



World Wars, Sikh Soldiers and Southampton's Commemorative Statue:

Southampton Sikh community have come together under the leadership of OCHD (One Community Hampshire and Dorset) to seek the Council's permission for a memorial monument in recognition of the enormous contribution and sacrifice made by the Sikh community in the two World Wars. The City Council recognises and values of the World War contributions and was proud to commemorate this in a small way by the erection of the silhouette of a Sikh soldier erected close to the city's temple last year. The Council is presently committed to finding the suitable site for the memorial statue which will be funded by a public subscription campaign.

Lord Rami Ranger, Chairman of the British Sikh Association (BSA) who is directly supporting the Sikh soldiery Southampton memorial, is working very closely with the Chief of the General Staff, General, Nick Carter on the various Sikh component of the British Army initiatives. Speaking highly of the tenacious plan and the overwhelming sentiment in favour of the memorial in Southampton, OCHD patron Lord Rami Ranger thinks that remembering the bravery of Sikhs soldiers will act as an inspiration to the future generation, particularly those born in the UK.

Pritheepal Singh, the CEO, initiator, Founder of OCHD sees the memorial as an important architectural site in the heart of the city, and a visual reminder for the youth to understand and connect with their past heritage. The memorial will make them feel proud of their integration with and contribution to British society and their community's direct connection with the history of the two World Wars, and how it tangibly assisted victory in for Britain and the Allies in both of these global conflicts.

Numerous activities are planned to keep the spirit of the community high while work for the memorial takes shape in the early days. A large event marking a major art exhibition in the Sikh Gurdwara has been announced in March 2021. The Gurdwara (Sikh Temple) which has been a great source of community cohesion is immensely supportive of the memorial project. Mr Sukhdev Singh the President of Gurdwara Nanaksar and Mr Harjap Singh as Chairman, OCHD co-founder and director in conjunction with the Southampton Council of Gurdwaras, sees the memorial representing a long historic association of the Sikhs with the city starting with the community's first Sikh resident Maharaja Duleep Singh, who arrived in Southampton in 1854. The Sikh community comprises an estimated 1.3% of the total population of the city that has four Gurdwaras dating back to 1966.

Alan Mercel Sanca, Director and co-founder of OCHD (and CEO of the UK Nepal Friendship Society), and a resident of Bournemouth whose work is related to the restoration of Nepali community heritage sees the Sikh memorial as a galvanising point for the richly diverse South Asian community in Bournemouth and the neighbouring areas.

Dr Sanjukta Ghosh of SOAS South Asia Institute (University of London) and a strategic community advisor to OCHD sees the importance of community subscribed art in post-Covid period bringing restorative value for the mental health of BAME communities. She said, 'Amidst raging BAME politics surrounding the demolition of colonial statues, building a memorial for Sikh soldiers is truly a historical moment and wins for the Indian diaspora heritage that challenges the erasures in the colonial past of names and contributions in the national history curriculum. Other members of the Council, Ben Abubakar, Chairman of the Ghana Association Portsmouth sees the educational value of the memorial for the BAME communities in the region.

Work for the memorial is slated to begin in early 2021, and the OCHD Council of Members have unanimously announced the unveiling of the memorial coinciding with Southampton's celebratory procession marking the birth of "Khalsa", the birth of Sikhism on Vaisakhi April 16th 2023.

Further information please contact on the details below.

Kind regards,

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