

Heartbeat

Monday, November 7

Issue 8



Lost soldiers remembered at students' pilgrimage

During half-term, a number of Year 8 students travelled to Ypres, Belgium, to pay their respects to the soldiers who lost their lives during WWII.

Among the staff present was Mr Hughes from the History department. Here is his account of the trip.

On the 21st October, 56 Year 8 students reported for duty at 7.30am, ready to embark on a pilgrimage to the Ypres Salient, scene of some of the most sustained trench warfare of the First World War.

The students and seven staff left the College for the long journey to Dover for an afternoon crossing.

Our ultimate destination was the Poppies Hotel, set in the beautifully restored medieval Belgian town of Ypres, alternatively known as 'Wipers' to the British Tommies on the Western Front.

Experience

With the objective of the visit to learn about and appreciate the experience of the soldiers of all nations, our first visit, early on Saturday morning, was to Diksmuide. Guided by the excellent Flemish expert, Noel, students saw the so called 'Trench of Death' - a restored section of the line on the River Yser where the Belgian defences were built up to head height, the 'polder land' being too waterlogged to excavate trenches in the usual way.

Langemark was the next stop, a suitably sombre Germanic military cemetery containing 44,000 enemy dead. It was very clear that our students would be as respectful of the German dead as of those of the British Empire. A canopy of oak trees shaded the graves here and some pupils collected acorns to plant as their own memorials in the gardens of Crosby.



In the bracing weather, lunch in Ypres was welcome as an opportunity to load up with rations of Belgian chocolate and waffles before heading to the Hooze Crater Museum and the Paschendaele Trench and Dugout Experience.

Both collections were packed with artefacts ranging from a huge selection of uniforms, weapons and medals to less obvious items like copies of the British Army newspaper the 'Wipers Times', trench art made from shell cases and a unique, intact, German field kitchen (to confirm the old maxim that an army

marches on its stomach).

The last visit of the day was to the impressive Tyne Cot British Military cemetery, the largest of its type in the world, each individual grave beautifully maintained by the CWGC and marked in Portland stone.

Our pupils were fascinated to find graves of teenagers, Liverpoolians, Jewish and Muslim soldiers, ANZACS, Canadians and so many men still unidentified. Few were left unmoved by the scale of a site containing around 12,000 British Empire dead.

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After a hot meal of Flemish stew that was a bit too Flemish for some, we gathered in reflective mood at the famous Menin Gate Ceremony of remembrance.

Held at 8pm every night since the 1920s, this is Belgium's tribute to the 55,000 dead of the British forces who have no known grave. To the skirl of the bagpipes a wreath was laid by Martha Furlong, Jack Williams and Mr Gardiner (pictured on p1) on behalf of Sacred Heart watched by hundreds of silent witnesses from all around the world. All were privileged to be at an event that will not be quickly forgotten.

Sunday began with a trip south to Hill 60, 60 metres above sea level being worthy of note in Belgium and of vital strategic advantage in a flat landscape. Here, and at Hill 62, British and Australian miners had tunnelled at great depth and distance to blow up the German defences leaving vast craters that remain to this day. One, filled with water, is referred to as the Pool of Peace and has, in 90 plus years, become a place of great beauty and tranquillity.

Surrounded by autumn colours and to a background of birdsong, a minute's silence was observed by the pupils after readings and prayers led by the staff.

Inspiration

With thoughts turning to home, the Y8 pupils were directed by Mr Thirlwall to the grave of Private Thomas Peaceful, inspiration to the Michael Murpergo story that was, for many of them, the main context for their visit to Flanders Fields.

At this Bedford House Cemetery, the pupils took the time to stand at the grave of a soldier not known to them, contemplating the sacrifice made by each one. Fifty seven British soldiers remembered, perhaps for the first time in decades.

With duties complete, the students re-embarked for blighty at 2.25pm on Sunday, mission accomplished.

On behalf of the students, a big thank you goes to Mrs Garner, Mr Gardiner, Mr Thirlwall, Mr Hughes, Miss Court, Miss Niescier and Mrs Fagan for giving up some of their half-term break to make this trip possible.



Tuck shop to make a difference



Students and staff within the College are being urged to 'treat yourself and make a difference'!

The College operates a Fair Trade tuck shop using products supplied by Traidcraft.

RE's Mrs Lavery explains: "Traidcraft fights poverty through trade, helping people in developing countries to transform their lives and campaigns in the UK and internationally to bring about trade justice.

"Established in 1979 as a Christian response to poverty, they are the UK's leading fair trade organisation and run development programs in some of the poorest countries in the world."

At Sacred Heart, Sixth Form volunteers help to run the shop and display active support for the school's citizenship program.

During the last 12 months, more than

£1,000 worth of goods have been sold with the practical financial benefits this brings allied to the ability to raise awareness of the lives of others in less fortunate areas of the world to the students.

Mrs Lavery added: "Products include confectionery made with Fair Trade dairy products, berries and fruit.

"The Sixth Form volunteers give up their time generously and students can treat themselves in the knowledge they are making a difference!" "Traidcraft offers a range of opportunities for families to get involved at home either by making a donation or by purchasing from the online shop. Products include festive favourites like Christmas tree decorations!" For more information contact www.traidcraft.co.uk

News in brief

We welcome guests from across Europe this week as part of the Come-nius initiative. Y12 Drama students visit Salford on Thursday and good luck to the Y7 Athletics students who are in action on Friday.