

Edinburgh locals mark end of WW1 centenary year

A group of residents from Edinburgh and Lothians recently joined the city's award winning storytellers, Mercat Tours International, on a unique commemorative battlefields trip marking the end of the WW1 Centenary year, when the guns fell silent on the Western Front, ending the Great War.

During World War I a powerful and successful recruitment campaign meant many volunteers flocked to join the ranks and accept the King's Shilling. By 1917, given the horrors of the war, insufficient numbers were volunteering to fight therefore conscription was introduced. Mercat Tours International's special 'King's Shilling Tour' commemorated those who joined up with such enthusiasm and innocence and who were still alive to witness the Armistice in November 1918.

The tour immersed participants in the past through the use of music, drama, documentary footage and archive material, and marked the exact armistice, in place and time.

Speaking about the King's Shilling trip, Clare Young, who participated on the Kings Shilling Tour with her daughters said: "It was incredible to be on this truly special and poignant tour with Des and Mercat Tours International. It really brought the stories of those who experienced the battles to life for me. It is heartbreaking to think of all that they went through, but it was a real privilege to honour them on this very powerful trip."

Former history teacher and founder of Mercat Tours International, Des Brogan added: "It truly was an honour to help those on this special commemorative tour walk in the footsteps of relatives who fought in WW1. As the Centenary year draws to a close, it is important that we do not forget

all those people, including many Edinburgh and Lothians residents, who fought and died for their country. We promise to continue giving people the opportunity to bring the personal wartime history to life and commemorate the lives of their relatives and ancestors through our tours of the most iconic battlefields in France and Belgium.”

Mercat Tours International leads tours through some of the most famous world war battlefields in France and Belgium. The tours, led by award-winning storytellers, immerse visitors in the sights, sounds and stories of the world wars.

Often those who join the tours are looking to learn more about their own family members who fought and died at the sites. The award-winning company has also taken 2.5K UK students across to Flanders Fields in 2018 to ensure that the lives of those who fought in WW1 are honoured and commemorated for generations to come.

The King’s Shilling Tour visited:

- Mons in Belgium, where the first and last British soldiers were killed and the first Victoria Cross was won in August 1914.
- The site where Wilfred Owen was killed as well as his grave at the little French town of Ors.
- Compiègne where the Armistice which stopped the war was signed in a railway carriage.
- The Hall of Mirrors where the official Treaty ending the war was completed in the Palace of Versailles in 1919. The participants from Edinburgh were also joined by some participants from across the UK and America. For more information about Mercat Tours International see: www.mercattoursinternational.com