

The Holborn  
Cenotaph



Tony White

*From: Tony White*

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Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to make a short announcement that is not in your orders of service, because there have been some exciting developments in our Holborn Cenotaph appeal that I wanted to share with you all, with the committee and those others present here tonight, in recognition of many of your support for the project, the work that you have put in, and in advance of tomorrow's press launch, which I know that some of you were asking about on the way in.

There has been a lot of work going on behind the scenes, and I thank you very much for that. Thanks also to those of you who have taken the time to come and view Stuart Brisley and Maya Balcioğlu's cenotaph whilst it has been installed here in Sir Gilbert Scott's beautiful chapel. I would remind you that this is not a maquette for the proposed Holborn Cenotaph — of which more later. Can I thank, too, those of you who in recent months have taken the collection tins, many of which I know have been distributed to the various receptions, the communal and public spaces around the college. You may have seen them on your way here this evening. You may indeed have donated. Thanks in particular to Professors Read and French for their efforts in this regard.

As a result, and as you can see from the fundraising thermometer, we have nearly reached our target of matching the Heritage Lottery Fund's generous grant. So on behalf of the committee, thank you.

Now to our happy news. It was confirmed at this morning's MOPAC<sup>1</sup> meeting at the Mayor's Office, that the current Holborn Police Station on the corner of Theobalds Road and Lamb's Conduit Street will be decommissioned in 2015, with functions moving across from 2 January onwards to the very much larger premises of the refurbished former Royal Mail sorting office at 21-31 New Oxford Street, at the junction with High Holborn. Those of you, like me, who may have walked past in recent months, and wondered what was going on behind the hoardings, now we know.

I should say that MOPAC were keen to stress this morning that the move will not affect police cover in this part of London, and that a staggered move — department by department — will ensure that there is no actual break in the delivery of any key function, and that includes counter and other public-facing services including the now familiar PCSOs, the Police Community Support Officers — **(make stiff, robotic, arm and upper body movements)** 'C3POs', as they are known in the trade! — as well as liaison with Immigration Enforcement, the National DNA Database, UK Visas and Immigration, and Border Force. Those assurances received a positive response this morning and I'm sure we're all glad to hear them, too.

Additionally, representatives of Her Majesties Inspectorates, both of Constabulary and Prisons, also assured this morning's meeting that the larger holding capacity of what they promise will be state of the art custody suites at the new site do not signal a substantial policy shift in the use of police cells for migrant detention, nor in the accommodation of prisoners on remand. The officials that I spoke to this morning were all in agreement that police custody services are largely unsuitable for long-term detention, but they noted that the service user numbers in both remand and migrant detention have risen year on year since MOPAC took over from the former Metropolitan Police Authority, as have the numbers of persons needing to be processed in Westminster and central London under the various sections of the Criminal Justice Act 1994, the Public Order Act 1986, the Police Reform Act 2002, the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, The Terrorism Act 2000, The Anti-terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001, The Criminal Justice Act 2003, The Anti-terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001 (Continuance in force of sections 21 to 23) Order 2003, The Prevention of Terrorism Act 2005, The Terrorism Act 2006, The Terrorism (United

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1 *The Mayor's Office for Policing And Crime*

Nations Measures) Order 2006, The Counter-Terrorism Act 2008, The Coroners and Justice Act 2009, The Terrorism (United Nations Measures) Order 2009, and The Terrorist Asset-Freezing (Temporary Provisions) Act 2010, etc. In light of this slight up-tick in demand, the official position is then unchanged: that police cells will necessarily continue to provide ‘some flexible capacity’ — was how they put it — but only where that cannot be found within the prisons estate.

When I spoke to you last year, you will remember me telling you that planning approval of our proposed Holborn Cenotaph had of course been conditional upon this decommissioning of the soon (now) to be former Holborn Police Station site.

Following this morning’s announcement, then, that approval is now in place.

This means that we have been able to bring forward the official launch of the Holborn Cenotaph, which as some of you know is to be held tomorrow at ten o’clock, on the steps of Holborn Police Station in Lamb’s Conduit Street, soon to be the site of the new Holborn Cenotaph. I extend the invitation to any journalists present who may not already have been invited, to come and see us afterwards for more information about the various speakers and timings and the accreditation process for interviews, availability of media images and architectural artist’s impressions, CGI illustrations etc. Those of you already in possession of the text of tomorrow’s full announcement will know that the following information is strictly embargoed please until 10:30 tomorrow, 25 October 2014.

Committee members especially will know that we have travelled a long way together. Three years ago, we were talking of 1,425 cenotaphs that might be sited at locations associated with each of those deaths. Of course the number has continued to rise, but this historic Holborn decision allows us instead to focus our attention on a single cenotaph, by adapting the pre-existing fifty-metre tower at the junction of Lamb’s Conduit Street and Theobalds Road, to create a pylon that will rise through a series of shallow, stepped set-backs to an empty tomb at its peak.

Stepped, ramp and mobility lift access to and from the top of the current three-storey podium and Lamb’s Conduit Street will be retained, but all entrances will be sealed and the whole podium and the tower to floor six will be faced with ashlar slabs of Portland Stone.

Rising from this ashlar sheath, the grey-brick shear walls on north and south elevations will of necessity be retained to the full height of the tower. Two further shallow, stepped set-backs rising up east and west elevations will be achieved by stripping all glass and metal cladding from floors six to nine while retaining concrete superstructure therein. Whereas floors ten to thirteen will be taken back to what will appear to be the bare steel frame. This open section is designed to reflect the Glasnost-like spirit of openness that has been emerging among certain sections of — particularly — the **(shaking head)** Metropolitan Police and the **(shaking head)** South Yorkshire Police, and we acknowledge the support of those reformers and the risks they have taken, as well as that of others outside the Police Service who are working towards all of our shared goal of full UK compliance with the Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention on the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment.

