

Belgian Battlefields Trip 2017

Some of our Year 9 and Year 10 history students went on a historic trip to the Battlefields of Belgium last week. Here is an account of the trip, written by history teacher Ms Kenward.

“On Friday 10th March, on a *very* early and dark morning, myself, Mr Humphries, Mr Farquar and Mr Wilson set out with twenty Year 9 and twenty Year 10 History GCSE students to Belgium to visit the World War One Battlefield sites of Ypres. We left Longhill by coach and continued on to the Eurotunnel, where many students got very excited at the prospect of eating Haribo at 7am! We then travelled by coach through Calais and on to Ypres (also known as Leper) in Belgium.

Students were given time to walk around the highly impressive Menin Gate, which contains the names of 54,389 soldiers from World War One who have no known grave. We then went to visit the highly interactive and unusual Flanders Field Museum; here students were each given a character whose story they followed through the war, which showed the range of war experiences many soldiers faced. This was followed by a visit to a very traditional (and obligatory) Belgian Waffle House and then a traditional Belgian chocolate shop, which dazzled many of our students!

We carried on to the Essex Farm Cemetery, where students were given the opportunity to wander amongst the graves of British soldiers who died in the Ypres area and see the true scale of war and its impact. Some Year 10 students found the names of some Sussex Regiment soldiers which for many really brought home what they were seeing, especially as some of the soldiers were only 18 years old.

We got back on the coach for the next stop, Langemarck, which is a German Cemetery that has over 44,061 graves. Many students found this hugely contrasting and upsetting compared with the other grave sites we had visited. We continued on to Tyne Cot, which is the largest of the British cemeteries, having 11,953 graves in it with over 70% of graves being for soldiers who have no known resting place. After this we drove to Hill 62, which is also known as Sanctuary Wood; here students got the chance to walk through a real trench, explore the tunnels and see for themselves what war conditions were like. After that we hopped back on the coach for the very long drive back to Brighton (whilst desperately trying to avoid the Albion match that was finishing!)

Thank you to all our lovely students who came on the trip; they were absolutely wonderful and impressed many members of the public who we encountered. Thank you also to all the parents and carers who braved getting up so early and returned again so late to allow us a very successful trip.”

