and increasing efficiency.

The official opening also saw MBDA re-sign the Armed Forces Covenant by which it has already shown its commitment to the military community through facilitating flexible working, support and leave schemes for reservists and participating in the MOD Employer Recognition scheme as well as directly supporting several armed forces charities.

News story: Tenth Annual Armed Forces Day celebrated across the country

Men and women from the Royal Navy, British Army and Royal Air Force, both Regulars and Reserves, are being recognised alongside the wider defence family including cadets and veterans.

The National Event is taking place in Llandudno, North Wales, attended by Her Royal Highness Princess Anne The Princess Royal, representing the Queen and the Royal Family. Prime Minister Theresa May and Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson are also attending the event, alongside the thousands of attendees who will gather to watch parades, displays and a record number of flypasts.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Today we mark the tenth Armed Forces Day and it remains a valuable opportunity to honour our troops who work so hard to keep us safe. Our servicemen and women are on hand every hour of every day to protect us from the threats we face and today I encourage people across the UK to come together and salute them for their tireless commitment.

I commend Llandudno for an outstanding event and thank organisers across the country for their efforts to mark Armed Forces Day.

The Armed Forces have had a busy year at home, including helping those struggling in heavy snowfall providing emergency assistance in the aftermath of the Salisbury attack.

They are currently working in more than 25 countries and are ready to respond whenever they're required. This year we saw over 2,000 personnel deployed to the Caribbean in the aftermath of Hurricane Irma, on operations in Iraq and Syria as part of the fight against Daesh, and continue to reassure NATO allies in Europe.

News story: DIO restores much loved Wiltshire monument

Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) has worked with partners Landmarc

Support Services (Landmarc), the Army, the New Zealand High Commission and local volunteers to restore a kiwi carved into the chalk on Beacon Hill, above the town of Bulford in Wiltshire. Affectionately known as the 'Bulford Kiwi', it was created in 1919 by soldiers from New Zealand at the end of World War I as they awaited their return home.

The figure has recently become a scheduled monument, which means it is recognised as a nationally important archaeological site and it is now protected from destruction or change. The monument has been looked after by the New Zealand High Commission and various local groups and companies over the years.

As part of a conservation project to ensure the historic significance of the kiwi is preserved, 100 tonnes of chalk were dropped from an RAF Chinook helicopter and raked into place by volunteers from the 3rd (UK) Division Signal Regiment, Operation Nightingale – a project established jointly by the DIO and The Rifles, which sees ill and injured service personnel and veterans assisting archaeologists with excavations on the defence estate – Landmarc, the New Zealand High Commission and local conservation groups.

Sir Jerry Mateparae, the New Zealand High Commissioner said:

I have thoroughly enjoyed meeting and working with so many willing volunteers today. The links between the UK and New Zealand are still strong and it has been touching to see so many people involved in looking after and protecting the kiwi for generations to come.

It has been great to be involved in helping to protect and restore such a significant monument.

The kiwi stretches to 130 metres (420 feet) high across Beacon Hill and is a much loved monument locally, nationally and internationally.



A Chinook delivers bags of chalk to re-chalk the kiwi for the first time in 30 years. Crown Copyright.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Britain and New Zealand have deep and longstanding ties and it's important that we play our part in preserving valuable monuments like these for future generations.

The MOD is responsible for conservation of our land, allowing it to offer much needed habitats for a variety of flora and fauna to thrive, and for public enjoyment.

While we need to make sure our military training facilities prepare the armed forces for operations worldwide, we must never forget that conservation is extremely important.

The work is not just an act of conservation but recycling as well. The chalk has been made available because of the excavations on Salisbury Plain to build new housing and infrastructure under the Army Basing Programme. The conservation project has been undertaken by DIO, which plays a vital role in protecting and maintaining monuments across the MOD estate.

Richard Osgood, DIO archaeologist, said:

Thank you to everyone who has worked together to get the kiwi

looking its best again. It has been a truly collaborative effort and we are also grateful for the involvement and support of the High Commissioner of New Zealand.

It has been a brilliant project to be involved in and is a perfect example of the work that DIO does to protect and maintain the many historic sites across the estate.

[News story: DIO restores much loved Wiltshire monument](#)

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