

Work to start on Wojtek Memorial today



A famous bear which is dear to many living in Edinburgh is to be celebrated with a memorial. The Wojtek Memorial Trust has told The Edinburgh Reporter that construction works will commence today for the installation of the Wojtek Memorial in Princes Street Gardens West.

Read more about the story of Wojtek [here](#).

Sir Robert McAlpine Ltd is generously donating the construction works to underpin the granite platform, which will be set by G Laing Stonecraft with granite that has been quarried, cut and inscribed by Piramida in Szczegom, Poland. The sculptor for the memorial is Alan Beattie Herriot and the casting is being undertaken at Powderhall Bronze in Edinburgh. Its setting has been designed by Raymond Muszynski of Morris & Steedman Associates.

The Wojtek Memorial Trustees explained: “We wish to thank all those who have made it possible for the ambition to become a reality since our launch in May 2013 and the granting of planning consent by the City of Edinburgh Council in September 2013. The appeal for funds has awakened support from across continents, countries, and communities from all walks of life and across the generations.

“The memorial will belong to everyone and will be officially bequeathed to the City of Edinburgh on 7th November. Millions of people are expected to visit the memorial and many will see it on a daily basis as they pass by in Princes Street Gardens. Its image will be photographed and posted around the world.

“The memorial is designed to honour the courage of all Polish soldiers and Wojtek the bear and to do so in recognition of their Scottish homeland in war and peace. There are few veterans remaining but their legacy has been reawakened in post communist times. Their fortitude and for the majority their silence on their experiences is now better understood.”

Andrew McAlpine for Sir Robert McAlpine Ltd said: “One can’t help but be moved by Wojtek the soldier bear’s extraordinary story. As a company we are fortunate to employ staff from a range of backgrounds, and our members from the Polish community have contributed significantly to our ongoing success. I’m delighted that we are able to assist the Trust in commemorating the life and times of Wojtek, and the Polish soldiers for whom he was such an inspiration.”

Raymond Muszynski for Morris and Steedman Associates said: “The contribution that the people of Poland made to the Second World War and the security of our own country has to some extent been forgotten. The placing of this memorial is what must be one of the most beautiful and important urban spaces in Britain, pays respect to their effort and sacrifice. It will provide interest and fascination for future generations, being one of the great wartime animal human stories of the 20th century”.