

Platanos College News

Monday 26th March 2018

Trip to WW1 Battlefields in Ypres, Belgium

On Friday 23rd March 2018, 45 early rising year 9 and 10 pupils began their journey to the First World War Battlefields in Ypres. The 5.30am start did not deter these intrepid historians walking the scenes of some of the most brutal fighting during the war.

We arrived in Ypres at the Menin Gate, a memorial built for 55,000 British soldiers who were missing, assumed dead, following the battles at Ypres between 1914 and 1918. Our pupils were clearly dumbfounded by the number of names etched into stone - the numbers of dead broken down individually for all of them to be remembered for the rest of history.

Our historical enquiry into the lives of soldiers in the First World War continued with a visit to the *In Flanders Field* museum, where our pupils extended their learning of the experiences of soldiers living through the war, equipment and weaponry, and the temporal importance of the war.





Our pupils were very lucky to have a fantastically informative local tour guide in Annette Linthout. Annette took the pupils on a detailed journey to Essex Farm, the Tynecot Cemetery and the Hooge Crater.

Whilst at Essex Farm, our pupils paid their respects through remembrance by listening to a reading of John Mcrae's poem In Flanders Field and holding a minute of reflection. This was a very apt reflection as we were then directed to Valentine Strudwick's grave - a boy who lied about his age to fight in the war, killed in January 1916. He was 15. A similar age to the pupils on the trip.

At Tynecot Cemetery pupils were overwhelmed by the scale of the mass graves of British soldiers fighting in the war, as well as the 8,000 gravestones whose names were 'known only to God.'

The tour's near conclusion was a visit to a recreated German and British trench, which enabled our pupils to view the trench systems of both sides in the First World War.

Our final part of the tour was fitting. Following a day filled with information and empathy, we drove under the arch of Menin Gate to hold a final minute of reflection to remember those young men who died without really knowing why they were fighting. Never before had a government asked so much of its people. Platanos College remembers them.



'Seeing the exhibition in the 'In Flanders Field' museum was really interesting and I learned a lot about the First World War.'

Yaasiin Mahudin 9A

Pupil feedback:

'I really enjoyed the trip to Belgium as it was both fun and educative. I learned a lot by having a first hand perspective of seeing all the gravestones at the war cemeteries. It made me appreciate the human devastation that this war, and other wars before and since have caused.'

Bruno Cavaca 9B

'I really appreciated the opportunity to visit Ypres and the battlefields. It was incredibly informative and I would recommend the trip to future pupils at Platanos College.'

Laney Neilson 9A

'In Ypres we gained a deeper understanding and a wider perspective of the First World War. We saw its effects on Belgium - an amazing country - which we also experienced when touring the square of Ypres.'

Daniel Deane 9B