



A Rededication Service for

**Lance Corporal John Edgar Springate MM  
&  
Serjeant Ernest Albert Stevens**

**11<sup>th</sup> Battalion Queens Royal West Surrey Regiment**

**15:00 hours Tuesday 9 June 2026  
CWGC Hoge Crater Cemetery, Belgium**

**Service conducted by Reverend (Major) Adèle Rees CF  
Chaplain to 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment**

## **Autumn 1918 & The Recovery**

In late September 1918 the 11 Queen's Royal West Surrey Regiment took up a position east of Voormezele, before moving up to Klein Zillebeke ahead of an attack towards the Wervicq-Comines railway. At dawn on the morning of 1 October the battalion were ordered to march to the Ypres – Menin road via Tenbrielen. That evening they launched an attack towards the Wervicq – Menin railway. They advanced around 1500 yards before coming under very heavy machine gun fire from a nearby chicory field. Losing the light, and having suffered significant casualties the battalion halted their advance and dug in for the night. Further casualties were incurred during the move towards an assembly point. From 1 – 2 October 1918 the 11 Battalion lost 36 men, 15 of whom remained missing following the war – their names were listed on the Tyne Cot Memorial. John Edgar Springate and Ernest Albert Stevens were two of these men.

Following the end of the war, the remains of an unknown sergeant of the Queens regiment were recovered south-west of Gheluwe and north-east of Wervicq. In a separate recovery the remains of an unknown lance corporal of the Queens regiment were recovered just south of Gheluwe and north-east of Wervicq - near or astride a track connecting the roads between Reeke and Gheluwe, and Wervicq and Klijtmolen. Both men were identified as to their rank and regiment, but their personal identity remained unknown – leading them to be buried in graves marked simply 'Known to God'. Now, archival research has revealed that the unknown Serjeant was Ernest Albert Stevens, and the unknown Lance Corporal was John Edgar Springate. Today we rededicate their graves accordingly, returning their names to them and honouring their sacrifice.



**Lance Corporal John Edgar Springate MM**  
2 May 1884 – 1 October 1918

## **Lance Corporal John Edgar Springate MM**

2 May 1884 – 1 October 1918

John Edgar Springate was born in Lambeth in 1884 – the fifth of thirteen children born to William Springate and his wife Martha Ann Tiley. William was a general labourer during John's early years, but later became foreman in a timber yard. Sadly six of John's siblings died in infancy or early childhood. In 1901 at the age of 16, John was working as an iron monger's assistant, and he carried this career on until his enlistment in the army.

John's service record hasn't survived to tell us about his army career, nor his war service, but his medals indicate that he first saw active service sometime after the beginning of 1916. He seems to have served his whole time as part of the Queen's Royal West Surrey Regiment. On 28 September 1917 his name appeared in the London Gazette announcing that he had been awarded the Military Medal (MM) – this seems to have been for an expedition with 2Lt Darlington in which they laid tapes to mark the forming up spot for the battalion during an impending attack – they came under heavy fire whilst doing this.



### **Serjeant Ernest Albert Stevens**

1895 – 2 October 1918

Ernest was born in the summer of 1895 in Buckinghamshire – the oldest of eight children born to Frederick Stevens, a French Polisher (furniture trade) and his wife Emily Vere. By 1911 the family were living in West Wycombe and Ernest was working in the same industry as his father, though he was trained as an upholsterer rather than a polisher.

Ernest's service record hasn't survived to tell us about his army career, nor his war service, but his medals indicate that he first saw active service sometime after the beginning of 1916. He seems to have enlisted at Aylesbury, and served with the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light infantry before transferring over to the Queen's Royal West Surrey Regiment.

## **Welcome**

It is our privilege to gather today and remember these bold young men. Though we may not have known them they are forever bound to us, be that by blood relation or service given. In this act of reconnecting their bodies with their names we give to them the honour their sacrifice deserves.

## **Opening Prayer**

Almighty and eternal God,  
from whose love in Christ we cannot be parted,  
either by death or life:  
hear our prayers and thanksgivings  
for those who we remember this day;  
fulfil in them the purpose of your love;  
and bring us all, with them, to your eternal joy,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen**

## **Scripture Reading: 2 Corinthians Ch 13 vs. 11-13**

*Read by Reverend Richard Clement, St. George's Memorial Church*

Finally, brothers and sisters, farewell. Put things in order, listen to my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.

Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

## **A statement from the family of LCpl Springate**

*Read in Flemish & English by Michiel Vanmarcke, the original enquirer in this case and now the CWGC Commemorations Ceremony Coordinator*

We staan hier niet enkel in verdriet, maar ook in dankbaarheid, dankbaarheid voor Lance Corporal John Edgar Springate MM's moed, zijn opoffering, en voor het leven dat hij leidde naast het uniform.

Hij was niet enkel een soldaat, hij was een zoon, een broer, een neef. Hij is geen naam verloren in de geschiedenis, maar een man herenigd met zijn familie.

Moge deze grond hem zachtjes vasthouden.

Moge dit vrede brengen in zijn ziel en in de onze, en dat we nooit zullen vergeten welke prijs hij betaalde voor de vrijheid die hij heeft helpen verwerven.

Opdat wij niet vergeten.

We stand here not in sorrow alone, but in gratitude - for Lance Corporal John Edgar Springate M.M. 's courage, for his sacrifice and for the life he lived beyond the uniform.

He was not only a soldier, he was a son, a brother, a cousin. He is not a name lost in history, but a man restored to his family.

May this ground hold him gently.

May this bring peace to his spirit and to ours, and may we never forget the cost of the freedom he helped secure.

Lest we forget.

## **Reading – A Soldier’s Grave** by Francis Lewidge

Then in the lull of midnight, gentle arms  
Lifted him slowly down the slopes of death  
Lest he should hear again the mad alarms  
Of battle, dying moans, and painful breath.

And where the earth was soft for flowers we made  
A grave for him that he might better rest.  
So, Spring shall come and leave it seet arrayed,  
And there the lark shall turn her dewy nest.

## **Address**

*The Reverend Adèle Rees CF*

## **The Exhortation**

*Read by Colonel Mark Nooney, The Princess of Wales’s Royal 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.**

## **Last Post**

*Played by LCpl James Adcock, The Band & Bugles of The Rifles*

## **Silence**

## **Reveille**

## **Kohima Epitaph**

When you go home tell them of us and say:  
"For your tomorrow, we gave our today".

## **Laying of Wreaths**

## **The Collect of The Queens Royal Surrey Regiment**

*Read by Dee Hutchison,  
Secretary, The Queen's Royal Surrey Regimental Association*

O Lamb of God, in whom we behold the Savior of the world  
in whom we triumph even in adversities, keep, we pray Thee,  
Thy servants of the Queen's Royal (West Surreys) Regiment ever  
mindful in all duty by sea and by land of the valour of old unto death,  
who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Ghost,  
one God world without end.

**Amen.**

## **Prayers**

Lord, welcome into your calm and peaceful kingdom  
those who have departed out of the present life to be with you. Grant  
them rest and a place with the spirits of the just;  
and give them the life that knows no age,  
the reward that passes not away.

**Amen**

God of infinite mercy,  
we trust in your good purposes of peace for all your children.  
We pray for those who at this time  
face danger in the defence of justice.  
Watch over those in peril;  
support those who are anxious for loved ones;  
gather into your eternal purpose those who will die.  
Remove from the hearts of all people  
the passions that keep alive the spirit of war,  
and in your goodness restore peace among us;  
for the sake of the Prince of peace,  
Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen**

## **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 humanity,  
peace and unity;  
and to us and all his servants, life everlasting.

Go out into the world in peace: be brave and strong;  
hold fast to what is good; do not repay evil with evil;  
encourage the discouraged, support the weak,  
help those who suffer, honour everyone,  
and love and serve the Lord with joy,  
trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit.

And the blessing of God Almighty,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be with you and remain with you always.  
**Amen.**

## **The Act of Dedication**

We now rededicate this grave as the final resting place of Lance Corporal John Edgar Springate in the name of Christ, who died and rose again.

This place stands as a sign of our remembrance, our thanksgiving, and our love.

Lord, grant that your servant John may rest in peace, in the sure knowledge that he now abides in your glory, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

May the road rise up to meet you,  
may the wind be always at your back,  
may the sun shine warm upon your face,  
may the rains fall softly on your fields.  
Until we meet again, may you be held in the hollow of God's hand.  
And may the blessing of God Almighty,  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
be with you and remain with you always.

## **The Act of Dedication**

We now rededicate this grave as the final resting place of Lance Corporal Ernest Albert Stevens in the name of Christ, who died and rose again.

This place stands as a sign of our remembrance, our thanksgiving, and our love.

Lord, grant that your servant John may rest in peace, in the sure knowledge that he now abides in your glory, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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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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