Welcome to the latest Victoria and Albert Museum’s Culture in Crisis audio recording, in the series ‘Preservation by Design’. My name is Vernon Rapley, I’m the director of Cultural Heritage Protection and Security at the Victoria and Albert Museum and I’m honoured today to be joined by Lieutenant Colonel Tim Purbrick who’s responsible for Cultural Heritage Protection for the British Army headquarters. Welcome Tim.

Thanks very much Vernon, good to be here.

So, Tim, there’s a reason that we’ve asked you along at the moment, to discuss your role. I understand you’re forming the new Monument’s Men, is that correct?

That is largely. We’re re-establishing a skill inside defence which we last had in the Second World War as a result of the ratification by Parliament of The Hague Convention 1954 and its’ two protocols.

The Hague Convention was written, not surprisingly in 1954 which was just 9 years after the end of the Second World War and it recognised the contribution of the so-called Monument’s Men who were actually the ‘Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives’ sections in the Allied Armies, whose job it was to be on the battlefield and support our forces in combat to ensure that we didn’t damage, destroy and loot cultural heritage. And also, that, neither did the enemy. And that extended also to our Air Force and our Navy as well. And now that parliament has ratified The Hague Convention, the Secretary of State for Defence very early on in the process said that we would establish this unit back in the armed forces.

So, I won’t go over why it took so long for the UK to ratify The Hague Convention, but I presume that this didn’t come as a shock to you. Have you been able to prepare in advance of the ratification for this process?

That’s a very good question. For me, the process started at the back end of 2013 and I was sitting in Army Headquarters and at the time working in a very esoteric unit called the Concepts Branch. And our job was to look 20 years in to the future, determine what kind of environment the future looked like and how we were going to change the army of today to meet the challenges of the environment tomorrow. And I was looking at media, information warfare and cyber warfare. So quite a long way from cultural property protection. But I was reading a publication called The British Army Review in which I had written an article all about green energy. So, I, in a self-congratulatory way, I was reading this magazine and I thought I owed it a duty to the magazine to flick through the rest of it and see what else was written in there, when I came across a far more interesting article by professor Peter Stone from Newcastle University all about how the military should be doing more for cultural property protection during armed conflict.

And for me, it was a complete coup de foudre moment, apologies for my French pronunciation, but clap of thunder moment, because I, when I’d left the regular army in which I’d done 10 years, I went to work in the civilian world for the, in part
for the Art Loss register, and so I’d spent 12 years hovering around the recovery of stolen art and antiquities. I’d had a long-standing interest in the work of The Monument’s Men during the Second World War and I now work for our family business which is art dealing in St James’s in central London. So, for those reasons this article really struck a chord with me. And I went to my boss at Army Headquarters and I said I think this is an area that we could possibly write a paper on; because we’re responsible for looking at new capabilities and writing assessments of them and how we might deal with issues. He authorised me to write the paper and in the way of these things in Army Headquarters it took 18 months for it to float up to 3 Star level, so that’s the top of Army headquarters, that’s general level. And in parallel we started a Military Cultural Property Protection Working Group which initially was 6 of us round a table at the defence College at Shrivenham. The went through a phase when you very kindly hosted us here in the boardroom of the V&A until that got too small and we’re now got around 30 people sitting around the table 3 times a year in The National Army Museum in Chelsea looking at, at this issue.

VERNON Excellent. So, you sort of were in the right place at the right time, I suppose. The best person in the right place at the right time.

TIM Well I, I don’t know about the right person but it’s this whole story about Cultural Property Protection in the Armed Forces this time around has been a story of stars aligning in the most unlikely ways. Because when that paper reached the top of the army after 18 months of circulating around Army headquarters and externally because we socialised it with real experts who exist outside the Armed Forces, that exactly coincided with when the then Secretary Of State for Department of Culture, Media and Sport announced in Parliament that the government would put The Hague Convention and it’s ratification before parliament in the form of the Cultural Property, brackets, ‘Armed Conflict Act’ or ‘Bill’ as it was then - then subsequently became an Act. So, in a curious sort of perfect timing moment, we had timed the arrival of our paper on a General’s desk with the government saying ‘we’ve got to do this’.

