

Reynolds' Portrait of Omai at risk of leaving UK

- Export bar is to allow time for a UK gallery or institution to acquire the painting
- Painting depicts Pacific Islander Omai who travelled with Captain Cook on HMS Adventure to London in 1774

A painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds depicting a Pacific Islander who travelled with Captain Cook on HMS Adventure to London in 1774 is at risk of leaving the country unless a UK buyer can be found. Worth £50 million, Portrait of Omai is a full-length, life-size painting from the 18th century. It depicts one of the earliest and most celebrated Polynesian visitors to England in flowing white Tahitian dress.

The painting is inextricably linked to the great voyages of discovery and exploration during this period. It offers an important insight into the British reception, understanding, and representation of people from beyond Europe at that time in history.

The artist, Sir Joshua Reynolds, was one of the foremost British painters of his day. He became the first President of the Royal Academy and his work and beliefs had a profound impact on subsequent generations of British artists. Portrait of Omai technically exemplifies Reynolds at his best and is a masterpiece of 18th-century British painting.

Arts Minister Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay said:

The outstanding 18th-century Portrait of Omai by Sir Joshua Reynolds exemplifies the importance of the export bar process. This stunning painting is impressive for its scale, its attention to detail, and the valuable insights it provides into the society in which Reynolds painted it.

I sincerely hope that a UK buyer comes forward to save this iconic painting for the nation.

The minister's decision follows the advice of the [Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest](#). The committee agreed the painting is one of the great iconic works of the 18th century and is arguably the greatest portrait by one of the greatest British portraitists.

Committee Member Christopher Baker said:

This magnificent British portrait has a global resonance. It illustrates the connectivity of the world in the late eighteenth century through exploration and the spread of colonial ambitions,

as well as the fascination that high profile cultural encounters inspired. Mai (c.1753-1779) (or 'Omai' as he was called in Britain) arrived in London from his home in Polynesia in July 1774, aboard HMS Adventure, which formed part of Captain James Cook's second voyage. He was regarded as a celebrity and became the focus of written accounts and images, among which this sensational painting is undoubtedly the most potent.

Reynolds' picture was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1776, just after its subject returned to the Pacific. It is a highly romanticised image, illustrating European perceptions, and has a special status in the evolution of grand portraiture of the period. Securing it for a public collection would have profound benefits and allow the numerous and riveting historical and artistic narratives it embodies to be fully developed and shared.

The committee made its recommendation on the grounds that the painting met all three of the Waverley Criteria: being closely connected with our history and national life; of outstanding aesthetic importance; and of outstanding significance for the study of British history and 18th century art and, in particular, for the work of Sir Joshua Reynolds.

The decision on the export licence application for the painting will be deferred for a period ending on 10 July 2022 inclusive. This period may be extended until 10 March 2023 inclusive if a serious intention to raise funds with a view to making an offer to purchase the painting at the recommended price of £50 million is expressed.

ENDS

Notes to editors

1. Organisations or individuals interested in purchasing the painting should contact the RCEWA on 0845 300 6200.
2. Details of the painting are as follows: Portrait of Omai oil on canvas 236 by 145.5 cm. (93 by 57 in.) Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792) painted c. 1776
3. Provenance: The artist's studio sale; Greenwood's, London, 16 April 1796 (= 3rd day), lot 51,100 gns. to the following, Michael Bryan, from whom acquired by 13 August 1796 by the following, Frederick Howard, 5th Earl of Carlisle (1748-1825), Castle Howard, and by descent to the following, George Howard, 13th Earl of Carlisle (b. 1949), Castle Howard; Sotheby's, London, 29 November 2001, lot 12 (£10,343,500), where acquired by the present owner. The painting has appeared before the Committee before on two occasions, in December 2002 for a permanent licence that was refused (reported at Case 17 of its 2002/03 annual report) and in April 2012 for a temporary export that was also refused (reported at page 21 of its 2011/12 annual report).
4. The Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest is an independent body, serviced by Arts Council England (ACE), which advises the Secretary of State for Digital,

Culture, Media and Sport on whether a cultural object, intended for export, is of national importance under specified criteria.

5. [Arts Council England](#) is the national development agency for creativity and culture. Its strategic vision in [Let's Create](#) is that, by 2030, England should be a country in which the creativity of everyone is valued and given the chance to flourish and where everyone has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences. ACE invests public money from the government and the National Lottery to support the sector and deliver the vision. Following the [Covid-19 crisis](#), ACE developed a £160 million Emergency Response Package, with nearly 90 per cent coming from the National Lottery, for organisations and individuals needing support. It is also one of the bodies administering the government's unprecedented £1.96 billion Culture Recovery Fund.

