Great Houghton War Memorial







HELLO AND WELCOME

As Conservative MEP for the East Midlands, I was delighted to become Chairman of the East Midlands War Memorials Association.

Here in the East Midlands our war memorials are important reminders of what we owe to previous generations. But they are also stark reminders of the evils of war and why it is so important that we never let up in our efforts to maintain peace and understanding between the nations of Europe. And in their day the war memorials played their role in fostering reconciliation. The crosses, angels and other features that adorn war memorials in Britain, Italy, Germany, France and further afield show how much we have in common.

In the European Parliament I spend much time seeking to improve understanding between the member states of the European Union. The same cultural underpinnings that make war memorials in England so similar to those in Belgium or the Netherlands also help to build friendly relations in the European Parliament between myself and my fellow MEPs.

Far from the usual admonition of "Don't mention the war", I find that the shared history and experience of warfare brings us together in a shared determination never to allow such horrors to happen again in Europe. My role as Chairman of the East Midlands War Memorials Association helps to build bridges to MEPs from other countries. My father's cousin was killed in 1944, the father of the German MEP whose office is opposite mine was killed that same year. We both remember men we never really knew at war memorials.

Where war once divided nations, war memorials can now bring them together.

Rupert matthews.

PART ONE

THE FIRST WORLD WAR

The summer of 1914 was glorious across the East Midlands. The sun shone, crops ripened in the fields and the factories hummed with booming production that guaranteed work to the thousands who toiled away within them. If anyone noticed that an Austrian Archduke had been murdered in the Balkans, it did not really register. That sort of thing went on in the Balkans all the time.

When the Austrians invaded Serbia in supposed outrage over the murder – though in truth they had been seeking an excuse for years – only the mildest of alarm bells rang. But then Russia invaded Austria to support Serbia, Germany attacked Russia to support Austria and France invaded Germany to back up Russia. Finally, Germany invaded France. On 4 August German armies poured over the Belgian border as part of a great, sweeping march to outflank the main French armies on the Franco-German border. And then Britain declared war on Germany to honour a treaty defending Belgium

At this date, the counties of the East Midlands, as with most counties across the UK, had their own local regiments: The Lincolnshire Regiment took precedence, having been raised in 1685 and was numbered 10th in the Army List; the Leicestershire Regiment dated to 1688 and was numbered 17th; the 48th Northamptonshire Regiment was raised in 1741 and also drew recruits from Rutland. The final East Midlands regiment was the Sherwood Foresters, which had been created in 1881 by the amalgamation of the 45th Nottinghamshire Regiment and 95th Derbyshire Regiment.

Men from our counties served not only in their county infantry regiments, but also in various cavalry regiments and some were to be found in the Royal Navy. But in wherever they served, these men marched off to war.



British infantry attacking near Thiepval, 7 Aug 1916, during the Battle of the Somme. This photo was taken from the firing step of the trench that they've just left. Note the wooden stakes supporting coils of barbed wire. Before an attack such as this, military engineers would have cleared paths through the wire.



British infantry advancing in support near Morval on 25 September 1916, part of the battle of the Somme. Note the man carrying a stretcher in the centre, while the others carry rifles and the standard pack, in which would be ammunitions, food and a blanket. The spades were used for repairing trenches.



British wounded returning from fighting on Baneztin Ridge on the Somme, July 1916. Walking wounded were expected to make their own way back to field hospitals for initial treatment where medical staff decided if they could return to their units or had to be evacuated to hospitals in the rear. Note that the man fourth from the left wears a German uniform and is presumably a prisoner, which may explain the unwounded man with a rifle behind him.

The fighting of 1914 involved rapid advances, cavalry charges and sweeping infantry attacks, but neither side delivered a knockout blow. When the bad weather of autumn set in, the armies dug defensive trenches to hold their position through the wet, dismal winter weather, confident in the expectation that come the good spring weather more mobile warfare would resume and the war would soon be over.

Meanwhile, the regular regiments were thinly stretched along the line. Massive recruitment drives began to raise new troops. Some were drafted into regular battalions, but others were put into special battalions formed to last only for the length of the war. All of the East Midlands regiments gained these additional units.

