

Medal ribbons help identify Great War casualty

On Wednesday 27 October, on what was the Western Front just over a century ago, 38 year old Lance Corporal (L/Cpl) Robert Cook of 2nd Battalion The Essex Regiment, was finally laid to rest with full military honours in the presence of his family. The service was organised by the MOD's Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC), also known as the 'MOD War Detectives' and was held at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's (CWGC) New Irish Farm Cemetery, near Ypres in Belgium.

L/Cpl Robert Cook was born in Bishop Wilton in the East Riding of Yorkshire, on 6 June 1876 and was one of seven children. From his surviving family, his great nephew Arthur Cook and his great niece Sally Cooper both attended as well as members of C 'Essex' Company of 1st Battalion The Royal Anglian Regiment, who supplied both the bearer and firing parties for the ceremony.

Rosie Barron, JCCC said:

"It has been a privilege to have worked with The Royal Anglian Regiment to organise this burial service for LCpl Cook and to have buried him in the presence of his family.

"None of this would have been possible without the help of Maj Ret'd Peter Williamson MBE and The Essex Regiment Museum, who painstakingly searched their records ultimately leading to the identification of this casualty as LCpl Cook."

L/Cpl Cook joined The Essex Regiment in November 1914 aged 38, and soon arrived on the Western Front on 14 March 1915.

Arthur Cook, great nephew of L/Cpl Cook said:

"It is absolutely amazing that someone who gave his life over a hundred years ago, along with many thousands of others, should be remembered in such a way. He has laid unidentified in an unmarked grave for over one hundred years and we are now able to commemorate him, remember his contribution to British history, and record part of his story on a headstone for future generations to see.

"Our thanks go to the Reverend Gary Birch CF and all the members of the Royal Anglian Regiment who have taken part in this service. The fact that members of Robert Cook's family are here in Ypres and able to finally lay him to rest in a marked grave with the dignity and honour that he deserves is all due to the excellent detective work of Rosie Barron of the MOD's Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre who we cannot thank enough."

Sally Cooper, great niece of L/Cpl Cook said:

"We are honoured to be able to attend the funeral of a member of the family

who had served his country in the three conflicts and we would like to express our thanks to Rosie whose efforts led to his identification."

How L/Cpl Cook was identified

Between 2014 and 2015, 24 sets of remains were found during construction work at what is believed to have been the site of Irish Farm Cemetery on the outskirts of Ypres. Irish Farm was in use as a Regimental Aid Post in May 1915 at the time of L/Cpl Cook's death. It had previously been thought that after the Great War, the graves in Irish Farm Cemetery had all been moved to New Irish Farm Cemetery, a short distance away – 19 of these soldiers were buried in September 2017 with full military honours (see JCCC gov.uk for further details). A further four soldiers were buried in 2019 after further investigation by the JCCC.

The final set of remains were found with shoulder titles and a cap badge of The Essex Regiment as well as a medal ribbon bar indicating that this soldier had received the British South Africa Company Medal 1890-1897, the Queen's South Africa Medal 1899-1902 and the King's South Africa Medal 1902. Based on the location where these remains were found, it was believed this casualty likely belonged to 2nd Battalion The Essex Regiment.

The battalion had arrived in the frontline close to Irish Farm on 30 April 1915 and remained in the area until July. On 2 May 1915, the day of L/Cpl Cook's death, the battalion was attacked with gas, causing panic and confusion in the line. Gas was first used by the Germans on 22 April 1915, and no protection against this new weapon was yet in place. The enemy then attacked the line.

Too many casualties of 2nd Battalion The Essex Regiment were missing from during this period to carry out DNA testing, so JCCC sought further assistance from Major (Ret'd) Peter Williamson MBE at The Essex Regiment Museum in narrowing down which of the missing soldiers may have received the three South Africa medals. Based on the medals found with his remains and information from the Essex Regiment Museum archives, Peter was able to confirm that only L/Cpl Cook would have done so.

Major (Ret'd) Peter Williamson MBE, from The Essex Regiment Museum said:

"Due to an improved quality photograph enabled the positive identification of the medals which this soldier had earned, and that was the foundation for several months of painstaking research to eliminate all but Lance Corporal Robert Cook.

"Like many who had emigrated to South Africa L/Cpl Cook had promptly answered the call in 1914 and gave his life; it is incredibly satisfying that we are now able to lay him properly to rest."

The service was conducted by the Reverend (Major) Gary Birch CF, Chaplain to 1st Battalion The Royal Anglian Regiment. The Reverend Birch said:

"I think it's a beautiful time when someone who was lost is found. New family connections are forged, and new relationships born. As we lay Lance Corporal

Cook finally to rest alongside his comrades in arms we pause to remember his legacy that speaks from the grave that the peace for which they all fought must strengthen our resolve to always strive for peace and reconciliation in our nations today without the use of violence.”

