

The Trooper Potts VC Memorial Trust

'The Hero with the Shovel'

Building a permanent memorial to Reading's only Victoria Cross hero and the men and women of the Berkshire Yeomanry past, present and future.



30 September 2015

The memorial to Trooper Fred Potts VC and the Berkshire Yeomanry moves forward to the unveiling on 4 October 2015

The Trooper Potts VC Memorial Trust has announced today that the completed bronze sculpture of Trooper Potts VC and Trooper Andrews is waiting to be collected in the Morris Singer Fine Art Foundry, Lasham. It will be installed on 2 October between 7 and 9am. This is the final part of the memorial to be delivered.

The unveiling service will be held on Sunday 4th October, just outside Forbury Gardens, Reading, opposite the Forbury Hotel RG1 3EJ. Events start with the Band and Bugles of the Rifles at 10:30, the service is between 11am and 12noon.

Richard Bennett, Chairman of the Trust said:

The delivery of the completed sculpture marks an end to the project stage of our work. The whole memorial is then in the public domain. We hope people will respond to it favourably.

*The Granddaughter of Fred Potts and the Grandson of Arthur Andrews are key members of the Trust. They, and the rest of the committee, are delighted by the work of the sculptor and **The Morris Singer Fine Art Foundry, Lasham**. The team at the foundry has delivered the quality we hoped for, their team work has been exceptional. It has been fun to work with such a knowledgeable and passionate group of craftsmen and women who have worked closely with us and the sculptor to ensure they delivered exactly what we sought.*

The transformation of the fundraising, by the Major Sponsor (Haslams Estate Agents) and Chris Tarrant OBE, 30 months ago enabled the trust to start to develop the detailed drawings, commission and complete the project.

Completion of the whole memorial over the last 12 months has engaged some 38 people across 9 trades and professions (Sculptor, two Foundries, Architect, Construction company which made the plinths, Stonemasons, a Designer, a Sign Company which made the information boards, a company that designed the Roll of Honour, Fundraising {Major Sponsors (Haslams Estate Agents) & Chris Tarrant OBE} and a film maker is recording the process of production).

www.pottsvetrust.org

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Dig deep for Trooper Potts

Donations made via www.findmeagrant.org/wberks/browse.aspx Ref WB 10795 can have gift aid added if appropriate.

Patrons

The Hon Mrs Bayliss CVO JP, Mr Chris Tarrant OBE, Mr Michael Naxton, Curator of Lord Ashcroft's VC Collection

The Trooper Potts VC Memorial Trust Registered Charity No. 1147047

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Additionally the Trust had the vital support of Reading Borough Council from 7 departments which have helped with; planning, the process of selecting contractors, management of the construction and installation, have provided the site and have agreed to adopt the memorial on completion. English Heritage were also a formal consultee.

Everyone has worked so well together on this project and it has been rewarding to be a part of it.

The unveiling event on 4 September will be quite a day for all the committee, our Major Sponsors (Haslams Estate Agents), our Donors and the 94(Berkshire Yeomanry)Signal Squadron.

The Band and Bugles of The Rifles will play before 350 invited guests and members of the public who have supported us from the start. We have been surprised and delighted that so many people have been keen to come to the unveiling event.

*Many descendants of Trooper Fred Potts and Trooper Arthur Andrews will join us. We have sought to have young people involved in the service; Fred's Great, Great, Great Granddaughter will read his **VC Citation** and Arthur's Great, Great Niece will read **The Exhortation** and girls from the 6th Form at The Abbey School will unveil part of the memorial. In recognition of this Gallipoli story we will be joined by Mr Fatih Ulusoy (Deputy Head of Mission at the Turkish Embassy) who will read the words of reconciliation by Kemal Ataturk. The Turkish National Anthem will also be played during the service.*

Reading Borough Council have been supportive from the very beginning of the project. Councillors and members of council staff have helped us to reach this point and have provided the site for the memorial."

Cllr Tony Page said:

"More than nine million British and Commonwealth soldiers fought in the Great War, but only 628 received the highest award for gallantry, the Victoria Cross. This tells us what an exceptionally brave man Trooper Fred Potts was. Men like Fred Potts gave so much in the Great War – and so many gave their lives - to win the freedom and stability we enjoy in this country today, and it is vital we never forget what they did for us."

Details of the unveiling at the site of the memorial just outside Forbury Gardens RG1 3EJ.

- Guests have been asked to arrive by 10:30 when the band starts to play and be in their places by 10:45.
- Events start with the Berkshire Yeomanry Trumpet Call at 10:59. This is followed by the Lance Guard and Escort of The Berkshire Yeomanry marching on though the Abbey Gateway. The Guidon then follows and the Lord-Lieutenant will arrive and take the General Salute.
- Chris Tarrant OBE and the Lord Lieutenant will unveil the sculpture of Trooper Potts VC and Trooper Andrews. .
- Two girls from the 6th Form at The Abbey School will unveil the Roll of Honour. This is appropriate as from the 1920s to the 1960s the girls of The Abbey School provided Veterans with a Christmas lunch, which Fred Potts and Arthur Andrews attended.