The battles of 1915 – at Neuve Chappelle, Ypres and Loos – soon revealed that there was to be no easy breakthrough leading to a quick victory. Instead, the war was likely to descend into a murderous war of attrition. The victor would be the side willing to spend the most money and most blood to gain triumph.

Efforts were made to break the stalemate in secondary campaigns. In both Mesopotamia and at Gallipoli attacks aimed at knocking out Germany's ally Turkey took place. Romania and Italy were induced to attack the Austrians. These ploys failed, but men and resources were sucked out of Germany to prop up their allies.

In 1916 the Germans attacked first, assaulting the famous French fortified city of Verdun. They inflicted vast casualties on the French. It also caused the planned Allied attack on the Somme to take place sooner than planned and without adequate resources. The bloodbath that was the Battle of the Somme was the result.

Back in the East Midlands the demands of war were making themselves felt with increasing impact. Day after day, week after week the local newspapers carried the

names of local men who had been killed, wounded or decorated for gallantry. Men coming home on leave spread the news about the conditions in the trenches, discussed the role of new weapons such as machine guns or aircraft and passed on legends, rumours and gossip. Factories were re-equipped to make weapons instead of tractors, furniture or tools.

Above all there was a need for more and more men to join the army. Throughout 1915 volunteers had kept up the numbers, but in 1916 conscription was introduced. All men aged 18 to 40 were liable to service.

As the men went off to fight, their places in factories, farms and other workplaces were taken by women. Young, unmarried women without family ties were encouraged to work in factories far from home. Working class girls volunteered in large numbers to earn the top wages on offer. Middle class girls preferred the more genteel, if less well paid, roles of nurse or teacher. Right across the East Midlands gender roles were becoming more fluid.

In 1917 the USA entered the war to support the Allies and hopes of victory rose, only to be dashed a few months later when the Russian Empire collapsed into a chaotic revolution that took her out of the war.

By the spring of 1918 the Germans launched three massive offensives that came close to breaking through the British lines and gaining victory for Germany. In the event the attacks were just held. On 8 August the British, French and Americans launched their own massed assault. The German Army high command told Kaiser Wilhelm that defeat was inevitable and



British machine gunners near Arras, 1917. The heavy machine gun dominated the battlefields of the First World War and effectively made infantry attacks so dangerous as to be impossible.



A Sopwith Camel of the Royal Flying Corps. The Camel was primarily a fighter designed to shoot down enemy aircraft, but it could strafe enemy trenches with its guns or carry light bombs under the wings.



British Mark V tank. The Mark V entered service in 1918 and was a far more reliable and improved version of the Mark I of 1916 and Mark IV of 1917. It was armed with four machine guns and two 6 pounder guns. Bovington Tank Museum

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advised him to seek an armistice as quickly as possible. On 11 November 1918 that armistice was signed at 5am, and came into effect at 11am – the symbolic eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. The Great War was over.

In popular imagination, the First World War was a nightmare of mud, trenches and inhuman barbarity in which brave men were led by incompetent generals. As with many stereotypes, there is some truth in the popular image, but only some.

The image of mud comes mostly from a few weeks of hellish conditions in 1917 during the Battle of Passchendaele. The heavy casualties of the Battle of the Somme in 1916, during which some units were effectively wiped out in a few hours of fighting, created the image of sudden, massive casualties.

For most men, the daily routine rarely changed. The men would be called to 'stand to' an hour before dawn in case of enemy attack. Then breakfast would be served before the men were given their tasks for the day – latrines had to be cleared out, food had to be cooked, weapons needed cleaning. At night, men would go into no man's land out on patrol. The barbed wire in front of the trenches had to be checked and, if necessary, repaired.

Sometimes a night-time raid would be carried out on the enemy. This might involve as few as a dozen men sneaking forward to hurl grenades into enemy trenches, or larger raiding parties would leap down into the enemy front line to kill sentries and set demolition charges to blow up enemy trenches.

Nor were the men in the front line all the time. Units spent a few days in the trenches, then moved to a rear area for rest and training. After a period that might be a week or so, or sometimes as long as a month, the battalion would be moved up to the reserve trenches before going forward to the front line again.

