

WW1 Battlefield Tour 2017

A successful tour relies on three things, an interesting itinerary, a knowledgeable tour guide and a skilful driver, we had all three.

We visited an R&R centre for soldiers taken off the line, Talbot House, a place where they could relax and enjoy some entertainment before being called back to the fighting. Further visits included various museums and Essex Farm, a forward

Aid Station, where the poem "In Flanders Fields" was written and is also the last resting place of the youngest victim of the war at just 15 years of age.

Visits to three cemeteries: Tyne Cot (English), La Lorette (French) and Langemarck (German), gave us the opportunity to compare the different layouts. Both the English and French had many floral arrangements whereas the Germans were much more constrained with just small black name plaques laying on grass.

In many places the effect of mine warfare could be seen, such as at Beaumont Hamel, but the largest was at the Lochnagar Crater, now preserved by a private buyer.



The war memorials and Graveyards, all breath taking, Tyne Cot, Thiépval and Vimy Ridge to name the largest all brought home the tragic waste of life. However, the most moving of all was the Menin Gate where the Last Post ceremony has been held every evening at eight o'clock since 1929, apart from the war years. It records the names of 79000 servicemen whose bodies could not be found, together with another 34000 at Tyne Cot.

Alan Tunnicliff

Thank you for allowing me to come on the Battlefields trip with Verwood U3A. The highlight of the trip for me was the ceremony at the Menin Gate.



Remember, that we were told if we wanted to get a good view to arrive an hour early, we arrived at about 7.40 and they were already standing about 8 deep all the way round, so we could see nothing. Still people kept coming and there was probably another 8 rows behind us.

The ceremony started on time with the band marching in playing, 'Men of Harlech', I wondered if it was the Welsh Guards, but it was the school band which followed us around for the rest of the holiday. I hummed along to this and the famous old hymns 'The Day Thou Gavest Lord is Ended' and 'Abide with me' also some Elgar, I thought that it was one of the Pomp and Circumstances, but was told it was part of the 'Enigma Variations' or Nimrod.. The ceremony was the same as at War Memorials on Remembrance Sunday and lasted a total of around 20 minutes.

We did manage to see most of what was going on thanks to several mobile phones that were held up and recording the event.

Afterwards, thousands of us made our ways back to our coaches and hotels without incident.

Cathryn Candy