And the interesting thing about The Hague Convention is that it adds to our responsibilities that are already set for us by a number of other pieces of legislation, that already exist, which oblige us to protect cultural property during time of armed conflict. What The Hague Convention adds to that is Article 7 of The Convention which gives two obligations on the Armed Forces. One of which is, are you doing enough education and training for your armed forces in Cultural Property Protection? And that is an area that our educators and our legal staff are currently looking at to make sure that we do have the necessary and required level of Cultural Property Protection training that we give to our soldiers, sailors and airmen. The second obligation is to form a unit of Military Cultural Property Protection Specialists, which The Secretary of State for Defence at the time announced in Parliament - very early on in fact - even before the Bill was in parliament, that as part of the ratification process we would establish the unit inside the Armed Forces.

And the third leg is an implied task in The Hague Convention which is in order to protect this Cultural Property you’ve got to know where it is. You’ve got to have it on your map, in your digital mapping systems available to your soldiers, sailors and
aimen so that we can both plan and deliver Cultural Property Protection during armed conflict.

VERNON

Excellent. So, obviously you’ve been developing or designing this, this team and a lot of people listening to this will have no doubt seen the Monument’s men film. What would your model look like in comparison to the film’s representation of the Monument and Fine Arts Men?

TIM

Well, the Monument’s Men movie I thought was great. I really enjoyed it. In fact, every time I’m having a shave in the morning I see George Clooney in the mirror looking back at me. Although my wife might disagree I think. I think that it will be reasonably similar, but not the same size. And there was an excellent report written at the end of the Second World War by Lieutenant Colonel Sir Leonard Wooley who’s an archaeologist whose gallery you can see actually in the British Museum from his excavations in Iraq. And he and Sir Mortimer Wheeler, another Lieutenant Colonel in the Army, developed in two theatres of war the idea of the military having a better understanding of what Cultural Property Protection was all about. And Sir Mortimer Wheeler was in North Africa and Sir Leonard Wooley was back here in England looking at how we might plan for the invasion of Northern Europe and what we could be doing, both now and during the attacks, across Northern Europe to preserve cultural heritage.

And his very comprehensive report provides lessons for us today. Clearly there are aspects that have moved on significantly and so we’ve been spending a lot of time talking to people not only inside defence but also outside defence who have many years of experience in both Cultural Property and its protection, in order that we can gather best practice. Indeed, I was very grateful to The Secretary of State for defence who announced late in 2016 in Parliament that we were collecting best practice from our international allies about Cultural Property protection. And sitting in Army Headquarters on my one day a week as a reservists in Army headquarters my fingers metaphorically stopped on the keyboard and I thought, well, I’ve made a few phone calls and I’ve sent a few emails but if The Secretary of State gets asked again in Parliament what we are doing to gather this International best practice, it’s not going to look great if the responsible officer has just sent a few emails and made a few calls.

So, 2017 became the year of jet-setting around principally Europe, but also to our allies in America, to understand form those of our Armed Forces amongst our allies who do Cultural Property Protection, what it is they do and how they do it with, in what way. And that’s been fascinating because went first to Austria to meet with their Cultural Property Protection Liaison Officers whose work is primarily inside Austria. And then to the Dutch who do, have a similar role. Talked to the French who have a very legal approach to looking at it with their military legal officers. Over to America where they have a nascent unit in US Special Operations Command at Fort Bragg. And they do a lot of training with Dr Laurie Rush up at Fort Drum in upstate New York and General Walter Piat’s 10th Mountain Division who are shortly to deploy to Northern Iraq. And, and we talked to all of them to understand what it is that they do - that we could do.