During the course of the war, tactics changed dramatically. The British devised a plan of co-ordinated action between aircraft, artillery and infantry that was deployed on the Somme in 1916, and which failed. The French tried more daring dash-and-hold tactics, but they too proved abortive. In 1917 the Germans came up with the stormtrooper tactics. This saw small units of fast-moving elite infantry dash forward to penetrate through weak points before spreading out in the rear areas to assault enemy command posts, artillery positions and communications links.

Aircraft were used to direct artillery fire to make it more accurate, then to drop bombs with even greater accuracy. Poison gas was deployed to clear entire sections of the enemy front line. Artillery barrages became heavier, then creeping barrages were developed to move just ahead of attacking troops. New weapons made infantry fighting in trenches more murderous – grenades, sawn-off shotguns and flamethrowers were just some of the new inventions put to use.

In the end the answer to the stalemate of the trenches came in the shape of the tank. First deployed by the British in 1916 these behemoths were still rather unreliable and slow by the war's end, which made them less useful than they would be in 1939.

PART TWO

THE NORTHAMPTONSHIRE REGIMENT



The cap badge of the Northamptonshire Regiment. The badge carries the two premier battle honours of the regiment: "Gibraltar" and "Talavera"

The outbreak of the Great War in 1914 caught the British military rather by surprise. Although a Franco-German conflict was considered fairly likely, few expected it in 1914. And most people thought that British involvement would be restricted to supplying France with weapons and cash. It was the German invasion of Belgium on their way to France that brought Britain into the war.

The Northamptonshire Regiment in 1914 consisted of two regular battalions and two reserve battalions. The 1st Battalion was in Aldershot, and marched straight to the sea to be shipped to Le Havre, whence they went to Mons in Belgium by train. There they took part in the Battle of Mons and the Great Retreat that followed. The 2nd Battalion was in Alexandria, Egypt, when war broke out. They too took ship to Le Havre, arriving in November in time to dig in to trenches for the winter. Both these regular battalions stayed on the Western Front for the entire war.

The 3rd (Reserve) Battalion was composed largely of ex-soldiers who attended a few weeks training each year. They were ordered to muster at Northampton on the day war broke out. They spent the winter training, then moved to Kent where they guarded beaches against German landings and key bridges against sabotage. They continued this important, if unspectacular, task for the rest of the war.

The 4th (Territorial) Battalion was made up of younger men training at weekends. They were likewise mustered on the day war broke out and spent the winter training. They then went to join the bloody Gallipoli Campaign in Turkey in 1915. They subsequently fought the Turks in Palestine and ended the war in Beirut.

During the course of the war several other units within the Northamptonshire Regiment were raised. These were largely composed of new recruits, though officers and non-commissioned officers were brought in from other battalions to give some experience.

The 5th Battalion was trained as "pioneers" – what we would today consider to be military engineers. The 6th Battalion was mobilised in 1915 and went to France later that year. The 7th Battalion likewise mobilised in 1915, but had the misfortune to suffer very heavy casualties at the Battle of Loos almost as soon as they arrived in



Troops of the 1st Battalion, Northamptonshire Regiment marching past Prince Arthur, the Duke of Connaught, at his inspection of the 2nd Brigade, near Bruay, 1 July 1918.

France and was taken out of the line for some months to rebuild. The 8th Battalion was formed in 1915 and stayed in Britain throughout the war. The 9th Battalion was formed in 1917 and never got into front line service. There were also the 1st Garrison Battalion and 2nd Garrison Battalion, composed of men who for one reason or another were considered unsuitable for the front line. Instead they carried out duties in rear areas.

There was hardly a battle on the Western Front that did not include the Northamptonshire Regiment. They fought at Mons, the Marne and Ypres in 1914. They were at Aubers and Loos in 1915, on the Somme in 1916. The year 1917 saw the regiment fighting at Cambrai and at Passchendaele. In 1918 they fought in the long retreat in the face of the German spring offensives, then took part in the drive that pushed the Germans back to the Hindenburg Line and to defeat.

While most men from Northamptonshire who fought in the First World War served in the Northamptonshire Regiment, some did not. Conscripts could find themselves in the Royal Navy, especially later in the war when the Royal Navy was stretched to the limit trying to counter the U-boat menace. Men with experience of working with horses could find themselves in the cavalry or, if they were older or unfit for active service, in the supply corps. Those who knew something about motorised vehicles might find themselves drafted to serve in those units using those new weapons, the aircraft and the tanks.

