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Press release

Shared UK-Ireland commemoration announced for the Battle of Messines Ridge

From: Northern Ireland Office (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/northern-ireland-office>) and The Rt Hon James Brokenshire (<https://www.gov.uk/government/people/james-brokenshire>)

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Secretary of State announces shared UK-Ireland commemoration ceremony for the Battle of Messines Ridge.



Today, the Secretary of State, Rt. Hon. James Brokenshire MP, has announced plans for a shared UK-Ireland commemoration ceremony on 7 June 2017 to mark the centenary of the Battle of Messines Ridge.

The battle has considerable historic and symbolic significance for the UK and Ireland, as Messines was the first time that the 36th (Ulster) and 16th (Irish) Divisions fought alongside each other during the Great War. The UK and Irish governments have now committed to working together to deliver a shared ceremony of commemoration, in the spirit of the 36th (Ulster) and 16th (Irish) divisions at the battle.

Making the announcement today, Rt. Hon. James Brokenshire MP said:

I am pleased to announce this shared UK-Ireland ceremony to mark the centenary of the Battle of Messines. We have seen all too well how history can divide, but our ambitious goal throughout this decade of centenaries is to seek to use history to bring us together, and to build on the political progress that has been made throughout these islands.

This shared ceremony is an opportunity to remember the service and sacrifice of those who fought at Messines Ridge, as well as to further strengthen the important relationship that exists between the United Kingdom and Ireland.

The commemoration ceremony will take place at the Island of Ireland Peace Park in Messines, Belgium, and will be a ticketed event. Members of the public who wish to express an interest in attending the commemoration can obtain further details here (https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/610115/Messines_Ridge_Public_Attendance_Expression_of_Interest_Form.docx) (MS Word Document, 169KB).

Ends.

Notes to Editors:

1. Expressions of interest are now being sought from individuals interested in attending the Battles of Messines Ridge Centenary Commemoration, at the Island of Ireland Peace Park at 2pm on 7 June 2017.
2. Invitations will issue shortly to invited guests. All those interested in applying for a public ticket are asked to complete a brief form which can be found here (https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/610115/Messines_Ridge_Public_Attendance_Expression_of_Interest_Form.docx) (MS Word Document, 169KB) before submitting it to messinesqueries@dfa.ie. If you would like to receive the form in an alternative format, please contact messinesqueries@dfa.ie.
3. Given the likely level of interest in attending this ceremony, tickets cannot be guaranteed to all who apply and tickets may be allocated through a ballot system.
4. Priority will be given to the relatives of those who fought in the battle and persons who can provide demonstrable evidence of a particular interest in, or link to, commemoration of the Battle of Messines, in a context of reconciliation.
5. Further information on logistics for the ceremony will follow in due course.
3. The closing date for expressions of interest is Friday 5 May 2017 at 12 noon.

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