

News story: Graves of 2 soldiers rededicated 100 years after they were killed in World War 1

The resting places of Second Lieutenant (2Lt) Norman Frederic Surry and Private (Pte) George Skilbeck have been marked a century after their deaths in the Great War. The rededication service took place on 10 October at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) Montay-Neuvilly Road Cemetery near Cambrai in northern France.

The service was organised by the MOD's Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC), part of Defence Business Services, and was conducted by the Reverend Tim Flowers CF, Chaplain 4th Battalion The Mercian Regiment.

Rosie Barron, JCCC said:

It has been a privilege to organise this service and to have this opportunity to honour the sacrifices of 2Lt Surry and Pte Skilbeck 100 years after their deaths. As we mark the centenary of the armistice which ended the First World War next month, it is important not to forget the individual stories of these men who left their families and gave up everything to fight for the peace and freedom that we now enjoy.



Tony Skilbeck lays a wreath on his grandfather's grave, crown copyright all rights reserved.

The Reverend Tim Flowers said:

It is wonderful that we are finally able to give both these men the recognition that they deserve, and that their families now know the exact location of their final resting place. Now known to the family as well as known unto God.

2Lt Surry was serving with 16th Battalion The King's Royal Rifle Corps (KRRC) when he was killed on the morning of 12 October 1918, aged 25. The Battalion had been ordered to capture German positions on the Le Cateau to Solesmes railway line and had marched north east of Troisvilles to their assembly point west of the River Selle. 2Lt Surry was killed early in the attack which was ultimately successful.

2Lt Surry's first child, Madeline, was just 5 weeks old when her father was killed.

Pte Skilbeck was killed on 11 October 1918 whilst serving with 53rd Field Ambulance, Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC), aged 34. It is believed that he was killed between the front line at Neuville and the village of Inchy.

The service was attended by Pte Skilbeck's grandson Tony and his family.



Members of the RAMC, The Mercian Regiment and The KRRC Association, at the graveside of Second Lieutenant Surry, crown copyright all rights reserved.

Tony Skilbeck, grandson of Private Skilbeck said:

We are extremely grateful to the MOD's JCCC, CWGC and the researcher, Michael Lowe, whose research and hard work have made this service possible. We thank all those whose efforts ensure that the sacrifice made by George Skilbeck, and those like him, will never be forgotten.

We are pleased that my grandfather, having been an "Unknown Soldier" for a 100 years, is now identified and properly recognised for the brave man that he undoubtedly was.

Also in attendance were representatives from 16 Medical Regiment, RAMC, and the KRRC Association. Both men are commemorated on the Vis-en-Artois Memorial to the Missing and left behind young families who were faced with the uncertainty of not knowing where their loved ones were buried.

The final resting places of these 2 soldiers came to light after a researcher submitted evidence regarding their whereabouts. Further investigation 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.

David Avery, CWGC Commemorations Officer said:

Second Lieutenant Surry and Private Skilbeck were recovered from the battlefield and buried in the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's Montay-Neuvilly Road Cemetery. Thanks to the dedicated efforts of a researcher, we are privileged to be able to mark their graves with headstones bearing their names and personal inscriptions chosen by their families.

Two new headstones bearing the names of 2Lt Surry and Pte Skilbeck have been provided by the CWGC, who will now care for their final resting places in perpetuity.

[Press release: IWT conference 2018: new funding for counter-poaching training in Africa](#)

On the first day of [the fourth international Illegal Wildlife Trade conference](#) in London (Thursday, 11 October 2018), £900,000 of new funding has been announced to develop a new British military counter-poaching taskforce.

The announcement builds on the significant success of, and lessons learned from, the UK's previous work to train rangers in Gabon and Malawi.

Operatives will be deployed to train African park rangers in more effective and safer counter-poaching techniques. The project aims to reduce the number of poaching incidents by catching poachers and bringing them to justice.

The UK will work in partnership with targeted countries to provide support for intelligence mapping, interception tracking tactics and operations management.

Training carried out by [the British Army](#) in Gabon and Malawi during 2018 has been well received with 84 Ecoguards being trained in Gabon, which will double by the end of the year, and 120 Rangers partnered in Malawi.

UK Environment Secretary, Michael Gove said:

The illegal wildlife trade is one of the most serious issues of organised crime facing the world. In the last year alone more than 100 rangers were killed on the front line of the fight against poachers – as an international community we must do everything we can to support their vital work. The ranger programme we are funding provides professional training and builds capability to tackle this crime across Africa.

This demonstrates the UK's global leadership and delivers our commitment in [the 25-Year Environment Plan](#).

UK Defence Secretary, Gavin Williamson said:

The training we already provide has made a significant difference to the protection of some of the planet's most magnificent wildlife.

As the British Army now takes its world-renowned training further across Africa, those responsible for this abhorrent practice should be looking over their shoulders.