VERNON

So, if you had to describe the sort of pure objectives of this unit, and again harking back to the film, there were two roles for them fundamentally; one, one appeared to
be protecting property going forward and they seemed to have the historic problems of trying to argue that men’s lives should be risked in the protection of cultural heritage to protect churches or monuments or art when military decisions were difficult to make in that way. And then the second objective seemed to be the recovery of some of the objects that have been stolen in the Second World War by the Nazis or effectively nowadays removed by whoever and traded. But where would you put that balance in the new unit you’re forming? What is its objectives and priorities?

TIM

Well in terms of roles, they have been derived from 3 sources. Firstly, from The Hague Convention itself which is very tactical in its approach to the delivery of Cultural Property Protection in that the units’ roles in Article 7 of the Convention are that we must ensure respect for cultural property and we must liaise with those in the countries in which we’re operating who are responsible in those countries for that cultural heritage that we’re operating in and amongst. So, very tactical roles. The, other roles have been derived from The Secretary of State’s announcement in Parliament which included things like the reporting of any issue concerning the protection of cultural heritage form any area of military operations and included liaison and training. And then a third number of roles have been derived from that best practice which we’ve sought from our allies.

So, what? That means that we’re going to be with this unit doing things like education and training with our own troops including the provision of services during exercises both what we call a Command Post Exercise; basically, in a big tent or a big shed with no troops but people exercising the headquarters. And on physical exercises where there are people running around on the ground as well. Liaison with our allies. And then on full spectrum military operations which would go from everything from resilience and disaster relief at home and abroad through to the conduct of all our combat operations. And so, we’ve derived quite a few roles. So, we’ve expanded considerably on the basic roles given to us by The Hague Convention thanks to both the Secretary of State for defence and to the experience of discussing these things with our allies.

And one ally who I left out were the Italians who have in their Carabinieri a unit of 360 military police officers whose sole job is to protect Italy’s cultural heritage from the so called ‘Tombaroli’, the Tomb Raiders who target Italian archaeological sites. And we’re forming a very close relationship with Brigadier General Fabrizio Peruli and his Tutela Patrimonio Culturale which is the name for their unit for the Protection of Cultural heritage, based in Rome. And while I’m not sure we’re going to be like the shape that they are, in terms of 360 military police officers, they have also what we call ‘force projected’; they have sent their police officers, their military police officers on military operations that Italian forces have been on, both in Kosovo and Iraq, where they continue to conduct training for Iraqi police forces.

VERNON

So, there is another question. I work closely with the TPC and before that the TPA, as it was called then, in operations - and they’re limited. And, what I’m supposing is that you’ll be limited in the same way and that you’re limited to theatres of war that the country is engaged in. And, can you, or will there be another role for this unit? Would it ever take on a role of going in and protecting cultural heritage without their being an ongoing military operation in a country?
TIM Well I think that would be probably unlikely. I don’t think we’re going to be sending a small number of our reservists to defend cultural property in places where we are not already deployed in significant numbers on the ground, in order to protect that individual from conducting that kind of operation. So, I’m not sure that that’s likely. But there are other ways I think that with connecting with allies, with the formation of international connections and working in a more holistic way cross-government; and there’s a new cross-government Cultural Protection Working Group that’s been set up which we’re participating in - we, as the Ministry of Defence. And working with the police and border force and other government departments, to ensure that we stitch together a holistic approach to things like illicit cultural property trafficking and how we might cooperate in times of armed conflict, or where UK Armed Forces are deployed, to make sure that we have a proper response within our obligations to international law.

VERNON So, do you think, would the unit only ever operate under British Command or is there an opportunity for it to operate under the command of an ally, a NATO ally? For example, would your unit be able to support the efforts of the Carabinieri if they were working in an area or is it something where you would, would strictly be falling under British Army Command?