[Graves of 2 Lt Sam Hughes and CSM David Jones DCM rededicated in northern France.](#)

A combined investigation has enabled the graves of Second Lieutenant (2Lt) Sam Hughes and Company Serjeant Major (CSM) David Jones DCM, both 10th Battalion The Welsh Regiment, to be rededicated nearly 105 years after their deaths. Their new headstones, which now bear their names, were the centre piece of a rededication service that was held at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's (CWGC) Pont-du-Hem Military Cemetery, in northern France on Thursday 10 March.

The service was organised by the MOD's Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC), also known as the 'MOD War Detectives'.

The final resting place of 2Lt Hughes was identified after evidence collated by researcher Steve John and was submitted to the CWGC. Further research by the National Army Museum and MOD's JCCC led to the location of 2Lt Hughes's grave being confirmed. Whilst investigating the case, Rosie Barron a caseworker within MOD JCCC, confirmed the adjacent grave must belong to CSM Jones.

Rosie Barron, JCCC said: "It has been a privilege to organise this rededication service for 2Lt Hughes and CSM Jones. These men died on the same day and are likely to have known each other well. It seems fitting that we now know they lie next to each other in Pont-du-Hem Military Cemetery and that we have been able to honour their memories today in the presence of their regimental family."

The service was attended by serving soldiers of The Yorkshire Regiment and The Royal Welsh as well as veterans of The Royal Welsh Association and was

conducted by the Reverend Ben Norton CF, Chaplain to 4th Battalion The Yorkshire Regiment.

The Reverend Norton said: "To be able to lead the rededication services for Second Lieutenant Sam Hughes and Company Serjeant Major David Jones DCM from The Welsh Regiment is a tremendous honour. Reading their names and hearing their stories brings home to me personally their stoic courage and love for their fellow men.

"We walk in their footsteps and embrace the light of hope that they have passed to us through their sacrifice. We hold them in our prayers as we commend them to God."

2Lt Hughes and CSM Jones, were killed during trench raids in the La Boutillerie Subsector, south of Armentières in France, on 6 November 1917. They were recovered and buried by the Germans in Beaucamps Communal Cemetery German Extension. After the war, their remains were moved into Pont-du-Hem Military Cemetery and the two men were buried next to each other. As their identities were unknown, their names were recorded on the Ploegsteert Memorial.

In October 1917 CSM Jones had been awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM). The citation for his medal published in the London Gazette read:

"For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty during an attack. Reorganising part of his company, which had become detached, he led them forward and regained touch with the main body, and afterwards with four privates he attacked and captured an enemy strong point and killed the garrison. He showed fine qualities of resource and initiative."

Sadly, CSM Jones did not live to receive the medal, which was instead presented to his parents following his death.

The headstones over their graves have been replaced by the CWGC. Xavier Puppinck, CWGC Area Director for France said:

"We are grateful to the dedicated researcher who submitted the case for the identification of Second Lieutenant Hughes. We were delighted when the MOD JCCC was able to expand their investigation to the adjoining grave, which has now been established as that of Company Serjeant Major Jones. Commemorated on a Memorial to the Missing for almost 100 years, their graves can now be marked by CWGC headstones bearing their names."

[Foreign Secretary sanctions 386](#)

Russian lawmakers who supported Putin's invasion of Ukraine

- 386 members of the Russian Duma designated during latest round of UK sanctions
- Government places ban on travel and assets in the UK for those who voted for independence of Luhansk and Donetsk regions

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss has today (Friday 11 March) sanctioned 386 members of the Duma, the lower house of the Russian parliament, for their support for the Ukrainian breakaway regions of Luhansk and Donetsk. The new sanctions will ban those listed from travelling to the UK, accessing assets held within the UK and doing business here.

The Russian State Duma ratified treaties in February which recognised the independence of the Luhansk and Donetsk regions – part of Ukrainian sovereign territory – and authorised the permanent presence of Russian military there, acting as a pretext for Russia's invasion.

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said:

We're targeting those complicit in Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine and those who support this barbaric war. We will not let up the pressure and will continue to tighten the screw on the Russian economy through sanctions.

Together with our allies, we stand firmly beside our Ukrainian friends. We will continue to support Ukraine with humanitarian aid, defensive weapons and diplomatic work to isolate Russia internationally.

The designations announced today build on yesterday's crack down on key oligarchs from Putin's inner circle, and the introduction of new UK powers to detain Russian aircraft and ban the export of aviation items.

Since Russia's invasion, the UK has sanctioned more than 500 of Russia's most significant and high-value individuals, entities and subsidiaries, bringing the total now covered by the UK's sanctions list to over 800. This includes travel bans and asset freezes applied to 18 of Russia's leading oligarchs, with a combined worth in excess of £30 billion.

This brings the total number of Duma members sanctioned by the UK to 400.

On 9 March, the Foreign Secretary announced [new powers to detain Russian aircraft in the UK and remove aircraft belonging to designated individuals and entities from the UK register](#). Additional measures banned the export of aviation and space-related goods and technology, including technical

assistance and prevented UK companies providing insurance and re-insurance services in relation to these goods and technology.

