

News story: Defence Secretary announces exceptional gift to Canada

The journey to locate these vessels has taken 172 years. Rear-Admiral Sir John Franklin set sail from England in 1845 on an expedition to chart the Northwest Passage through the Canadian Arctic with HMS Erebus and HMS Terror. The ships and all crew were lost after the ships became stuck in ice off King William Island and the crew abandoned them to trek overland to the South. None of the crew survived.

Many attempts were made over the years but only artefacts were found. In 1992, the wrecks were designated as a national historic site, despite neither shipwreck having been found at that time. In 1997, UK and Canadian Governments signed an agreement giving custody and control of the wrecks and their contents to the Canadian Government, whilst still remaining the property of the UK.

With a combination of traditional Inuit knowledge and state-of-the-art technology, the wrecks of HMS Erebus and HMS Terror were finally located under relatively shallow Arctic Waters to the south of King William Island in 2014 and 2016 respectively. Acknowledging the importance of this momentous discovery, the UK Government is proposing to update the 1997 agreement, transferring ownership of the wrecks to Parks Canada, whilst retaining a small sample of artefacts. Items from the wreckages will be displayed for future generations in both Canadian and UK museums.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

“During her recent visit to Canada, the Prime Minister emphasised the importance of recognising our shared past with Canada as we seek to reinvigorate our already strong bilateral relationship.

“This exceptional arrangement will recognise the historical significance of the Franklin expedition to the people of Canada, and will ensure that these wrecks and artefacts are conserved for future generations.”

The transfer of ownership is expected to be undertaken over the coming weeks.

News story: MOD Veterans UK welcomes Prince Harry to Blackpool in a visit

marking 25 years of helpline support

During the visit, Prince Harry was accompanied by Jon Parkin, Head of Veterans UK, as he was shown the extent of work undertaken in support of all UK veterans. Veterans UK provides vital welfare help for ex-service personnel and their families, working in partnership with a number of charities and support networks. They also administer pension and compensation schemes for those injured or bereaved through service in the armed forces.



His Royal Highness Prince Harry talks to Veterans UK staff about the work they do, Crown Copyright, All Rights Reserved

Jon Parkin, Head of Veterans UK said:

I was delighted to welcome Prince Harry to Veterans UK. I am hugely inspired by his work with veterans, so I was very proud to be able demonstrate the breadth of services we provide here and the commitment our staff show in support of veterans.



Christine Bulpitt explains the support provided by the Veterans UK Helpline team to Prince Harry, Crown Copyright, All Rights Reserved

Representatives from the Veterans Welfare Service (VWS) described to the Prince how they provide assistance in enhancing the quality of life for veterans.

Russ Egan, Regional Welfare Manager said:

It was an immense pleasure to meet Prince Harry this morning. He clearly has a keen interest in the support and assistance we provide to our ex-service veterans and recognises the importance in helping those approaching discharge to ensure we make that transition pathway as seamless as possible.

Prince Harry also met the Veterans UK Helpline team and gained an insight into the invaluable service they provide. Helpline advisor, Lyndsay Ethell facilitated a call with the Prince watching on.



Prince Harry listens in to a Helpline call with Lyndsay Ethell, Crown Copyright, All Rights Reserved

Lyndsay said:

It was a great honour meeting Prince Harry, a once in a lifetime opportunity that I feel extremely privileged to be part of. The whole of Helpline deserve this recognition for all the hard work we do and to say we all enjoyed the day is an understatement!

The Prince then took time to talk to members of the local community who have received help from Veterans UK over the years. They included a retired squadron leader who receives a war disablement pension, a family member who has recently received welfare help and a member of the local Veterans Advisory and Pensions Committee.



Prince Harry is presented with a Passchendaele 100 brass poppy badge by Phoebe Taylor, Crown Copyright, All Rights Reserved

Prior to leaving, local children of Veterans UK staff presented the Prince with a brass Passchendaele 100 poppy made from shell fuses found on World War 1 battlefields.



Prince Harry unveils a plaque to commemorate 25 years of the Veterans UK Helpline, Crown Copyright, All Rights Reserved

Outside the building the Prince unveiled a plaque marking 25 years of service by the Veterans UK Helpline to great rapture by the watching staff.

[Press release: Minister for Europe opens Strategic Dialogue with Georgia](#)

Minister for Europe and Americas, Sir Alan Duncan, will today [October 23] welcome Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Georgia, Mikheil Janelidze for the fourth round of the UK-Georgia annual strategic dialogue, known as the Wardrop Dialogue.

Deputy Prime Minister Janelidze's will also meet Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson before joining the Lord Mayor at Mansion House for talks on business links.

Georgian Defence Minister, Levan Izoria, is also visiting London to participate in the Dialogue and will meet Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon.

Relations between the governments of the UK and Georgia are at an all-time high. The dialogue will provide an opportunity to discuss continued co-operation on trade, defence, and mutual values, which underpin the strength of our ties.

Minister for Europe Sir Alan Duncan said:

Our relations with Georgia are stronger than ever, and I'm delighted that Deputy Prime Minister Mikheil Janelidze visited London for the fourth round of our annual Wardrop Dialogue.