TIM Well you make a very good point about NATO, and we’re working very closely with NATO on this. They have a strong interest in developing Cultural Property Protection across NATO and for all the member nations. And that’s important in several ways. Because when we operate with NATO we use, for example, NATO’s information. So, it’s in our interest when it comes to geospatial information and intelligence about cultural property that NATO has what we have. And through NATO we have many allies who we can reach out to bring in to NATO Cultural Property location data. So, we start to get a clearer geographical and global understanding of where cultural property is that we are obliged to protect. So, we’re working very closely with NATO and I’ve already outlined how we’re working closely with our Italian Allies and Austrians and Dutch and American. And we are always sending people on other people’s operations as liaison officers or as formed units so it’s entirely possible at the discretion of our government, as to where we send our forces to be deployed.

VERNON Many years ago, I formed a unit of volunteers myself in the police, to look after or trying to assist in policing the London art market and preventing the illicit trafficking of cultural goods. And they were ‘reserves’ or ‘special constables’, as they were at the time, and we looked for particular skills and attributes in these people before, before taking them on. One of them was actually that they weren’t connected to the art trade, so you would have been eliminated from that! But, what skills are you looking for; what is the Monuments Men or women, I presume, of the future. What are they going to look like? What are they going to... where are they going to come from?

TIM In terms of the skill sets that we’ll be looking for, when you look back at The Monument’s Fine Arts and Archives Sections in the Second World War, well there are three areas that we’re looking at straight away. I’m not sure how many experts there are particularly in monuments, but there are certainly experts in Fine Arts, Archives, Manuscripts and, and libraries. And in addition to that there’s archaeology, architecture, structural engineering, art conservation, art logistics, art
And if they’ve got a language as well, so much the better because whatever language you have, it shows you’ve got an aptitude for languages and we may need to have more languages in order to engage with those who are responsible for cultural property in areas where we need to engage with them.

VERNON

And will these people be existing Army Reservists, or will you be recruiting them specifically for this role?

TIM

I think that we’ll probably find a mix. Over the last 3 to 4 years people have sought me out and I’ve ended up with an in-tray which has got more CV’s in it than there are places that are going to be in this unit. And we are going to be looking for specialist reserve officers to fill the roles. And what are they? Those are people who have an expertise in an area and we’re going to employ them in a specific role inside the Armed Forces. So, we’re not going to suddenly turn round to one of our cultural property protection officers and say you’ve got to go and lead the mortar platoon, that infantry patrol or jump in that tank and go and fight that battle. They are hired because they have deeper expertise; probably 5 to 10 years’ experience in their chosen profession. Academically, practically or however we can judge that. And we’ll be working with professional organisations in order to make assessments and validate people’s qualifications.

And then they’ve got to be sufficiently robust in order to be able to deploy in to combat situations. So, there’s a trade-off then between an emeritus professor of archaeology who might be 70 years old and a 22-year-old graduate in fine art or history of art from a university. So, we’ll probably find a mix between some in the reserves. And I’ve just been ordered to form an implementation team to deliver the Cultural Property Protection Unit on behalf of the Army and defence and so we’ll be looking at those CV’s in my in-tray to see what capabilities and skills, and whether they match up to the ones that we require for this unit. And then, once we’ve acquired the right people, they’re going to be experts in monuments, fine arts, through to art crime investigation - but possibly not experts in cultural property protection. And certainly not experts, perhaps, in delivering that capability inside a military environment during the conduct of operations, where you have to be a forceful diplomat to get your voice heard around what they call the ‘bird table’, when you’re briefing your aspect to a commander in charge of 10,000 troops out on the ground and you have to ensure that the commander is meeting his obligations under International Humanitarian Law towards cultural property.

So, we’re going to have to train people on what we’d call a special to arm course to deliver this capability.

VERNON

How many, I mean very quick question, how many people do you think you will have? How many? The Carabinieri have 360.

TIM

Well, yeah, it won’t be 360. Ministers have announced it’ll be between 10 and 20 specialist reserve officers. So, we’ll have between 10 and 20.

