



public works

Department:
Public Works
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Issued by Chief Directorate: Communications

Enquiries: Thami Mchunu 079 519 6997

Issue Date: 11 July 2016

MEDIA STATEMENT

PUBLIC WORKS RESTORES THE DIGNITY OF SOUTH AFRICAN BLACK SOLDIERS WHO DIED IN WORLD WARS

The National Department of Public Works has proven that it does not only provide accommodation for the living, but that it also caters for South Africans who died in the line of duty in foreign lands.

Public Works Minister Thulas Nxesi, has been invited by President Zuma to attend the centenary commemoration of the Battle of Delville Wood, as well as the unveiling of the Memorial Wall for all the war dead. The Department of Public Works built the Delville Wood Memorial in remembrance of the fallen soldiers who served and died during the two World Wars.

The Wall, which will be unveiled by the President during a commemoration ceremony tomorrow, now includes the names of the Black and Coloured South African soldiers who also served and died during the War but whose participation was never recognised, until now. The South African National Memorial is situated in the North of France, some 170 kilometres from Paris.

The Department of Public Works, as the custodian of state immovable assets, was responsible for the renovation of the Wall and the addition of the Wall extension. DPW is also responsible for the refurbishment and transformation of the centre. The renovation of the Wall came after a resolution by the South African Mission in Paris in 2014, to reflect the unbiased and authentic role played by Black South Africans in the war.

Previously, the role of Black South Africans who took part in the war was diminished from the memorial because their remains were buried elsewhere in France. During the apartheid era, the Black soldiers were regarded as unfit for combat like their white counterparts.

The original war memorial was erected in 1920 when the South African Government purchased 63 hectares of land in Delville Wood. To commemorate and honour the sacrifices of Black South African soldiers, the South African National War Memorial and Museum in Delville Wood memorial in France was erected and inaugurated in 1926. In 1952 an altar stone was added to commemorate South African soldiers who died during World War II in various theatres of war.

The latest renovation project to transform the memorial was a joint inter-governmental initiative by the Departments of Public Works, Department of Arts and Culture and Department of International Relations and Cooperation. The renovations cost R49 million.

ENDS

Issued by: Thami Mchunu

National Department of Public Works

0795196997