

Ukrainian refugees in the UK to mark Grade II listing of second world war era Ukrainian Cross

- Refugees will visit the Cross at event with Heritage Minister Nigel Huddleston and Deputy Ambassador of Ukraine to the UK Taras Krykun
- Cross was built by Ukrainian refugees in 1948 as a symbol of gratitude to the UK and to mark their strong Christian faith

Recently settled Ukrainian refugees fleeing the ongoing crisis in their home country will today mark the confirmation of Grade II listed status for a second world war era Ukrainian Cross in the UK.

Refugees from areas including Kharkov, Kyiv and Lviv will meet with dignitaries from the UK and Ukraine at the site of cross in Mylor Bridge in Cornwall including the Deputy Ambassador of Ukraine to the UK, Taras Krykun, and UK Heritage Minister Nigel Huddleston.

The cross is being granted listed status to recognise its significance as a symbol of Ukrainian gratitude for refuge in Cornwall following the second world war and will serve as a reminder of the impact of wars on displaced communities throughout history.

It comes as the UK continues to welcome refugees fleeing Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Thanks to the generosity of the UK public, who have offered their homes to Ukrainians through the Ukraine Family Scheme, 155,600 visas have been granted with 95,400 Ukrainians arriving safely in the UK so far.

Heritage Minister Nigel Huddleston said:

This poignant Ukrainian Cross is an important symbol of Britain's solidarity with the Ukrainian people. Just as we welcomed those fleeing Soviet Russia 75 years ago, the whole country stands alongside Ukrainians escaping the atrocities of Putin's illegal war today.

Vadym Prystaiko, Ambassador of Ukraine to the United Kingdom, said:

The United Kingdom has been unwavering in its support and welcome for the people of Ukraine and we are thankful it continues to stand shoulder to shoulder with us. The Grade II listing of this cross is a beautiful gesture of companionship and support at a time when a new generation of Ukrainians are being forced to seek refuge in the UK.

Refugees Minister Lord Harrington said:

Thanks to the good will of the public for welcoming people into their homes, more than 95,400 people from Ukraine have arrived in our country, including over 640 in Cornwall.

As the people of Cornwall open up their communities to Ukrainians, we can today cement their special place in our shared history with this Cross – a symbol of our solidarity and a sombre reminder of the cost of war.

Hundreds of displaced Ukrainians found themselves in Cornwall in 1947 following the second world war. They were housed in temporary accommodation on the land opposite the cross and in military buildings nearby for a year before moving to permanent accommodation in surrounding villages.

Many refugees were employed locally and made an important contribution to Cornwall's mining, fishing and farming industries.

The Cross at Mylor Bridge was built a year after the refugees' arrival in 1948 as a symbol of their gratitude and their strong Christian faith.

It bears an inscription stating: This symbol of faith / in God was erected by Ukrainians / who escaping from Russian communists / found refuge in England / 7 June 1948. The cross was blessed by three Roman Catholic priests.

Duncan Wilson, Chief Executive, Historic England, said:

The Ukrainian Cross is a poignant reminder of the human cost of war and the lives lost and displaced. It is a simple reflection of gratitude for safe refuge and fully deserves to be listed.

Fedir Kurlak, Chief Executive, Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain said:

What an incredibly fitting gesture it is for the Ukrainian Memorial in Mylor Bridge to be granted protection with grade II listing. The Cross itself reflects the United Kingdom's generosity in sharing perhaps one of its most valuable assets with peoples of different nations that have sought and continue to seek shelter here from war and oppression: the right to live in a free and democratic country. The Ukrainians who placed the Memorial in 1948, and all of their compatriots, would be extremely proud today! In the same breath it is also important to recognise the kind-heartedness of the Mylor Bridge community in continuing to protect the Cross to this day!

Rt.Revd Philip Mounstephen, Bishop of Truro, said:

Cornwall's motto is 'One and All' and that encapsulates the spirit of this special place. We recognise that our neighbours are not just those near us and like us, but those distant from us and different to us. It was in that spirit that we welcomed Ukrainian refugees in the past, and we welcome them today in the very same spirit.

Leader of Cornwall Council, Linda Taylor said:

We are delighted to welcome the Minister and the Ukrainian Ambassador to Cornwall.

This cross represents what the people of Cornwall do best, helping and supporting people in their time of need which is as true now as it was over 70 years ago.

I'd like to thank all our residents who are supporting, or have supported, refugees in their home. I know that in the years to come we will continue to come together as a community and support those that need our help whenever the need arises.

At the end of the second world war and after the collapse of Nazi Germany, 11 million people were displaced including more than two million Ukrainians.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

- In June 2008 the cross was rededicated to celebrate its 60th anniversary. Some of the original refugees (including the original camp leader), along with their descendants, attended the ceremony.