VERNON

And so that reminds me very much again of the unit I formed where we had about 20 experts and they were working just in London and therefore very taskable and deployable for particular things. But we never had the right expert in the right place at the right time. And to what extent then do you think there will be...well either they have to become very general in their understanding or will you have a network
of other experts that they can connect back in to? And, in which case, how’s that designed, how will that function?

TIM

I think that’s a really good question because yes, no doubt about it at all, if we were operating in a particular country and you had your Fine Art specialist and he was standing in front of an ancient archaeological site - or she was - and they weren’t an expert in that area, but is clearly the expert on behalf of the Armed Forces at that particular point, we need to have an ability to reach back to expertise. And we can do that in a couple of ways. One of them is by having a small number, possibly 4, what we call ‘group B reservists’. So, those would be people who are very deep experts; might well be your Emeritus Professor of Archaeology, totally non-deployable on the battlefield, probably due to age rather than anything else, but a very deep expert in their area. And very well connected in the heritage world so that they could be points of contact through which we could go. And the other way is through you, Vernon, and others others like you in the Museums here in the United Kingdom, or indeed The Smithsonian or other museums in the United States, or wherever we can access that expert through nodes.

So that that Fine Art specialist standing in front of that archaeological site can pick up their satellite phone and within 2 minutes be speaking to a world renown expert, possibly who has even worked on that site, and knows the people who are standing in front of you on that site and says well why didn’t you speak to that person who’s in that crowd over there because they’re the person you really need to liaise with. So, it’s going to be very important to have that. It’s not always going to be possible to access it for security or whatever reasons. And so, there will be times when you will have to make decisions on the hoof but if we have designed our special to arm course correctly, and exercised the individuals and made them familiar with the area that they’re going in to through our process of training before deploying in to an area, then they will have to make those decisions on their own, given the security circumstances.

VERNON

And a thing that’s really important, because I think there are a lot of people in museums and cultural sector who would want to be involved in this, but there are very few people who will want to go off to basic training, join a reserve unit, commit their time, go to the front line. But I think that’s a really important way within the sort of design of your unit that would allow this very deep level of expertise to be engaged. But again, it takes me back to my policing days where there is this problem of sanitisation. You can’t vet everybody. I remember using one expert who had 25 years’ experience of Neo-Syrian horse harnesses and if that’s the person you need to give the information at the front, it’s very unlikely they’re going to be one of your troops. It’s unlikely they’re going to be one of your 4 professors but they’re going to be one of the many connections of a museum somewhere. And we used to have to use what we call sterile corridors to ensure that that unvetted person wasn’t given information about where your front line was, what was going on. How would you deal with that within a military context?

TIM

I think in probably much the similar way that you dealt with it. And you have to deal with it on a case by case basis as you work through it. I don’t think they’re going to be any hard and fast rules there, it will entirely depend on the security circumstances that exists at the time and whether it is possible to reach back during that military
operation and make those connections. Clearly in something like a disaster relief operation, no problem. A stabilisation operation, no problem. In an all-out conflict it, it may be an issue or it may not be an issue. And so I think we’ll just have to tackle that as and when the circumstances arise.

VERNON

I want to take you to maybe a couple of scenarios just to ask. The first is, is it ever right to ask soldiers, reservists, to give their lives or to risk their lives to protect cultural heritage and is that realistic? They’re going to be frontline soldiers, there is a risk that they’ll lose their lives doing this job that they’ve signed up for. Is it right to do that?

TIM

I think that it’s an obligation under International Humanitarian Law that we do form this role and therefore it becomes a task that we have. Many of the things that we do as soldiers, sailors and airman are dangerous and we put ourselves in harm’s way. This will become another task that we are asked to fulfil. And under what circumstances might people be risking their lives to protect cultural property? I think we have to feel our way in to what those might be. We may be responsible for example for guarding a museum because it has very high value in heritage and cultural terms, high value cultural property within it and so we would be required to prevent damage, destruction and looting to that structure and it, and its contents.

