

PRESS RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The *Hawthorn Ridge Crater Association* (HRCA) is pleased to announce its formation with the intention to support and develop the most intensive study of any Great War battlefield ever attempted.

The association will be leasing the site from the owner, the local council, on a 99 year lease for 1 Euro symbolic. The objectives of the project are to improve the access for visitors, manage the upkeep, and protect the site for future generations whilst providing a detailed study of the area with partner organisations.

Working within a defined boundary of the Beaumont-Hamel area, an international team of experts and volunteers will conduct a programme of research using all sources of evidence to create an in-depth archive of material devoted the battlefield of 1914-18, post-war reconstruction, the impact of the Second World War and modern tourism.

The *Hawthorn Ridge Crater Association* is a Franco-British collaboration based in France and founded on the French law of an association 1901. It is supported by Keele and Staffordshire Universities in the U.K, and using the services of experienced Great War archaeologists and historians.

The explosion of the mine under Hawthorn Ridge was the very first action of The Battle of the Somme. It was recorded by Geoffrey Malins at 7.20am on the 1st July 1916 and is one of the best-known pieces of film of the Great War. The mine was blown for a second time on the 13th November when the 51st Highland Division captured the ridge and village. The project study is initially looking at the period between these events from both sides of No Man's Land, giving a German perspective to our understanding. The central hub of the project will be web based and form a virtual resource freely available via the Internet.

The first phase of clearing undergrowth started in January and is ongoing. With the approval of the French authorities the next step will be to widen the path to the site from the main road. Work will also be carried out to protect visitors at the craters edge, and also to protect the surrounding farmland. Limited interpretation panels will be added on site and information will be available electronically as part of the broader study of the battlefield.

The HRCA is a charitable one and visiting the site is, and will remain, open to the public at no cost whatsoever to the visitor.



Further information is available from:

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