



A Burial Service for

**An Unknown Soldier of The Sherwood Foresters  
(Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire Regiment)  
and  
An Unknown Soldier of the Great War**

**15:00 hours Tuesday 20 May 2025  
CWGC Loos British Cemetery Extension**

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

## **Background**

In March 2020 two sets of human remains were discovered lying next to one another on ground being cleared prior to the building of a new hospital near Lens in Northern France.

Of the two men, one could be identified as a Commonwealth soldier thanks to the boots he was wearing. Sadly he didn't have any other artefacts with him which could indicate his nationality, let alone his regiment or rank, and so he remains unidentified at this time.

The second man was found with a shoulder title of The Sherwood Foresters (Notts & Derby Regiment), and other artefacts which suggested that he had died sometime during or after 1916.

Two battalions of The Sherwood Foresters – were in this area of France during May 1917, and so it is likely that the second man at least died during this period.

Unfortunately, and despite repeated attempts, scientists were not able to extract any DNA from his remains, and as such it has not been possible to identify either man. It is not clear why DNA was not found in the remains, but it could be due to soil contamination or other environmental factors.

Today we honour the sacrifice of both men, and give them the dignified and respectful burial they deserve.

## **Welcome**

*Bienvenue*

We have come to this place to inter the mortal remains of two unknown soldiers, who gave their lives during the Great War.

Today we accord them the dignity and respect that is due and commend them to the mercy and grace of God our redeemer and judge, and in the hope and life given to us by our Lord Jesus Christ who died for us.

May the Peace of the Lord be always with you,

**And also with you.**

## **Bidding Prayer**

*Prière*

We meet in the presence of God.

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

We come to remember with thanksgiving and sorrow these two soldiers, and all whose lives, in World Wars and conflicts past and present, have been given and taken away.

**Amen.**

## **Scripture Reading – Psalm 23**

*Lecture des Écritures Saintes*

*Read by a representative of the British Embassy*

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

## **Reading**

*Lecture*

*Read by Sergeant Martin Kelsall, 1<sup>st</sup> Bn, The Mercian Regiment*

## **To the Unknown Soldier, a thank you**

Anon

I do not know your name,  
although you were a mother's son.  
She must have waited patiently for some word from you,  
and for your safe return.

Your race, politics, creed - they matter not to me,  
As you, and the woman who let you go,  
sacrificed everything for my liberty

A prayer of thanks I say for you, and for the mother who lost a son,  
and for the rights that I have, that your sacrifice for me won.

## **Address**

*Allocution*

*Reverend Gary Birch*

## **Blessing of the Grave**

*Bénédiction de la Tombe*

O God, whose Son Jesus Christ was laid in a tomb:  
bless, we pray, this grave as the place where the bodies of your  
servants may rest in peace, through your Son, who is the resurrection  
and the life; who died and is alive and reigns with you now and for ever.  
*All    Amen.*

## **Commendation**

God our creator and redeemer, by your power Christ conquered death  
and returned to you in glory.

Confident of your victory and claiming his promises,  
we entrust these men into your keeping in the name of Jesus our Lord,  
who, though he died, is now alive and reigns with you and the Holy  
Spirit, one God now and for ever.

*All    Amen.*

## **The Committal**

*L'Enterrement*

We have entrusted our fallen comrades to God's mercy  
and now we commit their bodies to the ground: earth to earth, ashes to  
ashes, dust to dust: in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to  
eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our frail  
bodies that they may be conformed to his glorious body, who died, was  
buried, and rose again for us.

To him be glory for ever.

*All    Amen.*

## **The Exhortation**

### *L'Exhortation*

*Read by Sergeant Dominic Masters, 1<sup>st</sup> 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.

*All*    **We will remember them.**

## **The Last Post**

### *Sonnerie aux Morts*

*Cpl Jason Pickin, The Band of the Mercian Regiment*

## **Silence**

## **Reveille**

## **Kohima Epitaph**

### *L'Épitaphe de Kohima*

*Read by Sergeant Martin Kelsall, 1<sup>st</sup> Bn, The Mercian Regiment*

When you go home tell them of us and say:

'For your tomorrow, we gave our today.'

**Laying of Wreaths**  
*Dépôts des Gerbes*

**Collect of The Sherwood Foresters**  
**(The Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire Regiment)**  
*Prière*

*Read by Peter Gresty, The Mercian Regiment Association*

O god, who hast planted us as trees to bring forth fruit to thy glory, give thy grace to The Sherwood Foresters, that, as we increase in strength in the storms of battle, and stand unshaken in our earthly trust, so against all adversities we may take root deeply in the good ground of thy truth, which is in Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Prayer**  
*Prière*

We pray for all who have died or suffer as a result of conflict.  
Those whose lives are disfigured by war or terror,  
For service men and women, for civilians, for those held captive,  
each one remembered by and known to God.

May God give peace:  
**God give peace.**

We pray for peace-makers and peace-keepers;  
those who seek to keep this world secure and free;  
for all who bear the burden and privilege of leadership,  
political, military and religious;  
asking for gifts of wisdom and resolve in the search for reconciliation  
and peace.

May God give peace:  
**God give peace.**

Finally, we pray for all members of the armed forces who are in danger this day, remembering family, friends and all who pray for their safe return.

May God give peace:  
**God give peace.**

### **The Lord's Prayer** *Prière du Seigneur*

Trusting in the compassion of God, let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us:

**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**

### *Séparation de Dernière Bénédiction*

God grant to the living, grace; to the departed, rest; to the Church, The King, the Commonwealth, and all humankind, peace and concord; and to us and all his servants, life everlasting; and may the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, come down upon you and all those whom you love now and always. **Amen.**



The Ministry of Defence, through the Joint Casualty and 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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