

The Yr9 Trenches trip

We started our trip on a rather tiring note at 5:30 in the morning! All of us, including the adults, were exhausted and hoped we would not have to wake up so early in the following week. Anyway we drove to Dover in the coach, which took about two hours (I think) which means we got there at about 7:30. We then took the Euro tunnel to Calais (in France), which took about twenty minutes, which went really quickly!

When we got to France we drove for what seemed like forever before we reached the first memorial/ graveyard/ church. It was called 'Notre Dame de Lorette'; there were thousands of gravestones as well as mass graves that held up to 5694 soldiers! In total there are at least 20,000 soldiers buried there meaning it is the largest cemetery in France.



We then went to Vimy ridge to see the stunning memorial to the Canadians who fought in the battle of Vimy ridge. The monument was 110m high but seemed so much higher

The walls surrounding the monument were covered in names of the deceased or soldiers that never came home.



We then went out for lunch, which wasn't terribly interesting, but after we went back to Vimy ridge to see the preserved trenches and the underground communication tunnels.

I thought the trenches were very interesting; they gave me, and probably most people, a better understanding of what it was like to be in the trenches, but as you can see they were made of concrete instead of sand bags, mud and water. In some places I was surprised how low it was, sometimes it went below my waist!



Anyway after we had a good look around the trenches we went to the visitor's centre, which had some interesting exhibits, which included how they built the monument (the picture above).



Next we went down into the underground communication tunnels that are around 10m underground! It was extremely small and confusing there were so many tunnels. I liked it when our guide turned off the lights and turned on the emergency lights to show how dark it would have been, I thought it was really interesting.

We then retired to the Chateau D'Eblinghem for dinner and some rest (although



I highly doubt anyone actually got any 😊). The dinner was delicious and our rooms were very nice, but most of us headed out to the Games room; which consisted of a few pool tables, a table football machine (foosball), a pair of driving machines and some other machines. It was brilliant!!!



Getting back to the main trip, we prepared our lunch and set off for our first sighting of a British cemetery.

We stayed a while looking at graves, which we found many recognisable names (mainly teachers) printed on them, there was a memorial which is behind me in this picture but was very tall and looked black. We also found the youngest British soldier to die in World War 1 at fifteen years old!



We left for the German cemetery but side tracked to visit another trench, there isn't much to say about this small trip except that this trench was deeper than the earlier one (well seemed it at least).

When we reached the German cemetery it had a completely different feel to the British one, we had white vertical gravestones and the Germans had black flat ones. There were about 16 names on each headstone, which were carved then painted in gold. Some graves had flowers and/or candles but this is the only grave I found with a picture on. There looked like there were 100s of grave stones (I'm saying 250) **plus** some large stones with about 100 names a



side and there were at least 30 or so of them **plus** a room full of names at the entrance, which had about 1000 names in. So (excusing my rubbish math and bad estimations) it was about 11,000. Which

I think is loads! There were also some black statues (which were a bit creepy) standing opposite the entrance, I think they were supposed to watch over the graves.

Soon after we left we arrived at a Canadian monument, which only a few of us looked at because it was a very short stop. The Canadians spent so much money on Vimy Ridge that this one couldn't be nearly as grand, but none the less it still was impressive! This is to commemorate the first German gas attack when 2,000 Canadians and British died on the battlefield.



We took the coach to the largest British war cemetery called Tyne Cot.

There are almost 12,000 soldiers buried and about 8400 of them are marked with 'Unknown Unto God' meaning they don't know who they are. I think that's rather sad not just the amount of soldiers that died, but the fact that about 70% are unknown. If I fought and died I would like people to know I died for them.



These walls that you can see surrounding the cemetery are covered with names of the dead/lost, there are also little circular rooms that come of at certain points with even more names on! There were also little books that you could look for your name in, which many did but a few didn't.



We then left for Lunch, which was the same place that my FAVOURITE (©) part of the trip was! We ate our lunch, then we had a quick look in a museum and went out side were there were really muddy trenches! Yes, I know I am biased but...IT WAS REALLY COOL! There were loads of underground tunnels which you had to bend down to get through, it gave us all a feeling of how it would have really been like (minus the gun fire, rats etc). There were loads of puddles and mud, COOL! (I'm a big kid)



We drove off to the Flanders field museum in the town where we would spend the rest of the day. It was quite interesting; I especially liked the area



where it read out 'Flanders field' and 'Dolce et Decorum est' and showed you 6 versions of gas masks.

When we left we went to the Chocolate shop, which many of us bought chocolate from, but there where about 5 more chocolate shops in the same street so I highly suspect some went to those.

We spent about 45 minutes in the town before having a delicious meal at a restaurant and heading to the Menin gate for the last post.



At 8 o'clock the road going through the Menin gate was stopped and the last post played by the trumpeters. A 2-minute silence was supposed to happen but it didn't sound like it did. We had a look at the names on the walls and headed home.



In the morning we headed out to Beaumont Hamel, which used to be a war ground. The trenches (as you can see in the picture) were not preserved in any way which I think is better to just leave them, it doesn't show how is was but it just lets nature take its course.



I think only two people did not find their name on this monument, there are over 72,000 names on it! I'm pretty confident (unless your name has foreign roots) that you will find it on this monument. Although we didn't spend long here it helped us realise the enormity of the war.

After a long journey home we reached Barclay at about 8:30pm. I would recommend that every one goes on this trip when they get the chance (it's really good (apart from the travelling))
By Holly Kerslake