So, people may find themselves in future wearing a blue shield on their arm to designate the fact that they’re involved in the protection of cultural heritage.

VERNON

Tim, you just mentioned the blue shield. Can you tell me a little bit more about that?

TIM

The, The Hague Convention permits those in the Armed Forces involved in cultural property protection to wear the UNESCO blue shield which is outlined in The Hague Convention. And so, we secured permission, we the MOD, the ministry of Defence secured permission from The Department of Culture, Media and Sport to wear the blue shield. And then I went to the College of Arms - and if you have ever been to The College of Arms it is the most wonderful institution, but it’s slightly like where Alice in Wonderland bumps in to The Da Vinci Code. And they said absolutely you cannot wear a shield in the Armed Forces. And, and I said well why not? and they said when you’re on the battlefield and you’re galloping across the battlefield and you’ve got your shield with this blue shield on it, when you bump in to another Knight on the battlefield, who’s also got the same shield, what on earth are you going to do? I said well, I’d be absolutely delighted because they’d clearly be involved in cultural property protection as well so that would be wonderful.

And anyway, the College of Arms wrote an absolutely charming letter. Their Garter Principle King of Arms said of course you must wear the blue shield, that’s a terribly important thing. And it’s a supre-national requirement. In other words, it’s come from international law. So, very grateful to the Guard of Principle the King of Arms and the College of Arms for that permission. Last hurdle, the Army Dress Committee. And went to discuss it with the secretary of the Army Dress Committee and he agreed that it was a good thing that it should be done. Because the purpose is so that when officers in the Cultural Property Protection Unit are working in headquarters or out on the battlefield it’s immediately clear to others on the
battlefield what that individual is responsible for. Because we recognise what the blue shield is.

And so, it was important from my perspective that recognition should be there rather than just being another person on the battlefield. And so, the Army Dress Committee very kindly put it to the secretary, who put it to the committee. And it went in with a recommendation that it be passed but came back actually, ‘no you can’t wear it because the legislation says it must be an armlet that you wear’. An armlet being a sort of thing that you pull on your arm rather than having a sort of Velcro badge on your uniform. So, having got that slight gentle knock back we went to consult with British Red Cross and with UNESCO. And the word that came back from them was ‘as long as it’s visible, we don’t really mind how you wear it’. And so, what we’ve agreed - and it’s now currently with the Army Dress Committee again, so I’m hoping that it goes through this time - is that we will wear the blue shield on our uniforms, combat uniforms, and we will wear it on the smarter dress that you sometimes see military officers wearing; a sort of ginger suit called Number Two dress and we’ll wear that in a slightly different format, in a more NATO format, which is a leather button fob with an enamel blue shield on it. So, I’m hoping that that will all pass through. But by the time you’re listening to this dear listeners at home, it will have happened or not.

VERNON Excellent.

TIM There we go.

VERNON One last question. You’ve spent some time building this, designing it, thinking about it, it’s now hopefully at the implementation stage; you’re not far off recruitment. Where, where do you see this unit in 20 years’ time?

TIM Goodness me. I, I’d like to see it next year before 20 years.

VERNON Well no, no I don’t mean........................ I was rather hoping it would be very much formed but how will it have evolved? How do you think it might have changed? I mean we haven’t had one since the Second World War until now. Presumably this is a long-term commitment to having one. Do you think it will develop further, do you think it will come under pressure from other priorities? What will it need to survive and to maybe develop further?

TIM I think having established a unit we can always disestablish a unit. But having said and announced in parliament that this unit is being established in defence I think there is a strong commitment across government in defence to ensure the longevity of this unit because it fulfils our obligations under International Humanitarian Law.