The UK stands by Georgia in support of its territorial integrity, security, and ambitious reform agenda. This commitment is underlined by our Good Governance Fund, through which the UK helps Georgia to deliver necessary reforms, and reach its economic potential.

As the UK leaves the European Union, we are ensuring our relationship with Georgia will continue to grow. Trade will be an important element and the Prime Minister's appointment of Mark Pritchard as our new Trade Envoy reiterates our optimism over the future of UK-Georgian trade.

Not only is Georgia a role-model in the region for reform, democracy and human rights; they also play a pivotal role in the wider security of the region in the face of external pressures. We also support the positive role the EU plays in the region, which we expect to be reiterated at the Eastern Partnership Summit in Brussels in November.

Further information

- Follow Foreign Office Minister Sir Alan Duncan on Twitter [@AlanDuncanMP](#) and [Facebook](#)
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[News story: New frigates opportunity for Ferguson as Defence Secretary visits](#)

The Defence Secretary launched an ambitious National Shipbuilding Strategy last month, in which he laid out plans for a first batch of five of another new class of frigates – the Type 31e. Industry has been invited to provide high level plans to build an initial order of five ships at a maximum average price of £250 million per ship.

The Defence Secretary has personally committed to visiting all of the UK's major shipyards in the run-up to industry bringing forward its solutions for the Type 31e class, as he looks to grow the Royal Navy fleet for the first time since World War Two.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

With our cutting-edge Type 26 frigates already being built on the Clyde, I know Scottish skilled engineers will relish the chance to compete to build a brand new class of warships for the growing Royal Navy. We want to make the most of the renaissance in UK shipbuilding, delivering the latest ships that will help protect our nation and our interests across the world.

Part of the MOD's £178bn equipment plan, the contract for the first three Type 26 frigates has already been signed. Safeguarding 4,000 jobs in Scotland and across the UK supply chain until 2035, they are being built at BAE System's Govan shipyard on the Clyde.

The Defence Secretary cut steel on HMS Glasgow, the first Type 26, in July. Along with her sister ships she will have a truly global reach, protecting the UK's strategic interests, alongside the UK's nuclear submarines, and delivering high-end warfighting capability wherever it is needed. In a further commitment to Scottish shipbuilding, five Offshore Patrol Vessels are being built at BAE Systems' Scotstoun shipyard in Glasgow, sustaining around 800 jobs. Ahead of his trip to Ferguson, the Defence Secretary also visited the Scotstoun site where his wife, Lady Wendy Fallon, formally named the second OPV.

With the Government committing to build the Type 31e warships in the UK,

Ferguson has the opportunity to compete for this latest programme to build ships for the Royal Navy. One option is to build the Type 31e frigates in blocks around the country, assembled at a central hub. This reflects how the biggest ship ever built for the Royal Navy, the 65,000-tonne HMS Queen Elizabeth, was constructed.

The Type 31e Frigates will not only be designed to meet the needs of the Royal Navy, but also the export market. The Government will work together with industry to provide the certainty and support needed to become internationally competitive. Such a move will boost the British economy and jobs, while also helping to create a more stable and well-protected world.

The Defence Secretary has already paid visits to Cammell Laird in Merseyside and Harland and Wolff in Belfast as he continues to reach out to shipyards across the UK. Earlier this week BAE Systems and Cammell Laird outlined their proposal for the Type 31e.

[News story: Defence Secretary welcomes Liberation of Raqqa](#)

Following on from the liberation of Mosul, this is a significant development in the fight against Daesh. The fall of the capital of their so-called caliphate is a devastating blow to the terrorist group.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

With the fall of Raqqa, the head of the snake has been cut off and Daesh has lost its twin capitals in Iraq and now Syria. But the fight against Daesh's reign of terror is not over. We will continue to hit the terrorists hard in both Syria and Iraq while supporting efforts to rebuild – only by defeating Daesh for good will we reduce the threat to us here at home.

The UK has been at the forefront of efforts to alleviate the humanitarian situation since 2012, working tirelessly with partners on the ground to deliver more than 660,000 lifesaving relief packages including blankets, clothing and hygiene kits in Raqqa alone. We will continue to work closely with our Coalition partners to ensure that Raqqa's population will be able to return home safely as quickly as conditions allow.

Three years ago Daesh was almost at the gates of Baghdad, now it is failing but time and patience are still necessary to bring about their ultimate defeat. The UK is committed to maintaining the momentum and to keep up the pressure on the terrorists as the fight moves along the Euphrates River

Valley towards the border with Iraq. The RAF and Coalition partners will continue to target Daesh in both Syria and Iraq, supporting local forces on the ground to decisively defeat our common enemy.

But despite military progress in Syria and Iraq, the threat posed by Daesh and their poisonous narrative remains substantial. Their continued ability to inspire attacks means that we must remain resolute in our work to defeat them in their branches worldwide and counter their propaganda.

The liberation of Raqqah, by non-Regime forces, has yet again proved that Assad can never be a partner against terrorism. This means a national political settlement that secures a transition to a government that can protect the rights of all Syrians, unite the country and end the conflict remains the only solution.