

Sinking of the Glenart Castle: a war crime we will not forget

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THE Royal British Legion Hartland have always held a remembrance service at this time of year on the nearby cliffs overlooking the Bristol Channel.

They gather to mark the attack in World War One on a hospital ship, HMHS Glenart Castle. On February 25, 1918, she had left Newport in Wales bound for Brest in France to pick up wounded Portuguese soldiers. Clearly marked as a hospital ship, illuminated and displaying the red cross, she was torpedoed at 3.50am on February 26, with a massive loss of life. This was a war crime, a war crime that went unprosecuted but importantly, is not forgotten. Witnesses at the time, which included local fishermen, gave statements that it was clearly marked with the red cross... lit and showing navigation lights. But she joined a list of vessels that were destroyed despite their humanitarian cause.

This year representatives from the military medical services will be joined by 30 members of The Royal Centre for Defence Medicine who, on February 25 will provide a working party to tidy the cliff top plaque as well as giving the town war memorial a spring clean. There will

then be a clifftop gathering on the 26th for a service, assembling at 10.45am.

One of the people attending is Scott Baillie, who moved to the Hartland area eight years ago and by coincidence is a medal collector - especially those that were awarded to personnel who served on hospital ships. He owns several medals from the Glenart Castle incident.

"It is just a strange coincidence that I have a couple in my collection," said Scott from his Hartland home. "Including George Thomas Hutson, Royal Army Medical Corps. His medals will be on display, medals that he never saw as they were awarded posthumously. His back story is really rather sad. He was called up in 1917 and his very first posting overseas was on the Glenart Castle. Just some ten hours into active service, he was dead."

Scott will be there on the day with a stall and is willing to talk about his collection and the story of the tragic event.

"Figures are debatable when it comes to survivors, but it is thought that 29 out of 182 people made it to shore.

"The lifeboats on the starboard side had been ruined by the torpedo explosion, they hung like ribbons, was one description at the inquest. Those were unusable so only a lim-



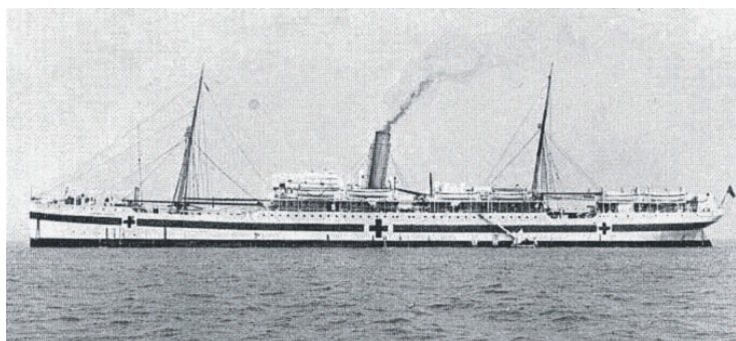
A piper at last year's memorial service for those who lost their lives on the hospital ship HMHS Glenart Castle on February 26, 1918. Pictures: Scott Baillie

ited number on the port were dropped into the water as she sunk stern first. The specific numbers are lost to history as some people died in the boats, bodies were taken to Wales and along the coast of England and in the confusion of the evacuation, nobody is sure of the numbers.

"The conditions that night were al-

so against water survival. I am attached to the Clovelly lifeboat and know the dangers of hypothermia. Even those who made it off the ship had little chance."

Everyone is welcome to the short service of remembrance on the cliff top on February 26 at 11am. The memorial can be found beside the coastal path near Hartland Point.



Hospital ship HMHS Glenart Castle



The medals of George Thomas Hutson, Royal Army Medical Corps



Military cadets gather for last year's cliff-top Glenart Castle memorial

New funds for walking and cycling

WALKING and cycling projects in Devon are receiving £3.9 million of government funding, which has been welcomed by the county council.

The Active Travel Funding is a share of £291 million announced nationally last Wednesday, February 12, by the government and Active Travel England, and is the largest settlement for any authority in the South West.

The council says that this latest investment will support the development of around 300 miles of new footpaths and cycle lanes across the county to make walking and cycling easier and safer, while also funding cycle training for thousands of children.

The county council currently has three local cycling and walking infrastructure plans and is developing three more this year to outline cycling and walking improvements across Devon over the next 10 to 20 years. The aim will be to use all of these plans to inform which schemes will be supported with this latest funding.

Councillor Stuart Hughes, county council cabinet member for highway management, said: "This is a significant and very welcome investment from the government to support active travel in Devon. We will be using our LCWIPs to guide what cycling and walking projects we can bring forward across the county. We're keen to include a package of crossing improvements for several locations across Devon with a focus on creating safer routes to schools.

"More than 100,000 children in Devon have received Bikeability training since 2006, providing them with vital road safety skills, as well as improving their health and wellbeing, and we will be looking to support thousands more children to take part in Bikeability training and building their confidence. This funding enables us to keep investing in our active travel networks and making it easier for our Devon residents to choose walking or cycling for shorter distance journeys to school, work or for leisure."

Minister for Local Transport Simon Lightwood said: "Walking and cycling is an affordable way to get around and is hugely beneficial for both mental and physical health.

"Investing in our national cycling and walking infrastructure is a key part our mission for growth and today's investment will not only provide better connectivity, but boost local businesses, grow local economies and ease pressure on the NHS, helping us deliver our Plan for Change."

The Active Travel Funding allocations announced today have to be committed by March 2026 and schemes delivered by March 2027.