

Heartbeat

Monday, November 4

Issue 8



Respects paid to those who made ultimate sacrifice

On the 18th October, 52 members of the CEF (Crosby Expeditionary Force) reported for duty at 7.30am, *writes Head of History, Mrs Garner.*

They were ready, willing and able to begin a mission of pilgrimage to the Ypres Salient, scene of some of the most sustained trench warfare of the First World War.

The students, along with seven staff, left Sacred Heart on the long journey to Dover for an afternoon crossing. 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.

Another early start the next day brought us to our first port of call, Essex Farm Cemetery, where John McCrae wrote his famous poem *In Flanders Fields*, which was beautifully read to us by Helen Fraser (8C), outside what remains of the concrete dugouts. Next, we stopped at Langemarck, a suitably sombre Germanic military cemetery containing 44,000 enemy dead. It was very clear that our pupils would be as respectful of the German dead as of those of the British Empire.

One of the last visits before lunch 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 students 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. In the relatively mild weather, lunch in Ypres was welcome, as was an opportunity



to load up with rations of Belgian chocolate and waffles before heading to Diksmuide, to fulfil one of the objectives of our visit which was to learn about and appreciate the experience of the soldiers of all nations. Guided by an excellent Flemish expert, Emmanuel, the so called Trench of Death was 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.

We also walked up 22 flights of stairs at the PAX tower in order to gain an impressive view of the surrounding landscape and some shelter from the torrential downpour which

we were being subjected to.

After a hot meal, we gathered in reflective mood at the famous Menin Gate Ceremony of Remembrance. Held at 8pm every night since 1928, this is Belgium's tribute to the 55,000 dead of the British forces who have no known grave. To the sound of a choir, a wreath was laid by Elspeth McAuley (8E), Charlie Rannard (8E) and Mr Thirlwall on behalf of our College, watched by hundreds of silent witnesses from all around the world. All were privileged to be there at an event that will not be quickly forgotten. Sunday began with a visit to Hill 60 (60 metres above sea level being worthy of note in Belgium and of vital strategic advantage in



a flat landscape) and the neighbouring crater.

Here, Australian miners had tunnelled at great depth and distance to literally blow up the German defences leaving vast craters that remain to this day. It was at one of these craters, surrounded by Autumn colours and to a background of birdsong, a minute's silence was observed by the students after readings and prayers lead by the staff.

Our final visit was to the Sanctuary Wood Museum, also known as Hill 62, to see a collection 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, just to confirm the old maxim that an army marches on its stomach.

With duties complete, the CEF re-embarked for Blighty at 2.40pm on Sunday, mission accomplished. Most received official commendations for conduct!

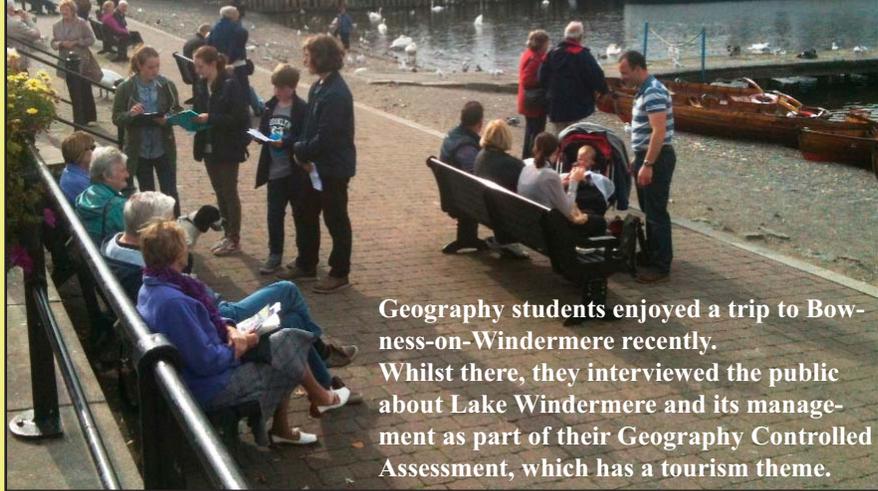
On behalf of myself and the students, a big thank you goes out to Mr Hughes, Mr Summerfield, Mr Thirlwall, Mrs Reid, Mrs Steele and Mrs Fagan for giving up some of their half term break to make this pilgrimage possible.

News in brief

There are morning Eucharistic services tomorrow at Upper and on Thursday at Lower.

On Wednesday, there is a trip to the Liverpool Empire to see a production of Blood Brothers. Coach leaves at 1.20pm for a 2.30pm start. The Y11 Consultation Evening is on Thursday.

Geographers visit Lake District



Geography students enjoyed a trip to Bowness-on-Windermere recently. Whilst there, they interviewed the public about Lake Windermere and its management as part of their Geography Controlled Assessment, which has a tourism theme.

Sacred Heart Catholic College PTA

LADIES NIGHT

Featuring Ollie Hughes as

ROBBIE



Friday 8th November Lower Site Hall

Myers Road East

7.30 till late

Tickets £7.50 Includes a free drink

Bar & Disco bring your own buffet