



A Rededication Service for

Second Lieutenant William Bernard Knight

North Staffordshire Regiment, att'd 1st Bedfordshire Regiment

**10.00 hours Thursday 22 May 2025
CWGC Oosttaverne Wood Cemetery, Belgium**

**Service conducted by Reverend Gary Birch CF
Senior Chaplain Headquarters South West**

Second Lieutenant William Bernard Knight

July 1887 – 21 April 1915

William Bernard Knight was born in Hanwell, Middlesex in July 1886 to Thomas Joseph Knight and his wife Margaret. William was the second of four children, and the only son – having an older sister called Margaret and two younger sisters, Dora and Isabel.

William had been in the Officer Training Corps of the Inns of Court prior to the outbreak of World War One, and so in August 1914 he joined the 4th Battalion of the North Staffordshire Regiment as a Second Lieutenant.

The War Diary of the 1st Bn Bedfordshire Regiment records that 2Lt Knight was one of four 2Lts to join them for duty on 25 March 1915 – at this stage they were in Ypres and rotating in and out of the frontline trenches.

Following a few days in the support trenches near Ypres in early April, the battalion were unexpectedly relieved and moved back into the reserves at Reninghelst. On 11 April they took over trenches opposite Hill 60 – to the south of Ypres – ready for a campaign to capture the hill. The next few days were attack and counter-attack throughout the day and night as each side tried to consolidate their position before trying to gain new ground. The casualties on both sides were considerable, and included 2Lt Knight who was listed as missing - presumed to have died on 21 April 1915.

In April 1924 the remains of an unknown officer of the North Staffordshire Regiment were recovered from a location on Hill 60. At the time his officer status and regimental affiliation were established from his uniform badges and buttons, but he was carrying nothing which could fully identify him so he was buried as an Unknown Officer of the North Staffordshire Regiment at Oosttaverne Wood Cemetery.

Recently extensive research by several parties has revealed that 2Lt Knight is the only man missing in this part of Belgium who could possibly match the description of the unknown officer. Finally, after 110 years we know the final resting place of 2Lt Knight and are able to reunite his physical remains with his name. Today we rededicate his grave accordingly.

The Cemetery

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission's Oosttaverne Wood Cemetery was established by the IX Corps Burial Officer following the first days of the Battle of Messines. Originally two small cemeteries, the site is now the final resting place for over one thousand service personnel of the First World War, whose graves were brought in from the surrounding battlefields and small cemeteries after the Armistice. There are also over one hundred graves from the Second World War. Among those casualties of the First World War is Second Lieutenant William Bernard Knight, whose grave we rededicate today.

Welcome

Welcome to Oosttaverne Wood Cemetery on this special occasion of rededication.

We gather today in the presence of God to honour a fallen soldier, who for 110 years has remained unknown to us and known only to God.

We are now able, though, to fully honour this Officer of the North Staffordshire Regiment by not only rank and regiment, but by name.

And so we accord Second Lieutenant William Knight the dignity and respect that he is due, and commend him to the mercy and grace of God, our redeemer and judge, in the hope of life eternal with him through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Opening Prayer

Let us Pray:

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

We meet in the presence of God to rededicate this grave to the name of Second Lieutenant William Knight, and to commit ourselves to work in penitence and faith for reconciliation between the nations, that all people may, together, live in freedom justice and peace.

We come to also pray for all who in bereavement, disability and pain continue to suffer the consequences of fighting and terror.

And we remember with thanksgiving and sorrow Second Lieutenant Knight, and all whose lives, in World Wars and conflicts past and present, have been given and taken away.

Amen

Scripture Reading: Psalm 139 v.1-14

Read by a representative of the British Embassy

You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.

Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely. You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me," even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

Reading: John ch.15 v.9-13

Chosen by the family of Second Lieutenant Knight

Read by Sergeant Dominic Masters, 1st Bn, The Mercian Regiment

Jesus said:

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.
Now remain in my love.

If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love.

I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.

Address

The Reverend Gary Birch

The Act of Dedication

We rededicate this grave to Second Lieutenant William Bernard Knight in the name of Christ who died and rose again;

as a symbol of our remembering, as a sign of our thanksgiving, a token of recognition and expression of our love.

We look forward with confidence to our reunion with him and all those whose dwelling is forever with Christ in the everlasting kingdom of the Father.

The Exhortation

Read by Sergeant Martin Kelsall, 1st Bn, The Mercian Regiment

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old.

Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.

At the going down of the sun and in the morning

We will remember them.

We will remember them.

The Last Post

Cpl Jason Pickin, The Band of the Mercian Regiment

Silence

Reveille

Kohima Epitaph

Read by Sergeant Dominic Masters, 1st Bn, The Mercian Regiment

When you go home tell them of us and say:

"For your tomorrow, we gave our today".

Laying of Wreaths

The Collect of the North Staffordshire Regiment

Read by Peter Gresty, The Mercian Regiment Association

Almighty God, whose manifold works fill the earth and the great and wide sea also, hear the voice of thy servants, the North Staffordshire Regiment, when we call unto thee from the ends of the earth and out of the deep, and deliver us out of all our distress, that we may praise thee for thy goodness, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Lord's Prayer (all)

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever.

Amen.

The Blessing

God grant to the living, grace; to the departed, rest; to the Church, The King, the Commonwealth, and all mankind, peace and concord; and to us and all his servants, life everlasting; and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, come down upon you and remain with you always.

Amen.



The Ministry of Defence, through the Joint Casualty & Compassionate Centre, is responsible for the research, identification and burial of all British casualties worldwide.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission cares for the graves, memorials, records and memory of the 1.7 million Commonwealth servicemen and women who died during the two world wars.

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