Maj James Cowen, who led the deployment in Malawi, said:

Having seen the beauty of these animals up close, and how at risk their survival is due to poaching, we are more determined than ever to stop these criminals in their tracks.

Planning is currently ongoing to identify countries and parks across the region with which the British Army will partner and assist over the next year.

Assistance can be tailored to the needs of the specific parks and consists of both base located training, such as command and control and paramedic, and a partnering model that sees UK soldiers living and operating with Rangers – helping Rangers to improve techniques and procedures whilst the UK soldiers have been able to improve their own skills in tracking and bush craft; a true partnership.

Environmental Crime, which includes the illegal wildlife trade and illegal logging, is the fifth most lucrative serious organised crime and is estimated to be worth up to £17 billion a year.

The two-day conference in London (11 to 12 October 2018) is bringing more than 80 nations together including international political leaders, conservation organisations and individuals interested in closing down the vile trade in wildlife.

[News story: UK troops deploy on](#)

[Largest NATO exercise in a decade](#)

Hundreds of UK troops have arrived in the Netherlands today as part of an epic 2,500km road move to Norway for Exercise Trident Juncture, NATO's flagship exercise in 2018.

In Norway, 2,700 UK personnel will contribute to the large-scale and complex exercise which will test NATO's most important founding principle of collective defence in an article 5 scenario – when an attack on one is an attack on all.

With some 150 aircraft, 40,000 participants and 10,000 vehicles, this is the largest collective defence exercise NATO has conducted in over a decade.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

NATO is the bedrock of our defence where Britain plays a leading role. Whenever the call comes, the UK is foremost in stepping up to support our friends and allies across the globe.

This exercise demonstrates the strength of our collective defence. Together we are ready to tackle any threat, from any direction.

Earlier this week British Army vehicles and equipment were loaded onto Channel Tunnel trains before arriving in The Netherlands today as part of the complex logistical task of transporting a Battlegroup to Norway – a journey that includes road, rail and ferry.

Members of the Royal Logistics Corps are lending their expertise in support of the road move while in Norway soldiers from the Royal Irish Regiment, the Duke of Lancaster's Regiment and supporting units will train together with NATO allies.

[News story: Graves of 2 soldiers killed 4 years apart during the Great War are rededicated a century later](#)

The resting places of Lieutenant (Lt) John Gillis Butt MB and Lance Corporal (LCpl) Leonard Thomas Courtney, were honoured yesterday (Tuesday 9 October) during separate rededication services at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) Hooze Crater Cemetery and Stasegem Communal Cemetery, both in Belgium.

The services, organised by the MOD's Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC), part of Defence Business Services, were conducted by the Reverend Tim Flowers CF, Chaplain 4th Battalion The Mercian Regiment.

Rosie Barron, JCCC said:

With the centenary of the armistice which ended the First World War now only a month away, it has been a privilege to organise these services and to reflect on the bravery of these 2 men.

Lt Butt was killed at the start of the great war, LCpl Courtney at the end. Their deaths represent 2 very different phases of the war: 1 of optimism and excitement, the other of weariness and relief that it would soon be over. Today we honour their commitment to duty and join with their families in honouring their sacrifice.

Lieutenant John Gillis Butt MB

The rededication service at Hoge Crater Cemetery was attended by Lt Butt's great nephew, Nicolas Previt , as well as representatives from the 16 Medical Regiment, Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC).

Nicolas Previt , great nephew of Lt Butt said:

This was a wonderful service and I am thrilled to know that John has finally been put to rest. The service was made extra special by the presence of so many people. It has brought closure to all the family.



Nicolas Previt  at the graveside of his great uncle, Lieutenant Butt, Crown Copyright, All rights reserved

Lt Butt was commissioned as a newly qualified doctor into the RAMC on 31 July 1914, aged 24 and just 4 days before the outbreak of the First World War. He was attached to 1st Battalion Grenadier Guards and disembarked in Belgium on 7 October 1914. Within a few weeks he found himself on the frontline of the First Battle of Ypres.

On the morning of 29 October 1914, the Germans attacked the positions of 1st Battalion Grenadier Guards near the village of Gheluvelt. Lt Butt and his orderly were tending to a wounded senior officer when they were shot and killed by the enemy. Now behind German lines, his body was not recovered until after the war, and he was listed as missing until his death was presumed in 1916. He is commemorated on the Menin Gate and was buried as an unknown Lieutenant of the RAMC.



Reverend Tim Flowers conducted the rededication service for Lieutenant Butt, Crown Copyright, All rights reserved

The Reverend Tim Flowers said:

As we approach the 100th anniversary of the end of the Great War, it is a great testament to the work that continues to be done to identify and honour those who fell all those years ago. For the family of Lt John Gillis Butt, it brings to an end a story that began at the very beginning of the war. Although the family have known that he had fallen, it is fitting that they now know his final resting place and that we are able to give him the service that his service so richly deserved. Now known to the family as well as known unto God.

