



# The Somme Trip Newsletter



Friday, 16th of June. The year 9 students took the coach and the shuttle back to the First World War. We arrived at the Somme battlefields, where we started our tour at Sunken Lane, where we first saw the tragic conflict at the beginning of the battle. We were guided through many sites and were given many facts about many events that happened. For example, we learnt about Lord Kitchener's army and the Pals Battalion as well as the plans on July 1st 1916 where the British would detonate TNT under a key German strongpoint (by digging a tunnel under there) and then soldiers would 'go over the top' of the trenches and advance on the confused Germans.



We feasted our eyes upon the area where the plan took place. British soldiers stormed over the top and into No-man's land, where they were all tragically killed by the German machine gun fire. We walked past the few large mine explosions that were still visible after the 109 years (from 1916) of the destruction. We walked through the pathways that the British force would have taken to plough holes through the hills to shoot out shells at the opponent. We paid our respects to the cemeteries that we had passed by. Here is a true fact that we learnt here: all French villages were on hills so then the French soldiers didn't have to move too far to get to a safe area.



## Trip statistics:

Overall journey: 4 hours 30 minutes-6 hours there and 4 hours 30 minutes-6 hours back.

Coach-2-3 hours-shuttle-35 minutes-coach-2+ hours.

Whenever you are near the shuttle or tourist attraction, you stop at a service centre. Don't worry, even if you cannot go to the loo in the service centre, you can always go to the toilet that's in the coach!

Please do remember to bring your passport as well as your Health Insurance Card for when you go through the border control (the Health Insurance Card is optional).

Time of leaving the school: 4:30am. Time of arriving back at school: 10:45pm.





We then went to a cafe where we were shown the WW1 army uniform, as well as the weaponry (rifle) and even a grenade. We then had lunch (which is supplied by the teachers), before moving onto the next tour area. Next, we technically went into Canadian land called Newfoundland Memorial Park! Newfoundlands (now known as Canada) had helped the British and the French army in the battle efforts with their tactics by taking a strong German position but unfortunately losing over  $\frac{2}{3}$  of their army. In return, France gave the part of land that Canada fought in to them! We walked through the incredible preserved trenches and paid our respects to a beautiful cemetery. There was a statue of the moose as it was a symbol of the confidence, power, bravery and resilience of the Canadian army during WW1 but also an unsuspecting tree called the 'Death Tree' where the Newfoundland's army gathered and charged at the Germans but got peppered by their machine guns, resulting in an extremely heavy amount of casualties.



Afterwards, we then walked past the world's largest man-made explosion up to 1916. The explosion was about 280 feet wide and 80 feet deep. It was a collection of homemade explosive that exploded whilst it was attached to a mine. Both of these explosions (the one on page 1 and this slide too) were used by the British to let the Germans know that they were coming. The immense force of this explosion was enough to clear quite a huge amount of a field and it also killed many soldiers on the opponent's side, yet it also told the Germans to get ready for the attack. This just shows us how strong our explosives were even 109 years ago, and how the battle affected both the british people and the German soldiers. One of the most surreal views on this battle and its technological advancements that we didn't expect or know.



In our experience of the trip, there will most likely be a small single decker coach for 2 forms and a double-decker coach that can hold up to 3 forms in it! Every stop at a service centre is 30-45 minutes long.



Remember to bring some euros with you to spend on souvenirs. There will be a gift shop at the memorial after the event has occurred. You can get keychains, books and even model tanks/accurate plastic WW1 helmets! Also, if you can't bring euros or if you forgot the euros you were meant to bring, then don't worry! You can pay with your card.



Finally, we stopped at the most breathtaking area yet; the Memorial. A huge, stone/brick building with 52,000+ soldier names that didn't have their bodies discovered amongst the dark and derelict landscape. We stood in awe at the sheer size of the architecture! Next, we walked through the build and tried to find our relatives' name/s since they could be written on the stone walls. Then we were called by the instructors to the WW1 graveyard at the back of the massive memorial were the graves of British (rectangle gravestones) and French (cross gravestones) soldiers lay and then taken to the gigantic cross at the end of it (shown in the bottom picture to the right). Then, a ceremony took place to remember all the dead soldiers that sacrificed their lives for us in the Great War by gathering around the cross and having the two students that were nominated take a poppy wreath each and then place them at the base of the cross. Then, we had a minute of silence to show how much respect we have for these soldiers who sacrificed themselves for us. We then walked down to the gift shop, bought some lovely souvenirs and then catch a final glimpse of The Somme Battlefields before we got on the buses and then started to head back to the School.



Interviews about the experience!

Here are some opinions about the Somme trip from our own classmates!

1. "I really enjoyed every part of the journey there with everyone, mucking about and having fun but also being able to learn the history of the Somme from a professional was really inspiring and made me feel smart."
2. "One in a lifetime experience. It was a pleasure to go to the Somme with the school."
3. "I think it was a very enjoyable experience, I mostly just played games but the guides were chill. The history stuff they taught us about was cool."
4. "I thought that it was a great trip. I learned a lot about the Somme during WW1. My favorite part of the trip was walking past/seeing the Loch Ness Crater. Overall, I would rate this school trip an 8 out of 10!"