During the First World War, the regiment won the following battle honours: Mons, Retreat from Mons, Marne 1914, Aisne 1914, 18, Ypres 1914, 17, Langemarck 1914, 17, Gheluvelt, Nonne Boschen, Givenchy 1914, Neuve Chapelle, Aubers, Loos, Somme 1916, 18, Albert 1916, 18, Bazentin, Delville Wood, Pozieres, Flers-Coucelette, Morval, Thiepval, Le Transloy, Ancre Heights, Ancre 1916, 18, Bapaume 1917, 18, Arras 1917,

18, Vimy 1917, Scarpe 1917, 18, Arleux, Messines 1917, Pilckem, Passchendaele, Cambrai 1917, 18, St Quentin, Rosieres, Avre, Villers Bretonneux, Amiens, Drocourt-Queant, Hindenburg Line, Epehy, St Quentin Canal, Selle, Sambre, France and Flanders 1914-18, Suvla, Landing at Suvla, Scimitar Hill, Gallipoli 1915, Egypt 1915-17, Gaza, El Mughar, Nebi Samwil, Jerusalem, Jaffa, Tell' Asur, Megiddo, Sharon, Palestine 1917-18

In all, over 5,000 men from Northamptonshire were killed on active service during the First World War. Their names are recorded on the war memorials of our county.

But some villages were lucky. All the men who marched off to war came back again. They came to be known as the "Thankful Villages" and Northamptonshire has no less than four of them: Wysall, from which 17 men left and returned; Maplebeck with two men, Wigsley with seven and the luckiest of all, Woodend which saw 19 men leave and 19 men return.

Of these, none has a war memorial as we know them elsewhere. But Wysall does have a war memorial of sorts. It takes the form of a clock in the tower of the village's Holy Trinity Church. It gives thanks to God for the safe return of the men who served in, and returned from the Great War.

THE BATTLE HONOURS OF THE NORTHAMPTONSHIRE REGIMENT

NOTE THAT NAMES IN BOLD WERE EMBROIDERED ON THE REGIMENTAL COLOURS.

FIRST WORLD WAR: Mons, Retreat from Mons, Marne 1914, Aisne 1914, '18, Ypres 1914, '17, Langemarck 1914, '17, Gheluvelt, Nonne Boschen, Givenchy 1914, Neuve Chapelle, Aubers, Loos, Somme 1916, '18, Albert 1916, '18, Bazentin, Delville Wood, Pozieres, Flers-Coucelette, Morval, Thiepval, Le Transloy, Ancre Heights, Ancre 1916, '18, Bapaume 1917, '18, Arras 1917, '18, Vimy 1917, Scarpe 1917, '18, Arleux, Messines 1917, Pilckem, Passchendaele, Cambrai 1917, '18, St Quentin, Rosieres, Avre, Villers Bretonneux, Amiens, Drocourt-Queant, Hindenburg Line, Epehy, St Quentin Canal, Selle, Sambre, France and Flanders 1914-'18, Suvla, Landing at Suvla, Scimitar Hill, Gallipoli 1915, Egypt 1915-'17, Gaza, El Mughar, Nebi Samwil, Jerusalem, Jaffa, Tell' Asur, Megiddo, Sharon, Palestine 1917-'18

SECOND WORLD WAR: Defence of Escaut Defence of Arras Ypres-Comines Canal, North-West Europe 1940, '45, Djediada, Djebel Djaffa, Oued Zarga, Djebel Tanngoucha, Sidi Ahmed, North Africa 1942-'43, Landing in Sicily, Adrano, Sicily 1943, Sangro, Garigliano Crossing, Anzio, Cassino II, Monte Gabbione, Trasimene Line, Monte La Pieve, Argenta Gap, Italy 1943-'45, Madagascar, Yu, Imphal, Tamu Road, Bishenpur, Monywa 1945, Myinmu Bridgehead, Irrawaddy, Burma 1943-'45

PART THREE

WAR MEMORIAL

The War Memorial in Great Houghton was inaugurated in 1920, having been constructed by local builder Henry Green. The monument cost the grand sum of £150, which given that in those days that meant 150 gold sovereigns was a tidy sum. It has been estimated that to build it anew today would cost in the region of £500,000.

