

St Thomas More Article Autumn 2015

Lest We Forget....

STM Battlefields Trip September 2015



As part of the national commemoration of the centenary of the First World War, two students from every school in Britain were offered a free trip to Battlefield sites of World War One. Part of this is the Legacy 110 project which is the idea that every student that attends the trip communicates to 110 people what they have experienced. The idea is that this will inform the same number of people today that died in the First World War.

Hritik and Cindy were chosen to attend this trip for a number of reasons; for their interest in history and commitment to the subject.

Friday was orientation day at Grosvenor Hall in Kent with teambuilding and adventure activities for the students and professional development for the staff.

The question for Saturday was 'How Were Ordinary people affected by WW1?'. Our first stop was at *In Flanders Field* Museum in the Cloth Hall in Ypres. This museum has exhibits on the experiences of all the people who were affected by the War; Allied and German soldiers and Belgian civilians.

We then visited the Death Cells and Talbot House in Poperinge. The cells held soldiers before they were executed for a variety of reasons; cowardice (18 killed), disobedience (5), murder (35), sleeping at post (2), striking a senior officer (4).

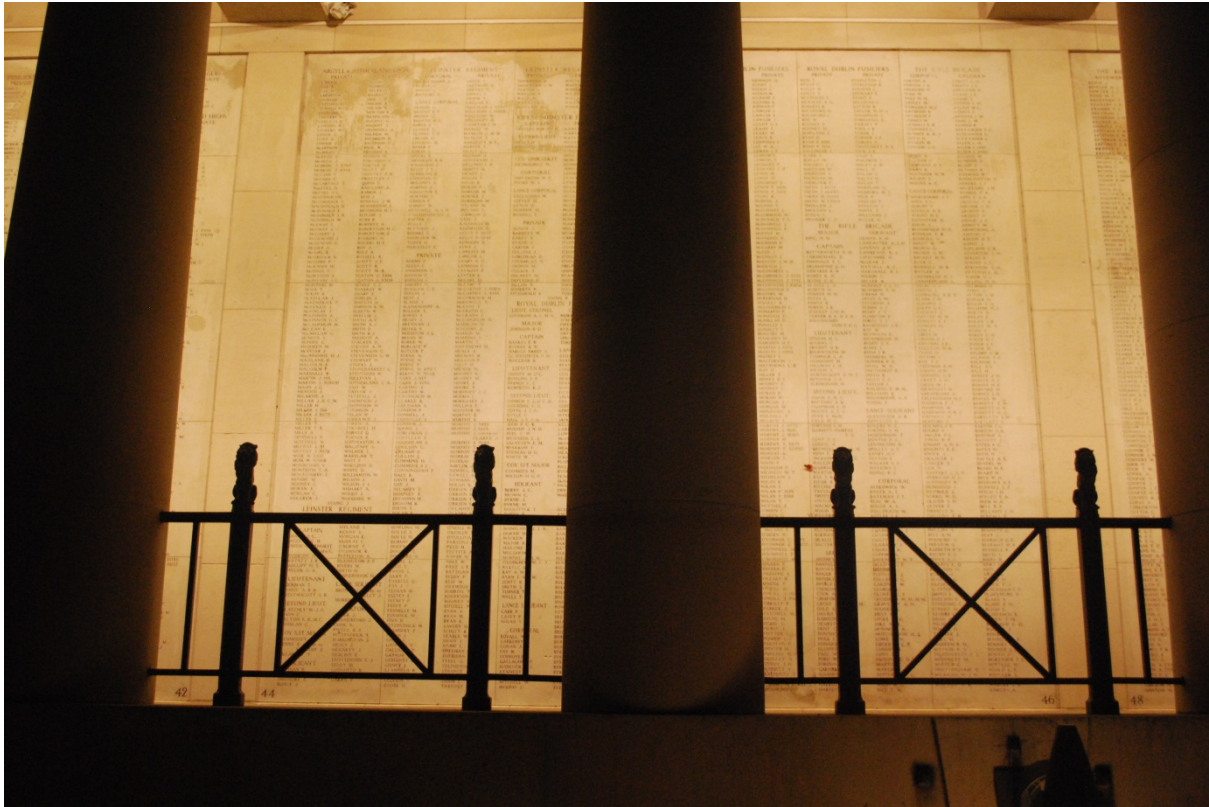


Caption for pic 1 While this is not the actual post against which soldiers were shot, it is a recreation not far from the actual site.

