# Fusilier Stephen Close Has Cap Badge Returned After Being Imprisoned for Gay Kiss



Fusilier Stephen Close, a 61-year-old former soldier who was court-martialled in the 1980s for kissing a fellow serviceman, has become one of the first gay veterans to have his ceremonial cap badge returned. Close was discharged with disgrace, imprisoned, and placed on the sex offenders register for gross indecency, after being reported for kissing another soldier while stationed in Berlin in 1983.

Earlier this week, Close was invited to the Royal Fusiliers' regimental headquarters at the Tower of London to receive his military cap and badge, 40 years after his discharge. The ceremony marked a significant moment for Close, who stated it provided him with a sense of closure. His brother, also a fusilier, expressed support during the court martial and attended the recent ceremony.

Homosexuality was decriminalized in 1967, but remained an offense in the British armed forces until 1994, with a ban on homosexuals serving lifted only in 2000. Close's civilian criminal record remained until he was granted a royal pardon in 2013, the same year as Alan Turing.

The return of Close's cap badge follows recommendations from an LGBTQ independent veterans review. Close mentioned the emotional toll of his experience, including anxiety and feeling abandoned by military mates. He noted that the acceptance of LGBTQ individuals in the military has improved over the years.