Lance Corporal (LCpl) Leonard Thomas Courtney

LCpl Courtney was serving with 4th Battalion The Worcestershire Regiment when he was killed near Stasegem on 20 October 1918, he was 23 years old. Just 3 weeks before the end of the Great War the German Army was all but defeated as the stalemate had been broken and the Allies were advancing eastwards.



Representatives from the Mercian Regiment and the British Embassy attended the rededication service for Lance Corporal Courtney, Crown Copyright, All rights reserved

LCpl Courtney was buried in Stasegem Communal Cemetery as an unknown Lance Corporal of The Worcestershire Regiment and commemorated on the Tyne Cot Memorial.

The service at Stasegem Communal service was attended by his great niece, Jan Courtney, and nephew, Doug Courtney, as well as representatives from the Mercian Regiment.



Douglas and Jan Courtney at the graveside of their great uncle, Lance Corporal Courtney, Crown Copyright, All rights reserved

The Reverend Tim Flowers said:

In a few weeks' time we will commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the end of the Great War. Somehow when we remember those who lost their lives so close to the Armistice it seems even more poignant. For the family of Thomas Courtney, the heartbreak must have been even harder to take. Today it is a real privilege as Padre to 4 Mercian that I can acknowledge the life and sacrifice of Thomas Courtney who was a member of one of our antecedents The Worcestershire Regiment. Now known to the family as well as known unto God.

Research and confirmation by the JCCC

The final resting places of the 2 soldiers came to light after a researcher submitted evidence regarding their whereabouts. Further investigations were 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:

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission remembers the grief and loss

felt by the families of Lieutenant Butt and Lance Corporal Courtney a century ago. We are privileged that their descendants are here today in the CWGC's Hooze Crater Cemetery and Stasegem Communal Cemetery to rededicate their graves. Each is now marked with a named headstone bearing a personal inscription chosen by their family. The CWGC will care for their graves on their behalf, in perpetuity.

[News story: Defence Minister calls on 'unsung heroes' to help military respond to new threats](#)

Opening the Ministry of Defence's LOGNET conference on military logistics, he said the UK would need the industry to stay ahead of the game for the country to retain its ability to respond quickly to threats from the likes of extreme terrorists and rogue states.

Today's event, the fifth of its kind, brought together 250 leading industry and military figures from the defence logistics community. New technologies from 14 companies and departments were showcased including autonomous resupply robots and pioneering logistics software.

Defence Minister Stuart Andrew said:

Our world-class Armed Forces are able to rapidly respond to unpredictable threats like terrorists and rogue states, and even humanitarian disasters like the recent tsunami in Indonesia.

We've got to move quickly when crisis strikes, and the logisticians are the unsung heroes behind those on the frontline, ensuring everything runs smoothly so they are there and ready to respond. This conference brings together some of the brightest minds in the sector as we look to spur them on to ensure we remain a world-leading military.

The UK is currently running around 30 logistics operations worldwide, with 15,000 people in the UK, in Africa, and in South East Asia delivering humanitarian aid and disaster relief as well as taking part in major Operations and Exercises. Just last week the MOD deployed an A400M transport aircraft and a team of military experts to Indonesia to help with the aftermath of the earthquake tsunami.

The Armed Forces are continually put through their paces in huge exercises such as the recently launched Saif Sareea in Oman to identify logistical best practice and uncover challenges faced on the modern battlefield. This ensures UK logistics systems are tested in the toughest of operational environments. These exercises help inform and steer the agenda for LOGNET events.



Defence Minister Stuart Andrew opens the LOGNET conference. Crown copyright.

Main areas of interest in the fifth LOGNET conference included:

- Defence's innovation agenda
- Autonomy and robotics
- Accelerating logistic innovation
- Routes to market
- Modernising defence support

LOGNET is the MOD's support engagement and future development event for the defence support network. It is designed to improve the understanding of UK defence's support requirements, pursue knowledge of developments in academic and commercial capability, whilst reinforcing partnerships through continued engagement. Its outcome is to assist defence in arguing the case for the UK to maintain a credible, highly capable and value for money support capability.

Also speaking at LOGNET was the Vice Chief of the Defence Staff, General Sir Gordon Messenger who focussed on the importance of logistics support to our Armed Forces and how it ensures the UK maintains its military edge over adversaries.

General Sir Gordon Messenger said:

The ability to meet any threat in the shortest amount of time with the necessary volume of personnel and military hardware is critical to our deterrent posture. This can only be achieved with robust and proven logistics support. LOGNET helps build crucial closer links between academia, industry and defence which ensures our Armed Forces have the support network they need.