

Tynecastle pupils toured WWI battlefields

Students from Tynecastle High School recently toured the World War One battlefields of France and Belgium. Ben Robertson in S5 was one of them and reports for us here.

2018 is a special year because it is 100 years since the First World War ended. It is even more special for Tynecastle High School, for two reasons. The first is that the most famous of war poets, Wilfred Owen, taught at our school for a few weeks in 1917 while he was recovering from shell shock up at Craiglockhart Hospital. Secondly, our school is right opposite Hearts football stadium, where 100 years ago, many players and supporters, joined the war in McCrae's battalion.



After a long bus journey our first day was in Ghent. The castle there was pretty cool with its museum of medieval torture devices. (I hope none of the teachers were picking up ideas!) Then we were off on a canal tour of the city, quite

different from the Union Canal which is very close to where I live in Edinburgh.

Then it was into the battlefields trip in full, around Ypres, or "Wipers" as British soldiers called it. It was interesting to see the German cemetery, as a reminder of just how devastating the war was on all sides. My favourite part was visiting Sanctuary Wood, with its carefully preserved trenches and tunnels.

On Saturday, it was off to France, and the Somme, probably the most brutal part of the war. We visited a little part of Canada at Vimy Ridge, where many Canadian soldiers died, and which is staffed even now by Canadian students. And, of course, we visited the village of Contalmaison, where the monument to McCrae's battalion is sited. It was strange to see the Hearts logo, in this corner of France, a symbol we see every day as we go into and out of school. In the evening we took part in the Last Post ceremony at Menin Gate.

The final day was a quick trip to Flanders Museum, buying some Belgian chocolates and then the long journey home.

It was a very busy four day trip, but it brought to life the poems and history in a way that books and films never can.

Many thanks to our teachers, Ms Howie, Shedden and Bowerman and to Mr Rhodan

Ben Robertson is a fifth year student at Tynecastle High School.