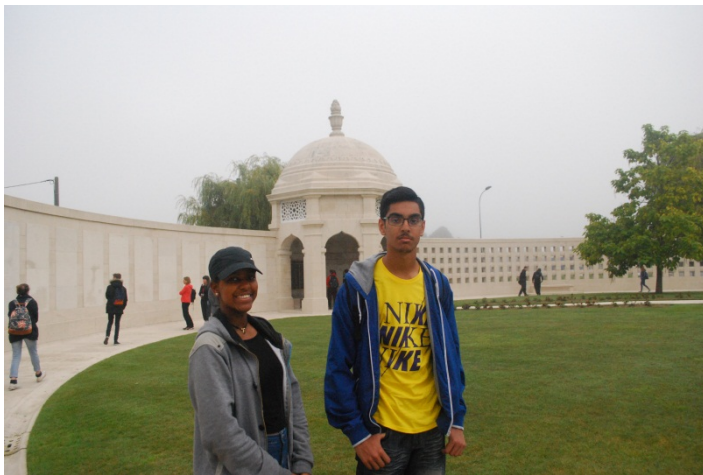
Our next stop was at Lijssehoek Military Cemetery. This used to be the site of a military hospital and those buried here did not survive their injuries or treatment.

After checking into the Hotel and having a Spartan dinner, we returned to Ypres for the Last Post Ceremony at the Menin Gate. For two minutes every evening this part of the city falls silent as buglers from the city's fire brigade wound the last Post: *'to commemorate and express the eternal gratitude toward the soldiers of the British Empire who fought and fell in the defence of the city and Ypres Salient, saving the independence and freedom of Belgium.'* Two students from each group laid a wreath to commemorate the dead.





The question for Sunday 'Was the Battle of the Somme in 1916 really a disaster for the British Army?' Our first stop was at the Indian Memorial at Neuve Chapelle.





This commemorates 4,661 Indian soldiers with no known grave. Around 130,000 Indian soldiers fought on the Western Front between 1914 and 1915 before being transferred to the Middle East. Indian soldiers won 13,000 medals for bravery, including 12 Victoria Crosses.

Next was a site from the Battle of the Somme at Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont Hamel.



We then visited The Thiepval Memorial to the Missing of the Somme. This is situated on one of the highest points of land on the old Somme battlefield, and there are 72,192 names of missing British and South African men who died on the Somme battlefields.



Views from Thiepval Memorial

One Sunday evening there was a comparison between a WW1 soldier's kit and a present day soldier's kit.

Monday was our final day, with the focus 'Is remembrance more or less important 100 years on?' With visits to Langemark Cemetery, Tyne Cot Cemetery and then completing the Coming World Remember Me workshop, creating a clay memorial to be displayed in Ypres much as the poppies were around the Tower of London.



Langemark Cemetery





Reading information on specific German soldiers buried at Langemark.
Considering why this cemetery is different to those of the CWGC.

On Friday evening Cindy and Hritik had researched a name given to them, H T Dickens, and found that he had lived on Stanley Street in Bedford and the location at Tyne Cot where his name is inscribed as one of the fallen whose body was never recovered. At Tyne Cot they found his name among 4 panels of other Riflemen.



Cemetery

Tyne Cot



We remember on behalf of the St Thomas More community H T Dickens of Stanley Street Bedford, who gave his life in WW1.

We were with groups of students and teachers from Milton Keynes, Luton and St Albans. Students and teachers made many new friends, many interesting conversations were held (late into the night for some!). Cindy and Hritik are putting together their Legacy 110 project so look out for that in Assemblies and Open Evenings.



His name is inscribed right at the top of this panel.