Above these open sections, the current concrete roof canopy will be retained. Following removal of larger roof top plant — the window-washing cradles, lifting gear, AC units, and walkways, phone and radio masts — and other appurtenances, it will support the requisite empty tomb, the whole again faced in ashlar Portland stone.

Girdling the Holborn Cenotaph at its narrowest point, will be a combined high-contrast scrolling LED sign and photovoltaic array, this will be a self-sufficient unit, supplemented by a further PV panel on the summit that will not be visible from the street. We are confident that we can push the power to pixel-pitch to font-height ratios and achieve a two-metre font with no significant loss in daylight legibility. The names of the [1,497<sup>2</sup>] (to date) will each process in their own slow, scrolling orbit of the structure. There is no limit to the number of names that can be displayed. We estimate that it will take some fifty-hours to run through the full current cycle in chronological order.

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2 Insert current figure here. Figure shown accurate at 24 October 2014, as calculated from the following sources: (i) John Burn-Murdoch, ‘Guardian Datablog: deaths after police contact or in police custody’, Guardian, 19 July 2012 <http://bit.ly/1wDILUX> and (ii) ‘Deaths in Police Custody’, Inquest, 11 September 2014 <http://bit.ly/1FSnqfK>

Ladies and gentlemen, this is the 21<sup>st</sup> century, so families and campaign groups will also be able to log on to a password protected section of the Holborn Cenotaph website to check the times when their loved one's name will be displayed, in order to better plan their visits, as well as to set calendar reminders, to purchase personalised photographs or share their thoughts and memories on social media.

So in conclusion, let me give you that headline again.

Following this morning's MOPAC announcement on a schedule for the decommissioning of the current Holborn Police Station, I am delighted to confirm that we now have full planning approval for our modest proposal to convert the tower on Lamb's Conduit Street into a new Holborn Cenotaph, a 50-metre high, networked memorial to those men and women who have lost their lives or who will die in contact with the police in the UK.

We can also take *this* opportunity, here and now (**gesture to acknowledge the immediate surroundings in which speaker and audience are located; then slowly, solemnly**) to remember just some of those men and women<sup>3</sup>:

***[Oliver Pryce, Omasase Lumumba, Leon Patterson, Joy Gardner, Richard O'Brien, Shiji Lapite, David Ewin, Ibrahima Sey, Alton Manning, James Ashley, Christopher Alder, Roger Sylvester, Harry Stanley, Robin Goodenough, Mikey Powell, Iain Tomlinson, Azelle Rodney, David Emmanuel, Mark Duggan, Jimmy Mubenga<sup>4</sup>]***

and the [1,476<sup>5</sup>] others who have died in police custody or following other contact with the police in the UK since 1990.

'No justice, no peace.'<sup>6</sup>

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3 Reader to list the names of men and women where unlawful killing verdicts and manslaughter or other serious prosecutions of state agents in cases of deaths in prison, police custody or pursuits since 1990 have been recorded. Names of men and women who have died in contact with the police but where lawful killing verdicts have been recorded may also be read at this point.

4 Names read by Tony White for The Cenotaph and the Public Sphere, 24 October 2014. List derived from sources including 'Unlawful Killing verdicts and prosecutions', Inquest, 25 April 2014 <http://bit.ly/1wauekA>

5 Insert current figure here. Figure shown was calculated 22 October 2014 from the following sources: (i) John Burn-Murdoch, 'Guardian Datablog: deaths after police contact or in police custody', *Guardian*, 19 July 2012 <http://bit.ly/1wDILUX> and (ii) 'Deaths in Police Custody', Inquest, 11 September 2014 <http://bit.ly/1FSnqfK>

6 "'No justice, no peace" means that, until we see fairness and accountability, we will not remain silent.' — Al Sharpton, 'No justice, no peace: why Mark Duggan's family echoed my rallying cry' *Guardian*, 10 January 2014. <http://bit.ly/1u39TyL>

*About 'The Cenotaph Project & the public sphere'*

*This panel event revisited Stuart Brisley and Maya Balcioglu's The Cenotaph Project (1987-91). The British painter, sculptor and performance artist Stuart Brisley is widely regarded as a key figure in British art. Along with his frequent collaborator, Maya Balcioglu, he has unflinchingly probed the political, cultural and social mores of his time in a career now spanning its sixth decade.*

*With The Cenotaph Project the artists exhibited replicas of the Whitehall Cenotaph, scaled down to match the typical height of a council flat ceiling, in six locations across the country. From a mute signifier of 'official history' the various, smaller cenotaphs opened a space for a critique of history and the possibility of change.*

*This event, held as part of the Arts & Humanities Festival 2014: Underground, resulted from a loose collaboration between Balcioglu, Brisley, Sanja Perovic (Lecturer in French, King's College, London) and Tony White that has been made possible by White's appointment as creative entrepreneur in residence and visiting research fellow at King's College, London, funded by CreativeWorks London.*

*N.B. The Holborn Cenotaph was written for the King's College Strand campus chapel, London, but could be read in any public or civic space associated with ceremonial or displays of power. In addition to the updatable sections indicated, the text could also be adapted for performance in any UK location (whether alongside Brisley and Balcioglu's The Cenotaph Project or not) by substitution of Holborn Police Station and other London or location-specific detail with any UK police station building, town or city; MOPAC for any local police authority, etc.*



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<http://pieceofpaperpress.com>