The inauguration on 3 October 1920 was carried out by General Lord Horne GCB KCMB, who was a most appropriate choice. Before being ennobled in 1919 by King George V in thanks for his wartime work, Horne had been plain Henry Horne, commander of the British First Army, which included several East Midlands battalions. Unusually for a British general, Horne had been an artillery officer before moving up to high command. The British army traditionally viewed artillery officers as being technical experts and looked to the infantry or cavalry to provide leaders of men. Horne must have been an impressive man to follow this odd route to high command.



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The war memorial takes the form of a three step, octagonal base on which stands a square base with chamfered corners, supporting a square column and collar topped by a decorative wheel cross with trefoil arms. In itself, this is not an unusual form for a village war memorial, though the wheel cross is large in proportion to the column. The memorial is surrounded by gravel constrained within a trimmed hedge with a small grassy area beyond. The names of the fallen are engraved on to the side panels of the base.

THE FRONT PANEL BEARS THE WORDS

OF GREAT HOUGHTON WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES FOR THEIR COUNTRY IN THE GREAT WAR 1914-1918 99

The words "World War 1939-1945" were added later.



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AROUND THE BOTTOM OF THE BASE RUNS THE SENTENCE:

66 GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN THAN THIS. THAT A MAN I AYS DOWN HIS LIFE FOR HIS FRIENDS 99

A quote from the Gospel of St John 15:13 that is frequently used on war memorials.

The memorial stands on the east side of the High Street, just opposite the village church dedicated to St Mary the Blessed Virgin. A flight of stone steps leads from the memorial down to the High Street. Rather unusually there is no matching flight of steps going up to the churchyard. Instead, those seeking to access the memorial from the church have to turn left up the High Street before turning right into the churchyard.

This war memorial is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest. The memorial is the responsibility of the people of Great Houghton under the care of the Northampton Borough Council. Great Houghton War Memorial, which stands on High Street facing the village church, is listed at Grade II for the following principal reasons. In March 2018 the council approved the memorial and a large area of great Houghton to be under a 'conservative protection scheme'.

THE NAMES RECORDED ON THE GREAT **HOUGHTON WAR MEMORIAL ARE:**

Cave, GT - 1917

Morris, G W - 1916 Chapman, C - 1917 Paget, G G B - 1914

Chapman, G F - 1917

Roberts, C.h. - 1943

Chapman, WAC-1918

Seaton, E - 1918

Ingram, A G - 1914

Smith. T H - 1915

Kilsby, F G - 1917

Walker, H J - 1918

Knibbs, F G - 1918

Watt, J.k.m. - 1941

Major, L H - 1918

Whitbread, WG - 1919

Although all command our honour and respect, three are especially notable.

Lt George Godfrey Brandreth Paget, of the Paget Family of Great Houghton House, served in the Northamptonshire Regiment. Like many young men of the gentry class, he had joined the militia and so when war came was called up to go to France. Notice of his death was published in The Times on 23 October 1914 as follows:

"Lieutenant George Godfrey Brandreth Paget was the only child of Mr. and Mrs. C.E. Paget, of Great Houghton House, near Northampton, his grandfathers being the late Sir George E. Paget, of Cambridge, and Canon Brandreth, of Standish. Lancashire. He was educated at Charterhouse, and at the time of his death was 23 years of age. He received his commission in the Northamptonshire Militia in 1908, being promoted to Lieutenant in 1910. He fought with the 1st Battalion Northamptonshire Regiment, and was gazetted a Second Lieutenant therein from August 14 last. He was killed in action at the Battle of the Aisne on September 14."

The Battle of the Aisne in which Lt Paget was killed was an attempt by the British army to get around the right flank of the German army and deliver a knock out blow from the north. The move began at dusk on 13 September. While French units made diversionary attacks on the German front, the British moved off to the west. Thick fog aided the British move, enabling them to cross the River Aisne without being seen. Unfortunately the fog also confused the British scouts so dawn found the lead British units - including the Northamptonshires exposed on a plateau that could be







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raked by German artillery fire. The British began to dig - the first time that they had dug trenches in the Great War. There were not enough spades and pickaxes to go round, so platoons were sent off to ransack farms and houses. It was at this point that Lt Paget was killed.

