

David Childs

Doctor of Letters

Durham Cathedral, 28 June 2018

Mr Chancellor, today's ceremony reminds us both that graduation means 'stepping-up' before 'stepping-out' for challenging responsibilities and that our honorary graduates bring into Durham's community achievements already marking the world, as with Commander David Childs.

Born in Malta in 1947 to a naval family, David entered Dartmouth, Royal Naval College, aged eighteen. His naval commitments included a social science degree at Leicester University, and service in the Gulf, the Far East, and circumnavigating the

reflections on the 1914-18 War, for it describes the strange birth of The National Memorial Arboretum.

When liaising with the USA Navy in 1992, David was in Washington D.C. After having visited both Arlington Military Cemetery and the National Arboretum on the same day, he slept, and awoke with the idea of combining the essence of these places but in a UK location. Then, co-incidentally, when flying home, a copy of *The Daily Telegraph* noted a plan for a National Forest in the Midlands, prompting David to propose to the sponsoring authorities that they include a National Memorial Arboretum: they were enthusiastic, as long as he found the land.

Lacking money and tree-planting experience he scoured the Midlands until offered 150 acres of old gravel-works at Alrewas, Lichfield, by Redland Aggregates. Though

John Ambulance Brigade. We might also find an affinity with the spot named as David Childs' Trees.

Annually, a member of the royal family, senior politicians and service chiefs meet bereaved families, making the Arboretum the nation's year-round place of continuing tribute. While obviously a place of memory David Childs is also adamant in wanting it to be a place of education, learning, and forward looking hope, something enhanced by its impressive Learning Centre informing thousands of

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