

Graves of two unknown World War 1 officers 'named' 111 years after their deaths

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The previously un-named graves of two officers who gave their lives during World War One have been identified in Belgium. Captain (Capt) Gordon Cuthbert of Sunbury, Middlesex, and Lieutenant (Lt) Leslie Harvey, originally from Windsor, both served with 1/8 Battalion Duke of Cambridge's Own, Middlesex Regiment and both died near Ypres on 25 April 1915.

Two 'unknown soldier' headstones have been replaced with ones bearing the names of the men who lay there after investigation work by the MOD's Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC), also known as the 'War Detectives'.

Rededication services for Capt Cuthbert and Lt Harvey were organised by the team, and services were held for Capt. Cuthbert at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's (CWGC) Tyne Cot Cemetery this morning, and for Lt Harvey at Sanctuary Wood Cemetery this afternoon (29 April 2026).

JCCC Caseworker, Alexia Clark, said:

I am grateful to the independent researcher who put such a lot of effort into discovering the stories of these two men, and the records behind the un-named graves and who ultimately submitted the cases for their identification. Their work has led us to recognise the final resting places of Captain Cuthbert and Lieutenant Harvey, and to restore their names to them. It has been a privilege to have contributed to these cases and to have organised the services of rededication today.

Captain Gordon Cuthbert

14 August 1876 - 25 April 1915

In 1894, Gordon Cuthbert joined the London Rifle Brigade, and he was gazetted 2nd Lieutenant in the 2nd Volunteer Brigade of the Middlesex Regiment in February 1900. He transferred to the Territorial Reserve in 1908 and was appointed captain in command of the Twickenham Company in 1911.

On the outbreak of war in August 1914, he rejoined the Middlesex Regiment and proceeded to Gibraltar for garrison duty until February 1915 when he was sent to northern Europe. He was killed on 25 April whilst leading a storming party which retook a trench near Ypres. In the chaos of war immediate burial was impossible, and following the war Gordon's name was added to the Menin Gate Memorial to the missing in Ypres.

In 1920 the body of a Captain of the Middlesex Regiment was recovered on the southern side of the Ypres-Roulers railway line - his rank and regiment were determined from elements of his uniform, but his personal identity was impossible to tell and so he was buried as an unknown Captain at Tyne Cot Cemetery. Detailed research has now allowed the unknown Captain to be identified as Gordon Cuthbert.

Military personnel salute, and Standards are dipped, as Last Post sounds at the service for Captain Cuthbert (Crown Copyright)

Lieutenant Leslie Harvey

3 January 1884 – 25 April 1915

Leslie Harvey joined the Inns of Court Officer Training Corps, and on the outbreak of war volunteered immediately, being given a commission in the Middlesex regiment on 28 August 1914. Leslie was sent to Gibraltar with the regiment in October 1914 and was promoted to Lieutenant in February 1915. Following a short period of leave in England he was sent to France, in late February – early March 1915.

By April 1915 Leslie had reached Belgium and was engaged in fighting in the Zonnebeke area. On 25 April 1915 he was killed whilst leading a bayonet charge. Although he was buried by his men at the time – near a railway crossing – the records of his grave were lost and following the war he was named on the Menin Gate Memorial to the missing at Ypres.

In early 1929, the body of an unknown Lieutenant of the Middlesex Regiment was recovered from a location just south of the Ypres-Roulers railway – identified by a shoulder title, and his badges and buttons. It was impossible to determine his personal identity, and he was buried as an unknown Lieutenant at Sanctuary Wood Cemetery, alongside two other men recovered at the same place and time. Archival research has now connected this unknown Lieutenant to Leslie Harvey and allowed us to identify his final resting place.

Padre Victoria Day leads the service for Lt Harvey (Crown Copyright)

The services today were supported by serving soldiers from the Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment and led by Padre Victoria Day of 26 Royal Engineer Regiment.

The headstones were replaced by CWGC. Polly Brewster, Commemorations Case Officer at CWGC, said:

On the 25th April 1915, Captain Gordon Cuthbert and Lieutenant Leslie Harvey were engaged in fierce fighting near Ypres and made the ultimate sacrifice. It feels very poignant that 110 years later, almost to the day, we are now able to commemorate them by name at their final resting places. The Commission will continue to care for their graves in perpetuity, ensuring that they can rest in peace and dignity, their sacrifice remembered.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/graves-of-two-unknown-world-war-1-officers-named-111-years-after-their-deaths>