The British flanking march having failed, the two lines became static and the trenches became permanent. On the 18 September, the Germans tried to outflank the British with a march to the north, but that too failed. Flanking move followed flanking move all the way to the North Sea - and so the trench lines were established.

Lt Paget is buried at La Ferte-sous-Jouarre, a few miles south of the spot where he was killed

Also named on the memorial is Gunner Frederick George Knibbs of the Royal Field Artillery. Born in Great Houghton, the son of Jesse and Eliza Knibbs, he had moved to Birmingham and married a young lady named Florence before he was called up. The Field Artillery were the medium guns and howitzers that were placed close to the front line to support infantry operations at a tactical level. Knibbs was not killed in battle, but instead caught bronchial pneumonia and died in hospital on 30th October 1918 aged 27.

Private A.G. Ingram was a regular soldier in the Grenadier Guards. Along with the rest of his regiment he was shipped out to France in the autumn of 1914. He arrived too late to take part in the early fighting, but was present for the vicious 1st Battle of Ypres. The Germans launched a surprise attack on 21 October aimed at capturing the key transportation centre of Ypres. They made significant advances before being stopped on 1 November at Gheluvelt. Private Ingram was killed during this battle on 29 October.

Private Samuel Ogley was called up and despite his Northamptonshire roots was put into the 2nd Battalion of the Yorkshire and Lancashire regiment. He was one of the last British soldiers to die in the First World War. He was wounded some weeks before the armistice, but did not die of his wounds until 27th December 1918, aged 29.

Bibliography

https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/1314

https://www.northampton.gov.uk/info/200207/building-conservation-and-trees/1629/great-houghton-conservation-area/1

https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/1314



ABOUT THE EAST MIDLANDS WAR MEMORIALS ASSOCIATION

The Association was founded to mark the centenary of the end of the First World War.

There are thousands of reminders to the fallen of the First World War and later conflicts all over the East Midlands. We believe that these war memorials should be cared for and respected.

- We will fundraise for repair or improvement works to war memorials.
- · We will look to tell the story of those brave individuals named on our memorials.
- We will work to ensure that all worthy war memorials in the East Midlands are listed by Historic England.
- We will create an educational program for schools in the East Midlands where we will be offering lesson plans to schools on the importance of Remembrance Day.

To keep up-to-date with our work, please visit our website at www.eastmidlandswarmemorials.com

where you can learn how to: sign up for our email newsletter, nominate a war memorial for listing, join our fundraising activities, join us when we visit war memorials.



WHO WE ARE

The East Midlands War Memorials Association is a not-for-profit company limited by share guarantee.

PRESIDENT: Her Grace Frances Duchess of Rutland

CHAIRMAN: Rupert Matthews MEP

VICE CHAIRMAN: Squadron Leader Andrew Smith

HON. TREASURER: William Scott
HON. SECRETARY: Simon Whelband





The European Conservatives and Reformists

Rupert Matthews MEP is a member of the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) Group within the European Parliament.

About the ECR

The ECR Group is a political group within the European Parliament that includes the British Conservatives and likeminded political allies from several other countries. We are the only group in the European Parliament that believes the EU should decentralise power back to national capitals, town halls or to families and individuals.

We were created in 2009 to bring about major reform of the EU based on Eurorealism, a decentralisation of powers, more openness and a focus on supporting Europe's economic growth.

We promote principles like open markets, lower tax, the transatlantic alliance and the family.

As the third largest group in the European Parliament we put forward an alternative agenda for the EU to bring together all MEPs who believe the EU cannot go on as it is and needs to change.

EU Reform

The ECR becoming the 3rd largest group in the European Parliament and the success of our member parties in elections across Europe show that our calls for reform are resonating with the growing skepticism of European voters across the continent

The current policies and structures of the European Union, largely designed to meet the needs of the 1950s, make it unfit to meet the challenges of the 2050s. This must change.

Europe needs a fresh approach. It needs new policies to modernise the economy so its industries and business can be competitive in the global marketplace. It needs reform so it is able to generate jobs and prosperity in the century ahead.

Contact the ECR

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