Guests include

- The Lord Lieutenant of the Royal County of Berkshire Mr J Puxley
- High Sheriff for Berkshire Mr D Bertie (whose ancestor is on the Roll of Honour)
- Chris Tarrant OBE
- The Mayor of Reading
- The Mayor of Bracknell Forest
- The Mayor of Windsor and Maidenhead
- The Mayor of Abingdon
- The Chair of West Berkshire Council
- The Chair of South Oxford District Council
- The Chair of the Vale of White Horse
- Rob Wilson MP
- Mr Steve Woodford MD of Haslams Estate Agents - Major Sponsors.
- Military VIPs include Colonel J W Cooper Comd 12 Sig Group, Brigadier Hughes Comd 11 Inf Brigade, Col the Lord De Mauley Yeo Col.
- Mr Michael Naxton Curator of Lord Ashcroft's VC Collection.
- Sir Philip and Lady Wroughton
- The Hon Mrs Bayliss
- Veterans of WW2 and Family members from WW1, members of the Potts and Andrews Families,
- Donors large and small
- The age range is from 6years to 80+

In view of the numbers we have had to control access to the main part of the site by ticket.

Members of the public, who have supported us from the start, will also be able to see the unveiling and hear the service and the band.

The Trooper Potts VC Memorial Trust started work to raise funds to erect a memorial in 2010.

Companies involved in the project include:

- Sculptor **Tom Murphy**, www.liverpoolsculptures.com/site/welcome-to-liverpool-sculptures, from Liverpool who was commissioned to produce the life size maquette in clay (November 2014).
- The committee approved the clay sculpture in March 2015 and selected **Morris Singer Fine Art Foundry of Lasham**, <http://www.morrissinger.co.uk> to take moulds and create the bronze sculpture, this was completed in September 2015.
- The sculpture and the Roll of Honour will be placed on plinths - **Francis Construction**, <http://www.francisconstruction.co.uk>, will provide the core for the plinths.
- **A F Jones Stonemasons**, <http://www.afjones.co.uk/>, have produce the Portland stone cladding for the plinths, and have hand carved the badges. This work was complete in early September 2015
- The Roll of Honour has been produced by Photocast Products of Liverpool, www.photocast.co.uk
- **A J Wells of the Isle of Wight** www.ajwells.com produced Information Boards which explain about the Victoria Cross and the Berkshire Yeomanry. They are designed by Anne- Marie Carroll; amc@clickwork.net
- **Robert Rigby Architects** www.rraltd.co.uk developed the architects drawings for the overall memorial and provided the structural engineering input.

-Ends-

Notes to editors:

Trooper Potts was a Reading man and a member of the Berkshire Yeoman who was awarded the VC for his actions in Gallipoli (over August 21-23 1915) when he saved a fellow Reading man from certain death in front of the Turkish Lines at Scimitar Hill. Potts became known as the "**Hero with the Shovel**" as he dragged his severely wounded comrade the final part of their 48 hour journey across no man's land on shovel.

The trust was set up in 2010 to raise the funds to develop a suitable memorial, Charitable status was gained in 2012. Trust members include the grandchildren of Trooper Potts and Trooper Andrews, Curators of the Berkshire Yeomanry Museum, a lecturer in History from Reading College and military historians. The Trust has undertaken Educational Outreach work in Primary and Secondary schools in Reading since 2012 and continues to do so.

Reading Borough Council, its councillors and officers, have supported the project from the outset and have provided the site for the memorial.

- Haslams Estate Agents became the Major Sponsor in 2013 and, with the help of Patron Chris Tarrant, were pivotal in enabling the trust, by November 2014, to raise the £150,000 required to construct the memorial and additionally to start an annual maintenance fund.
- Patrons are; Chris Tarrant OBE, The Hon Mrs Bayliss CVO JP, Mr Michael Naxton Curator of Lord Ashcroft's VC Collection.
- The project received the endorsement of The Prime Minister the Rt Hon David Cameron MP when he came to office in 2010. His grandfather served in the Berkshire Yeomanry.
- The Government's First World War Centenary campaign enables commemorative paving stones to be laid at the birth places of Victoria Cross (VC) recipients of the war on the centenary of the events at which they won the VC. The Potts VC Paving stone is one of three which will be laid in August 2015. 628 VCs were awarded in the First World War. www.1914.org/news/communities-unveil-the-first-victoria-cross-commemorative-paving-stones

For further information please contact:

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