

'Engineering the Loos Salient 1915-2018' is a long standing and on going inter-disciplinary study of the Loos battlefield being conducted by the Durand Group in conjunction with local communities and authorities. The aim of this research is to educate and inform the general public on all aspects of subterranean warfare during the conflict. The Group has already uncovered several sections of tunnel system near Loos-en-Gohelle and Hulluch in the Pas de Calais region of northern France.

During a 3-day project in February 2016 work has recently continued to investigate x3 possible entrances related to a First World War tunnel system. Work is on-going here to ensure safe access to subterranean systems to enable further investigation and recording. On all 3 sites significant progress was made despite the short time frame the work was carried out under.

On Saturday 20th February the remains of a First World War British soldier were uncovered during the process of investigating the existence of one of the potential tunnel entrances, near the 'Hohenzollern Redoubt', just south of the town of Auchy-les-Mines. The Hohenzollern Redoubt was a heavily fortified German strong point, which became notorious for the ferocity of the fighting that took place there, especially at the Battle of Loos which took place from 25th September to 14th October 1915.

Immediately on making the discovery of human remains, team members from the Durand Group halted their work in order to set in motion the correct protocols for such a discovery. Led by historian and author Mark Khan and archaeology lead, Dr Matt Leonard, contact was made with the local police and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC). Some items of ordnance and ammunition were also uncovered and were removed and isolated by an EOD expert. The French police and a member of the CWGC initially attended the site. The soldier's remains were recovered by a team led by archaeologist Dr Matt Leonard and were handed over to the French Police who have now released them into the care of the CWGC.

Andy Prada, Project Manager of the Loos Salient initiative for the Durand Group, said he was sad that soldiers were still being recovered from First World War

battlefields after 100 years but at least this soldier will now be buried with honours, unlike so many of his colleagues whose bodies were never recovered.

The UK MOD Joint Casualty & Compassionate Centre (JCCC) has released the following statement announcing details of the burial.:

*A funeral service will be held for an unknown soldier of the Royal Leicestershire Regiment and an unknown soldier of unknown regiment at 1100 hours on 29 September 2016 at St Mary's ADS Cemetery, Haisnes, France with The Royal Anglian Regiment providing support. A set of remains was discovered in Auchy-Les-Mines in February 2016 and accompanying military insignia indicated the remains were of a WW1 casualty of the Royal Leicestershire Regiment. A second set of remains was discovered in the same location in June 2016; no identifying insignia accompanied this soldier. Despite extensive research, the Ministry of Defence's Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC) was unable to identify the soldiers.*

*Both soldiers will be buried under separate headstones as Soldiers of the Great War, Known Unto God. The service has been organised by JCCC and will be attended by British Defence Staff, regimental representatives and local dignitaries.*



A 1914 dated penny found with the soldiers remains. ©Durand Group



An eye piece from a gas mask found with the soldiers remains. ©Durand Group



A key piece of information that linked the soldier to the Royal Leicestershire Regiment - a shoulder title. ©Durand Group