The Government's amendments to the Economic Crime (Transparency and Enforcement) Bill will aim to crack down on corrupt elites and ramp up pressure on Putin's regime.

[Rededication Service for Cpl Frederick Herbert Skinner](#)

On Thursday 10 March, the grave of Corporal (Cpl) Frederick Herbert Skinner of 11th Battalion, East Yorkshire Regiment, was rededicated in northern France. The rededication service took place at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's (CWGC) Nieppe-Bois (Rue-du-Bois) British Cemetery and was attended by his family having travelled from Bermuda.

The service was organised by the MOD's Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC), also known as the 'MOD War Detectives', and was supported by serving soldiers of The Yorkshire Regiment and The Royal Welsh.

Rosie Barron from MOD JCCC and who led on the case adjudication, said: "It is always a privilege to organise rededication services for previously missing soldiers and to see how much it still means to their family that their relative has been found. Although now more than 100 years after their deaths, it is important that men like Cpl Skinner are remembered, and their sacrifices are not forgotten."

Cpl Skinner's great nephew, Kevin Knights, originally from Ipswich and travelled from his home in Bermuda to attend the rededication service, said:

"We would like to say a huge thank you to the CWGC, MOD War Detectives, and all of those who helped to identify Frederick's final resting place. Also, to all those who arranged and participated in the rededication to make this such a special day.

"He had no known grave for over 100 years, so it was an incredible experience when we discovered that he had been found. It was an immense privilege to join with others to pay respect, give thanks for his sacrifice and witness the farewell he so richly deserved. His grave can now be visited by members of our family to ensure he is never forgotten."

The final resting place of Cpl Skinner came to light after a researcher submitted evidence to CWGC suggesting that the man buried in the grave was likely to be him. After further research by CWGC, the National Army Museum and MOD JCCC, it was confirmed by MOD JCCC following completion of their adjudication process that this was indeed his final resting place.

The service was conducted by the Reverend Ben Norton CF, Chaplain to 4th Battalion The Yorkshire Regiment.

The Reverend Norton said: "To be able to lead the rededication service for Corporal Frederick Herbert Skinner is a humbling honour.

"Corporal Skinner gave his life for love, hope and to see peace in the world. We today, as we lay him to rest and commend him to God continue his story by embracing these truths for ourselves and making sure that we continue his story in building a better world for the generations to come."

Cpl Skinner was killed on 25 June 1918 aged 26 whilst in positions around Nieppe Bois, south east of Hazebrouck in France. He was buried in Nieppe Bois (Rue-du-Bois) British Cemetery, but the marker over his grave was damaged and the identity of the soldier in the grave could not be determined. As he was missing, Cpl Skinner was commemorated on the Ploegsteert Memorial.

The headstone over the grave has been replaced by the CWGC. Liz Woodfield, CWGC Director of External Relations said:

"The Commission is honoured to be able to support the rededication of Corporal Frederick Herbert Skinner's grave in Nieppe-Bois (Rue-Du-Bois) British Cemetery, now marked with a headstone bearing his name. His family chose to reflect the sacrifice of this young man for his nation with the patriotic music of 'Land of Hope and Glory'. This ceremony is an opportunity for us to renew our commitment to care for his grave and those of his comrades, in perpetuity."

Veterans minister calls on ex-service personnel not to join war in Ukraine

Press release

Veterans Minister Leo Docherty has written to military charities to seek their support in ensuring that veterans do not travel to Ukraine.



Veterans Minister Leo Docherty has called on veterans not to travel to Ukraine and instead turn their efforts to helping the Ukrainian people from the UK, through charity and volunteering.

Minister Docherty has written to military charities to seek their support in ensuring that veterans direct strong feelings of support for Ukraine to charitable activities, rather than travelling to join the conflict.

In the letter, the minister also outlines support available for veterans whose mental health may be adversely affected by the war.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans Leo Docherty said:

We know that Russia's illegal invasion has rightly brought out strong feelings of support for the Ukrainian people.

Veterans always step up in times of need, but they must channel their skills, experience and passion into legal routes of support for Ukraine and not engage in the conflict.

There are many ways that we all can support the people of Ukraine, including through donating money to charity.

Since the start of the war, there have been reports of former service personnel from a number of countries, including the UK, travelling to Ukraine to fight.

In the letter, the Minister outlines that the government does not support volunteers going to fight in Ukraine and that individuals who do so will put themselves at significant risk by entering into a conflict area.

The Minister also offers to support charities through the Office for Veterans' Affairs and the Ministry of Defence should they become aware of veterans looking to travel to Ukraine.

Veterans who find their health and wellbeing affected by the war can also seek specialist support from health services, such as NHS Op Courage in England, and the Veterans' Gateway.

The government advises against all travel to Ukraine.

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