



Great Pilgrimage 90



A decade after the end of The First World War, eleven thousand veterans and war widows made a great pilgrimage to the battlefields of the Somme and Ypres before marching to the Menin Gate in Ypres, Belgium on 8th August 1928 for a Remembrance service.

Exactly 90 years later, on 8 August 2018, over two thousand Royal British Legion members carried their standards and wreaths along the same route to the Menin Gate, to commemorate the beginning of the last 100 days of World War One, thereby representing an entire generation who served defending their country.



Tyne Cot Memorial, Belgium



Thiepval Memorial, France



Thiepval Memorial, France

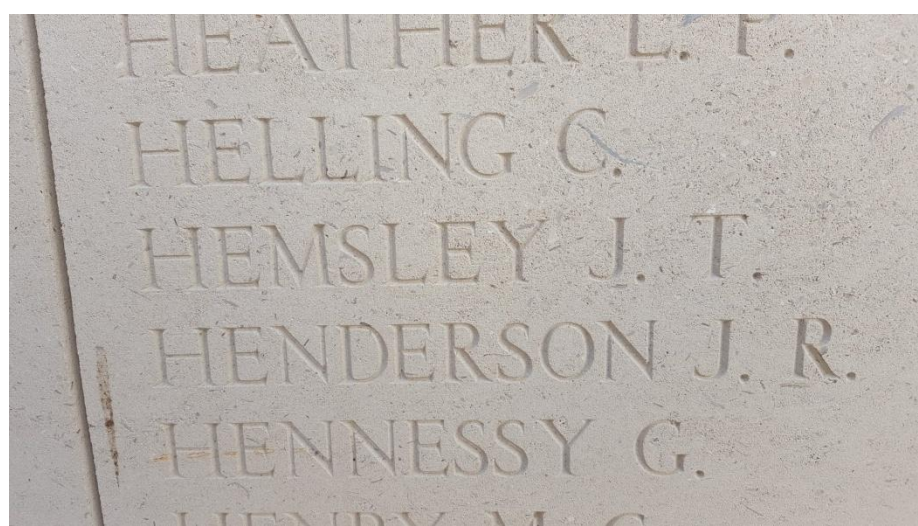
The Ulverston Royal British Legion branch standard was paraded and dipped in an act of homage at all of the cemeteries and memorials visited during the battlefield tour, honouring those men of Ulverston who fell in France and Belgium.



Delville Wood Memorial and Cemetery



Individual remembrance crosses were laid for each of the fallen of Ulverston at Tyne Cot Memorial and the Menin Gate in Belgium and at Delville Wood Cemetery and the Thiepval Memorial in France.



Messines Ridge, Passchendaele, Belgium



British front line

German front line

Of the 175 names on the Ulverston war memorial I was able to lay crosses for 51 soldiers. Of these 51 crosses only three could be laid on a grave (all at Delville Wood), the other 48 soldiers had no known grave so their crosses were laid at their memorials at Tyne Cot, the Menin Gate and Thiepval.

I hope in the future to be able to lay crosses for more of the remaining 124 fallen but many of our soldiers, sailors and airmen fell in countries far away, some in areas still in turmoil such as Iraq and Gaza. Others have graves or memorials in Turkey, Italy, Tanzania, Greece, Malta and South Africa.

After a chance meeting with the South Africa Standard Bearer at Delville Wood Cemetery during GP90 I have been able to contact members of the South African Legion and they have kindly offered to place crosses on our behalf for those of our fallen in Tanzania and South Africa.

I hope to be able to liaise with other Commonwealth Legion members to arrange for crosses to be laid elsewhere.

The parade in Ypres on 8th August 2018 followed the route that our soldiers will have followed, from the railhead to the south of the town of Ypres through the Menin Gate on their way to the battlefields of Passchendaele. This was a very moving experience knowing that so many had bravely marched this very route before, many never to return. After marching through the Menin Gate the Standard Bearers wheeled round and formed up in front of the Memorial (see photograph top right of this poster). A memorial service was then held with wreaths laid by all Royal British Legion branches present. At the end of the epitaph as all present responded with the heartfelt words 'we will remember them' a strong wind fleetingly blew through the standards; it felt as if the fallen were acknowledging our act of homage. Poppy petals were released through the roof of the Menin Gate during the two minutes silence, which were carried by the wind to settle over the Standard Bearers on parade. After the ceremony we marched once more through the Menin Gate and past thousands of applauding spectators lining the route. As we rounded the last corner onto the road from the old railhead a spontaneous chorus of the popular wartime marching tune 'It's a long way to Tipperary' broke out amongst the Standard Bearers. Many faces were wet with tears after a very emotional day in Ypres.



**They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them**