So, where’s it going to be in 20 years’ time? Where is it even going to be next year, or in 5 years’ time? And I think where it should be is part of what you might call ‘normal jogging’. Its part of our everyday way we conduct ourselves on the battlefield and during any form of military operation is that we ensure we properly discharge our obligations under International Humanitarian Law for the protection of cultural heritage.

VERNON The TPC in Italy has been in existence since 1969. It’s gone form 50 people to 180 to 200 to 360. What does that say about the way maybe the Italians view cultural heritage protection as a nation, compared to the UK or America or others?
I think that’s a very leading question Vernon, probably not one for a very junior reserve officer to answer at a governmental level. I think what we have done is we formed a working group that was looking at international, illicit antiquities trafficking in not too dissimilar way than the District Attorney for New York has formed with Colonel Matthew Bogdonos who’s also an Assistant District Attorney in New York. And there’s a possibility that - and defence is very much in support of policing in this aspect - that we might re-establish or continue the work of that and make international linkages in support of international policing. So, we’re already working inside defence with Interpol looking at the ways in which we can report looting and seizure of illicitly trafficked cultural property. So, it’s beyond antiquities because it applies to all cultural property.

So, we’re working very closely with colleagues in the police to deliver that, both in the Metropolitan Police Art and Antique Unit, which you used to command, and also in SO15 who, who have specialist units that look at things like terrorist fundraising and even war crimes. And cultural property destruction is now a war crime as well. And there’s been one individual convicted at the International Criminal Court for War crimes. Our Cultural Property Protection Unit has been given a remit by The Secretary of State for defence for reporting from any theatre of operations any issues concerning the theft and looting, damage and destruction and so forth of cultural property. That may, if it reaches the right evidential standards, form evidence which may or could be used via the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to support International Criminal Court Investigations and possibly indictments against those who are responsible for cultural property war crimes.

And if directed so to do, we in defence will support that.

And I think my point about the TPC in Italy was more actually that they’re loved, they’re cherished as a unit because they do, and they’re seen to do, a lot of good work both in Italy protecting their national cultural heritage, internationally in war, through the police network, through Interpol, through the Military. And I, and I guess I’m wondering whether you have a hope that your unit will be loved and cherished in the same way. That you will raise the understanding not only of the military as required by The Hague Convention but of the British Public to the need to love, cherish our own and other’s cultural heritage. Do you think you have a role in that, in that public awareness and therefore support?

I think, I think that’s an interesting aspect. I think that the existence of museums like The Victoria and Albert, and other great museums here in London and in most of our cities around this country, are demonstrations of the fact that we do cherish our cultural heritage in the United Kingdom. And quite properly when we go and operate our military forces in other people’s countries we should cherish their cultural heritage as well. So, in terms of being loved, I think certainly raise awareness amongst our allies. And we do think of ourselves as a reference army. In other words, there are other countries, other nations who look at us as a reference point as to how to do things. And even this morning on my commute in, walking through London, I was talking to our Australian Defence Force about cultural property protection. So, our allies are already gearing up a significant interest in this and we continue to learn from our allies. It’s one of these areas where the more I listen and read, the less I feel I really know about this area.
So, we’ve got a lot of humble catching up to do but at the same time I think when the British Armed Forces do something like this, it does send a message to others. And we hope that they will listen and look. And if we can do it right which I’m perfectly confident we can, be with the right people, then it will end up or it will - as on that journey - cause others to look at it and possibly copy the example. We can hope.

VERNON

Well thank you, thank you very much.

TIM

Thanks Vernon. It’s been a pleasure to be here.

VERNON

I have to go on by just wishing you the very best of luck and success, and I’m sure that museums such as The Victoria and Albert and many others I know will want to assist in any way we can with this very valuable endeavour. So, George Clooney, sorry er, sorry Lieutenant Colonel Tim Purbrick, thank you very much for your time today and thank you for joining us at The Victoria and Albert Museum.

TIM

Vernon, that’s very kind of you, thank you very much too.