



Prime Minister

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MINISTRY OF DEFENCE  
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1  
Telephone 01-8807022 218 2111/3

20th May 1983

*This would do -  
I do not see why I should like the name for the Scots Guards if they were taken for war. When requirements were previously made the details had to be sent to DOE? Can the Government be asked to expedite the requirements?*

Dear Michael,

You asked for advice on a question raised at the Prime Minister's Press Conference this morning, about the delay in providing headstones for the graves of Scots Guardsmen, whose bodies were repatriated from the Falkland Islands for reburial in this country.

All the burial arrangements, including the erection of headstones, for bodies brought back from the Falklands, are provided at public expense by the Ministry of Defence. The headstones are being made and erected, on our behalf, by the Department of the Environment. Inscriptions are being produced on the basis of the wishes of the next of kin, which were forwarded direct to DOE by the units and regiments concerned.

As the Prime Minister indicated, it is normal practice for headstones not to be erected for some months after burial, to allow for subsidence and settling. This often takes six months or more, and, as the repatriation and reburial of Falklands victims took place last November, one would not have expected headstones to be erected much before now. So far as we have been able to ascertain, none is yet in position, although one is apparently ready to be transported to the grave, and others, notably for the Parachute Regiment, are expected to be available shortly. Unfortunately there has been an additional delay in the case of the Scots Guards, who have only recently forwarded their requirements to the DOE. Although we have asked DOE to expedite the requirement as much as possible, I understand that there is little prospect of delivery within the next few months.

*only one?*

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Should the subject be raised with the Prime Minister again, she might wish to take the line that she understands that it is normal practice to wait some months before erecting headstones because of the settling process; that the preparations of headstones takes some time because of the skilled work needed on them; that the headstones of those repatriated from the Falkland Islands are being provided by the Government, and that they will be erected as soon as possible. If pressed on whether the Scots Guards' headstones will be available later than the others, the Prime Minister might wish to accept that some delays have occurred, but to say that every effort will be made to have them ready as soon as possible.





The MOD press desk has already received enquiries from the Glasgow Herald and the Glasgow Evening Times on the subject, and has taken the line above, though without any reference to particular delays for the Scots Guards. The other two units most involved are the Parachute Regiment and the Royal Marines; although none of their headstones has been erected yet, we are not aware of any complaints.

*Yas ever*

*Nich Evans*

(N H R. EVANS)





MO 5/21

Prime Minister

*This answers the  
questions you asked.*

*A.J.C. 13/5*

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE  
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1

Telephone 01-~~230 7922~~ 218 2111/3

23rd May 1983

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your letter of today's date, requesting further information for the Prime Minister on this subject.

The Scots Guards' requirements for headstones were not received by the DOE until 17th May. The reason for the delay was that the Scots Guards initially overlooked the fact that the onus lay with them to initiate action. Once this had been realised, it took some time to consult the next-of-kin about the inscriptions they wanted on the headstones. The Scots Guards did not press the relatives for quick responses to their enquiries for details in order to allow time for full discussion within families and to avoid causing any extra distress to those involved.

Instructions for the graves to be marked with temporary wooden crosses, pending the erection of headstones, were issued on Friday, and these should be in place within the next few days.

The Prime Minister may wish to know that press interest in this subject results from an approach to the Glasgow newspapers by the mother of one of the dead Guardsmen. She did not contact either the Regiment or the Guardsman's widow before making the approach. I gather that the Scots Guards have spoken to the widow, who did not share her mother-in-law's concern over the delay. She has since discussed the matter with her mother-in-law, with the result that both ladies are now believed to be content. We are therefore hoping to avoid further public comment, but the Scots Guards accept that they could be criticised for the initial delay and are sorry that established procedures were not followed as quickly or effectively as they might have been.

*Yours ever  
Nick Evans*

(N H R EVANS)

A J Coles Esq

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE  
ATTN: BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1



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*From the Private Secretary*

23 May, 1983

Graves of Scots Guardsmen

You wrote to Michael Scholar on 20 May.

The Prime Minister has minuted that she does not find the situation regarding the headstones for the graves of Scots Guardsmen satisfactory. She does not see why the Government should incur criticism for delay on the part of the Scots Guards in forwarding their requirements to the DoE. She would be grateful to know the precise date on which these details reached the DoE.

The Prime Minister has also asked whether it would not be possible for the graves to be marked temporarily with wooden crosses.

As this matter may continue to be the subject of public comment, I should be grateful for further advice as soon as possible today.

A. J. COLES

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N. H. R. Evans, Esq.,  
Ministry of Defence

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10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

24 May 1983

Headstones for the Graves of Scots Guardsmen

Thank you for your letter of 23 May. The Prime Minister has noted that the Scots Guards' requirements for headstones were not received by the DOE until 17 May. She has further noted that temporary wooden crosses should be in place within the next few days.

A. J. COLES

Nick Evans, Esq.,  
Ministry of Defence.

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