The grave will now be marked by a headstone provided by the CWGC, who will care for his final resting place in perpetuity.

Liz Woodfield, CWGC Director of External Relations, said:

“Lance Corporal Robert Cook had a remarkable life story and his experiences in South Africa are reflected in the personal inscription his family have chosen to be engraved on his CWGC headstone. His now lies alongside the men he fought and died with during the First World War, in the Commonwealth War Graves Commission’s New Irish Farm Cemetery. We remember his sacrifice and will care for his grave and memory with dedication, in perpetuity.”

Background note:

After the death of his mother Rebecca Cook in 1878, L/Cpl Cook’s father James Cook emigrated to South Africa along with five of his children. Their youngest child, Francis, was left in the care of an aunt in the UK. Following their investigations, the JCCC identified L/Cpl Cook’s great nephew, Arthur Cook, Francis Cook’s grandson, who later agreed to conduct a DNA test. The DNA results, combined with the research carried out by Peter Williamson, confirmed the remains belonged to L/Cpl Cook.

Having travelled to South Africa as a young boy, L/Cpl Cook served with various British Colonial regiments. On 29 December 1895, he took part in the Jameson Raid as a Trooper with A Troop of The Mashonaland Mounted Police. In 1896, he qualified for the British South Africa Company’s Medal with ‘Rhodesia 1896’ reverse, whilst serving with the Matabeleland Relief Force. Between 19 October 1899 and 19 November 1900, L/Cpl Cook served with The Bethunes Mounted Infantry in the Boer War, spending part of this time with The South African Light Horse. He was wounded on 23 April 1901 at Boschmanskop whilst serving with French’s Scouts. For this service, he was awarded the Queen’s South Africa Medal 1899-1902 and the King’s South Africa Medal.

Only five weeks left to share your views on route strategies with National Highways

As the core of our national transport system, it’s important that the future of our roads is prioritised.

This is why National Highways has developed an online tool to gather views from road users and those who live near to England's motorways and major A-roads, to help inform the long-term vision of our roads.

The online tool, which will close on 30th November 2021, forms part of the engagement process for developing Route Strategies, which is one of the elements used to inform the government's decisions on future road investment.

Over 700 individuals and organisations have already shared their views with National Highways. The online tool can be used to comment on a specific location or route on England's motorways or major A-roads, or wider issues, opportunities and general feedback about the road network.

Our roads are vital in enabling businesses to transport products and services, providing access to jobs and suppliers, and facilitating trade and investment across the country as well as providing essential links for leisure and connecting people and places.

Elliot Shaw, Executive Director, Strategy and Planning, said:

At National Highways we are constantly challenging ourselves to seek out ways to improve the experience of those who use our roads and the communities who live nearby.

The new easy-to-use online tool provides everyone from commuters, professional road users, nearby residents and community groups to comment.

I urge you to provide feedback on what is important to you – a specific location on England's motorways or major A-roads, a longer route or general feedback about our road network. This is your opportunity to help inform the long-term vision for the future of our roads.

Together with input from a wide range of other stakeholders, feedback will be used to inform recommendations and investment plans going forward for the Department for Transport's next Road Investment Strategies (RIS3 2025 – 2030).

The online tool is open for feedback until 30 November 2021.

See [Route Strategies – Planning for the future of our roads](#) to access the tool, and for further information.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the National Highways customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the National Highways press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

[UK statement on Israel settlement construction](#)

News story

James Cleverly, Minister for the Middle East and North Africa, has issued a statement on the recent announcement by the Government of Israel to advance further settlement units in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem



Minister for the Middle East and North Africa James Cleverly said:

We urge the Government of Israel to reverse the decisions on 24 October and 27 October to advance the construction of settlement units in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem. Settlements are illegal under international law and present an obstacle to peace and stability.

Published 28 October 2021

Ofsted calls for stronger oversight of early years multiple providers and social care groups

Two new research reports by Ofsted, published today, find that current legislation does not reflect the level of influence that early years multiple providers and social care groups have on individual nurseries and children's homes, respectively.

Early years multiple providers are Ofsted-registered providers that own 2 or more childcare settings, such as nurseries and pre-schools. Social care groups are providers that own more than one children's home.

These providers exert a great deal of influence over their settings, but Ofsted is currently only able to inspect individual nurseries, pre-schools and children's homes. Today's reports call for stronger regulatory powers to make sure multiple providers and groups are having a positive impact on children.

Early years multiple providers

Ofsted's early years research looks at how multiple providers influence the education and care given at their nurseries. Researchers found that this happens in several ways, including through:

- setting the curriculum intent and influencing its implementation and impact
- developing, reviewing and controlling policies
- regular visits to nurseries to monitor and inspect practice and the implementation of policies
- monitoring and oversight of ongoing incidents in individual nurseries
- deploying staff between nurseries to observe perceived good practice.

