



A Rededication Service for

**Second Lieutenant Ronald Douglas Elmer
Speed**

2nd Battalion, Coldstream Guards

**14:30 hours Thursday 26 March 2026
Warhem Communal Cemetery, France**

Service conducted by Reverend David Jeal CP



Ronald Douglas Elmer Speed
15 January 1919 – 1 June 1940

Ronald was the only child of Douglas Charles Leyland Speed and Myrtle Deering, both of Kent. He was born in St. Georges Square, Hanover, London. Ronald grew up on his family's estate, Knowlton Court, which was near Doodneston in Kent.

He was educated at St. Aubyn's Preparatory School in Rottingdean, East Sussex before going up to Eton College. With both his father and Grandfather serving as British Army officers, it is no surprise that in June 1937, he successfully passed the

Army Entrance Examination and entered the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. On 26 June 1939, Ronald was gazetted as a Second Lieutenant and was subsequently posted to his first choice of regiment, the Coldstream Guards. By December 1939, he had joined the 2nd Battalion and embarked for France to join the British Expeditionary Force.

On 1 June 1940, Ronald was serving with one of four companies that were holding the line of Hondelooote Canal, close to Warhem. During the morning, this position was subject to heavy enemy shell and mortar fire, and his company was forced to retire. During the engagement, a shell exploded close to the spot where Ronald was standing alongside Major McCorquodale. He was later seen by his men lying mortally wounded next to Major McCorquodale, but sadly the intensity of the battle meant it was impossible for any members of his company to examine him. The location of Ronald's body was never discovered, and he was subsequently listed as missing.

Recently, a case was submitted to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission claiming that Second Lieutenant Speed was actually buried in Warhem Communal Cemetery in France. The grave in question was originally recorded as belonging to an unknown Second Lieutenant of the 2nd Battalion, Coldstream Guards. Ronald was the only officer of this rank and regiment still missing from this particular action near Dunkirk. The battalion war diary and eyewitness accounts confirm that Ronald would have been close to Warhem when he died. Further research subsequently confirmed that this unknown grave belonged to Ronald and the headstone was changed accordingly.

Welcome

We are gathered here today in this place of remembrance to honour our fallen in conflicts past.

We remember with thanksgiving Second Lieutenant Ronald Douglas Gimer Speed of the 5th Battalion, Coldstream Guards, who was killed in action on 1 June 1940. He, alongside so many others, answered the call of his country, served with honour and gave his life in the service of his nation, counting service to others greater than service of self.

His sacrifice is summed up in Jesus' words to His disciples:

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. **John 15, 12-13.**

Bidding Prayer

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, we remember with thanksgiving all those who made the ultimate sacrifice for us in time of war. We thank you that the offering of these soldiers' lives was not in vain. By your grace, enable us this day to dedicate ourselves anew to the causes of justice, freedom and peace; and give us the wisdom and strength to build a better world, for the honour and glory of your name.

Reading: A Soldier's Grave by Francis Ledwidge

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 see it seed arrayed,
And there the lark shall turn her dovey nest.

Reading: Since they have died by May Wedderburn Cannon
Read by Andrew For-Pitt, cousin of Second Lieutenant Speed

Since they have died to give us gentleness,
And hearts kind with contentment and quiet mirth,
Let us who live give also happiness
And love, that's born of pity, to the earth.

For I have thought, some day they may be sleeping
Forgetting all the weariness and pain,
And smile to think their world is in our keeping,
And laughter come back to the earth again.

Reading: Psalm 91 (NIVUK)

*Read by Captain Hamish Kehay-Bender, 7th Battalion, Coldstream
Guards*

Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High
Will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.
I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress,
My God, in whom I trust."

Surely he will save you
From the Fowler's snare
And from deadly pestilence.
He will cover you with his feathers,
And under his wings you will find refuge;
His faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.
You will not fear the terror of the night,
Nor the arrow that flies by day,
Nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness,
Nor the plague that destroys at midday.
A thousand may fall at your side,
Ten thousand at your right hand,
But it will not come near you.
You will only observe with your eyes
And see the punishment of the wicked.

If you say, 'The Lord is my refuge',
And you make the Most High your dwelling,
No harm will overtake you,
No disaster will come near your tent.
For he will command his angels concerning you
To guard you in all your ways;
They will lift you up in their hands,
So that you will not strike your foot against a stone.
You will tread on the lion and the cobra;
You will trample the great lion and the serpent.

'Because he loves me', says the Lord, 'I will rescue him;
I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.
He will call on me, and I will answer him;
I will be with him in trouble,
I will deliver him and honour him.
With long life I will satisfy him
And show him my salvation'.

Address

The Reverend David Jeal C/P

The Act of Dedication

So, let us now bless and dedicate this grave as the final resting place of the mortal remains of Second Lieutenant Ronald Douglas Elmer Speed.

O God, whose Son Jesus Christ was laid in a tomb: Bless and dedicate, we pray, this grave as the place where the body of your servant Ronald may rest in peace, in the knowledge that he now abides in your glory through the merits of your Son, who is the resurrection and the life; who died and is alive and reigns with you now and for ever. **Amen.**

The Exhortation

Read by Colonel (Ret'd) Jeremy Bagnall CBE (MC)

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

Silence

Raveille

Kahuna Epitaph

Read by WO2 Dean Dowd, 1st Battalion, Coldstream Guards

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

Laying of Wreaths

Prayer

Let us pray.

God of peace and compassion,
as we lay these wreaths, we honour those
who gave their lives in service to others.
We remember with gratitude Second Lieutenant Ronald
Douglas Elmer Speed
and all who have fallen in the pursuit of justice and peace.
May their courage never be forgotten,
their sacrifice never in vain,
and their example inspire us to live with integrity,
compassion and hope for a better world.
Grant peace to the departed,
and to us who remain, the strength to uphold the values
for which they gave their lives. **Amen.**

The Collect of the Coldstream Guards

Read by Captain Henrik Attey-James, 1st Battalion, Coldstream
Guards

Eternal Lord, beside whom there is no God, keep, we pray thee,
the Coldstream Guards, second to none in loyal duty to thine
only begotten son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who with thee, O
Father, and with the Holy Ghost, liveth and reigneth one God
world without end. **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

Go out into the world in peace; be brave and strong;
hold on to what is good; Do not repay evil with evil; encourage
those who are discouraged; support those who are weak;
help anyone who is suffering; honour everyone; love and serve
the Lord with joy, trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit. May
God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be with
you and remain with you always. **Amen**



The Ministry of Defense, 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 history of the 1.7 million Commonwealth servicemen and women who died during the two world wars.

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