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STARS AND STRIPES

Thursday, November 11, 2004

Chaplain's mission is to restore desecrated British cemetery in Iraq

By [Seth Robson](#), Stars and Stripes

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CAMP HABBANIYAH, Iraq — It's unclear when the last Briton visited the cemetery that holds 289 fallen servicemembers and civilians at this former Iraqi air base west of Baghdad. But the state of the graves suggests it was long ago.

It also appears to anyone who visits Camp Habbaniyah — occupied by the U.S. Army since early last year — that Iraqis systematically desecrated the graves and defiled a nearby Anglican church.

Now, more than a year after the coalition took control of the base, a soldier from the 1st Battalion, 506th Infantry Regiment are looking to put things right.

Chaplain (Capt.)



Seth Robson / S&S

Chaplain (Capt.) Randy Robison found this baptismal font amongst the weeds surrounding an Anglican church that Iraqis converted to a mosque.



Seth Robson / S&S

A cemetery for British servicemembers — many who died fighting the Iraqis during World War II — lies in disrepair after having been long abandoned at Camp Habbaniyah, Iraq, a former British base. Old photographs show the large monument to the left of the picture with a cross on top of it and tall trees growing amongst the headstones.

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Chaplain (Capt.) Randy Robison, 38, of Grand Prairie, Texas, discovered the British graves and their church after arriving at Camp Habbaniyah last month. Robison did some research and quickly found a Web site set up by Britons who had lived at Habbaniyah.

The site says the cemetery holds the bodies of men who died fighting Iraqis who partnered with Germany during World War II. In May 1941, Camp Habbaniyah —



Seth Robson / S&S
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The circle on the wall of the church used to be a stained-glass window, which was filled in with bricks.



