

Unknown soldier grave restored at Maker Camp October 2015

Soldier buried at Maker Heights remembered in special service 28/10/2015

Sailors from the Royal Navy, local schoolchildren and members of the public have gathered to pay their respects to a soldier who died 225 years ago, buried in a lone grave in Cornwall.

The grave of the soldier was found at Maker Heights, on the Rame Peninsular, by Warrant Officer 1 (WO1) Darren 'Fruity' Paskins MBE. The 46-year-old, who lives in Torpoint and works at Britannia Royal Naval College (BRNC), regularly camps at the site with his dog Ralf.

He originally spotted the grave on a map and set out to find it, fighting through brambles and bracken to eventually come across the stone marking the last resting place of the soldier who died in 1790. Having sought permission to restore the area, WO1 Paskins, who is BRNC's Ceremonial Training Officer spent much of his spare time clearing the area of vegetation and once the grave was restored organised the small service of Remembrance.

The service, conducted by the Reverend Keith Robus, Royal Navy Chaplain, included Officer Cadets from BRNC and trainee sailors from HMS Raleigh, along with Major Charlie King of the Rifles, children from Furlanesend School and local people.

I was overwhelmed by the number of people who attended the Service to show their respect for a soldier who died so long ago protecting our country Warrant Officer 1 (WO1) Darren 'Fruity' Paskins MBE, Ceremonial Training Officer WO1 Paskins said: "I was overwhelmed by the number of people who attended the Service to show their respect for a soldier who died so long ago protecting our country.

There is a long-lasting bond of mutual respect between military personnel, which is something we teach during initial naval training, and I thought it was important for us all to remember him. Details on the soldier are scant."

"The stone has been worn away by vegetation over the years, but I managed to make out he was called James, he was a Grenadier and he died of drowning in 1790. "A lady who attended the service said she believed he was called James Ashton and I hope to confirm that and find out more about him by accessing the pay records for the regiment at the National Archives in Kew.

"I've an interest in military history and I've found out he would have been in the Royal Fusiliers, a member of the 7th Regiment Of Foot, and he would have been defending the cannons stationed here to combat the risk of invasion from the French and Spanish who were allied with America during the War of Independence."

The position where the grave lies is known as a redoubt. It was abandoned in 1815 as better defences were built across the Rame Peninsular. Maker continued to play its part in the defence of Plymouth and more specifically the Naval Base as recently as the Second World War. A Heavy Anti-Aircraft battery was built in the late 1930s and altered in the 40s. WO1 Paskins's next project will be to restore the World War 2 gun emplacements, by cutting back all the overgrown vegetation.

American troops also mustered on the Rame Peninsular in preparation for the D-Day landing. Today Maker Heights is preserved for the community by the Rame Peninsular Conservation Trust, a registered charity.

The Chair of Trustees, Geoff Moore, said: "There are exciting things happening at Maker Heights centred on the arts and music and it is sometimes possible that the military history of the site takes a back seat.

"With his efforts to clear the site of the soldier's grave, put in the research to try and identify him and organise this ceremony of remembrance, WO1 Paskins has not only brought the site's history to the fore but has also given us a personal connection to a man who lived in that environment over two hundred years ago."

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L to R: Royal Navy Chaplain the Reverend Keith Robus, WO1 Darren 'Fruity' Paskins, Bugler Mike Thomas Royal Marines Band and Major Charlie King of the Rifles





Sources: The Royal Navy, Plymouth Herald, Cornish Guardian