The report recommends that Ofsted's oversight of multiple providers should evolve in a similar way to that of multi-academy trusts (MATs) in the schools sector, where summary evaluations look at the extent to which a MAT is delivering high-quality education and improving outcomes for pupils.

Social care groups

Ofsted's social care research finds that social care groups have some influence and control over the day-to-day running of their children's homes:

- models of care and policies in children's homes are generally decided by groups and standardised across their homes
- groups often influence the admissions process, sifting referrals before sending them on to their children's home managers

- social care groups often play a significant role when considering whether to end a child's placement.

Current inspection practice reflects the legal responsibility of children's home managers, who are registered to individual homes, not social care groups. Inspections and judgements are based on a model where managers have autonomy over the day-to-day running of children's homes, which does not reflect how the sector has evolved to have a significant proportion of children's homes under a small number of companies.

For inspection and regulation to have the greatest impact, Ofsted's report recommends that regulatory oversight is needed at group level, as well as at the individual children's home level.

Yvette Stanley, Ofsted's National Director for Regulation and Social Care, said:

Stronger oversight of large providers is vital if we are to make sure children are getting the best deal. Current legislation is outdated and doesn't reflect the early years and social care sectors as they operate today. The upcoming review into children's social care could be a real opportunity to reform this legislation.

Our research shows that these large providers have a significant impact on their individual nurseries and children's homes, and ultimately the education and care that children receive. As Ofsted can only inspect individual settings, we are missing an important part of the picture.

Business department to bring over 400 key central government jobs to Salford by 2025

- 420 business department jobs will be brought to Salford by 2025, expected to increase to up to 570 by 2030
- the department's first non-London-based Director General will be based at the new Salford site
- 1350 roles (30% of the BEIS workforce) will be outside London by 2025, going beyond the government's existing target of 25%

The Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy's (BEIS) new Salford site has been officially opened today (28 October 2021) by Business and Energy Minister Greg Hands.

The new office is expected to become the home of 420 business department jobs by 2025, increasing to up to 570 by 2030.

The opening forms part of a wider government move to ensure policy makers work reflects the communities they serve, while making certain economic growth and job opportunities are more evenly distributed across the UK.

The Business and Energy Minister and BEIS Permanent Secretary Sarah Munby attended the formal opening of the department's new Salford office to celebrate the unveiling of the impressive new space, as well as the appointment of the first Director General, Ben Rimmington, to be based outside of London. Mr Rimmington will be Director General, Net Zero Buildings and Industry, adopting a portfolio including heat and business energy, home and local energy and smart metering implementation.

The new office space, based on the second floor of the modern Trinity Bridge House, opened for use from 9 August 2021 and offers a host of accessible facilities having been recently refurbished.

Around 75 current BEIS staff members will be relocated by April 2023, with a further 162 new employees being recruited by the end of this year.

The move will ensure the business department, responsible for areas including clean growth and renewable energy, research and development, business growth and workers' rights, is represented by policymakers operating across all four nations of the UK.

Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng said:

Salford has been instrumental in driving growth and opportunity across Greater Manchester in recent years, with its rich heritage as one of the world's first industrial cities now reflected in its reputation as a centre for academic and business talent.

By bringing more than 400 top business and energy department roles to the area, we can take advantage of the fantastic local workforce and ensure voices in the North West are reflected in our national work to build back better from the pandemic.

The relocation will see business ministers spending an increasing amount of time outside of London, ensuring local communities feel better represented and providing new opportunities to better tailor policies to meet local needs.

These plans will allow closer collaboration between civil servants leading on green energy projects and the government's net zero stakeholders in the North of England and will make sure policy makers are right on the frontline in the fight against climate change.

Business and Energy Minister Greg Hands said:

It's a real pleasure to see the site first-hand and meet many of the staff who will develop and deliver our plans to combat climate change and drive clean growth, just a week after the launch of the government's Net Zero Strategy.

Not only does it mean that civil servants will be physically closer to the heart of the action on net zero in the North, but they will also benefit from all that Salford has to offer.

The department is in the process of relocating over 800 roles to regions across the UK. The BEIS workforce is being grown in Birmingham and Cardiff, and expanded to new locations in Belfast, Edinburgh, Darlington and Salford with an ambition to build a presence in Preston in the longer term. These plans which will see a total of 1,350 department roles outside London by 2025.

Across departments, the government is planning to move 22,000 Civil Service roles out of London, and closer to communities across the country.

BEIS Civil Service roles will be shifted through natural turnover, creating jobs in regional offices as and when vacancies arise from London, meaning current staff will not be required to relocate from London unless they want to. The business department will draw on a combination of government hubs and flexible working to ensure an efficient spread of roles.