



PRESS RELEASE

Swindon School Experience the Battlefields of Belgium

Royal Wootton Bassett Academy (RWBA) students visited Ypres, Belgium on their History trip. The First World War trip consisted of multiple battlefield locations.

Within just 3 days, the RWBA students had a packed in a lot, visiting First World War memorials, cemeteries and war museums in Belgium. The trip to Ypres and the Somme battlefields is a great contribution to their GCSE's, giving them a better understanding of the First World War. Ypres is surrounded by the Salient battlefields where many cemeteries, memorials and war museums honour the battles that unfolded in the area.



The first day consisted of a long journey to Ypres to visit the Hoge Crater Museum, Hill 60 a battlefield memorial site and park, and ending at the Lijssenthoek CWGC & visitors centre, a military cemetery. Hoge Crater Museum is Belgium's best privately owned WW1 museum, with life size reconstructions of battle scenes, an extensive collection of weapons, equipment and photographs. The village of Lijssenthoek is situated on the main line between allied military bases and the Ypres battlefields, so became a natural place to establish casualty clearing stations with 9,901 Commonwealth burials of the First World War.

The second day consisted of the students visiting the Somme. With over 150,000 British soldiers buried here, it is a site for pilgrimage and tourism. The Battle of the Somme was one of the largest and bloodiest battles of the First World War with a 5 month battle it is an important part of the history. The group managed to visit the Sheffield Memorial Park, Newfoundland Memorial Park, Thiepval and Lochnagar Crater whilst at the Somme. The evening ended with two students having the incredible honour in partaking in the last post at the Menin Gate, laying a wreath on behalf of RWBA.

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On the third and final day, whilst emerged in First World War history, the students got to experience the Tyne Cot Cemetery, Langemark Cemetery and Talbot House before sailing back home. Today, Talbot House is a museum where the students were able to go back in time to learn the history inside of its walls.

A student from RWBA commented “I had an amazing time. It was great for me as I am taking GCSE History and being able to experience Belgium where a large part of the First World War took place, was just beyond words. It will help me greatly in my coursework, hearing first-hand knowledge of what it was like and seeing artifacts from the war. We were tasked to engage with stories of soldiers local to Royal Wootton Bassett and Swindon, we were asked to locate their graves and learn about their exploits. To honour those soldiers, we then were able to lay a poppy and cross at the site of their graves.”

Mr Daniel Webb, History Teacher from RWBA went on to say “It is a great way for the students to experience first-hand the happenings of the First World War. The students all had a great time and were shocked to see some of the artifacts and cemeteries that we were lucky enough to visit, seeing just how many lives were lost made some of them shellshocked. We are really looking forward to our visit next year back to Belgium.”

