



enter

WW1 Battlefields Performances

*A report to highlight elements
of the experience funded by The
Gillian Dickinson Trust.*

After receiving invites to perform at the above venues, we knew it would be necessary to fundraise to ensure that we could support our students who (due to lack of expendable income) would struggle to pay costs associated with travelling abroad. Hence our application to The Gillian Dickinson Trust.

Introduction

Whilst there are many significant and positive outcomes from this project, by far the greatest achievement has been providing an opportunity for young people who would ordinarily be unable to participate in this type of project. In this way, we are opening up new pathways and opportunities and in so doing hopefully igniting a new passion for learning, creating a pathway of achievement, self worth and demonstrating first hand that it is important to be interested in today's society and to be a positive and productive citizen.

During this project, young people experienced first hand the impact of WWI and as we observed them, it was clear that they were moved by the whole Battlefields Trip. They have said that they will never forget the experience, that they will have a lifelong understanding of the impact of WWI, not only on yesterday, but on today's society and that they now fully comprehend the sacrifice made by so many brave (and very young) people. In turn they will be able to relate this to the significance of the Act of Remembrance.

Throughout the trip, the young people were reminded that they need to be aware of WWI and to understand and never forget about it because it is in the forgetting that the danger lies "What we forget we will inevitably repeat".



Enter CIC - WW1 Battlefields Performances



During one of these conversations, Enter CIC was asked to provide visual evidence regarding the type of performances we conduct. As a result, we forwarded an array of media samples for perusal and we were overwhelmed by the response from the recipients who were quite simply astounded at the high quality of our performance content and the performance delivery of our young people. We then (to our surprise) started to receive invitations to perform at some key memorial sites as part of the tour which included, but were not restricted to the following:

*The Last Post Ceremony, Menin Gate, Ypres, Belgium.
St George's Memorial Church, Flanders, Ypres, Belgium
Talbot House (TOC H), Ypres, Belgium
Cloth Hall, Ypres Belgium*

Enter CIC is a front line service provider and we choose to work in some of the most deprived communities in Durham. We are all too aware that there are many talented young people residing in areas of high deprivation, but despite their talent very few of them have the financial capability of being able to support their creative interest/training requirements.

Enter CIC works hard to level the playing field for these young people and we now have a history of making a huge difference for many young people who have an interest in the cultural, heritage and arts sector ensuring that even the most significantly deprived young people have access to high quality cultural experiences and can be recognised for their talents rather than their backgrounds.

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One of the aims of this project was to ensure that young people had an opportunity to develop a thorough understanding of WWI, so that they could return to England and utilise the information to create a high quality youth commemoration festival designed for, by and with young people.

In this pack, we have provided examples of the type of experiences undertaken by the young people and its affect on them and their 'audiences'.

Indeed, none of these experiences would have been possible without the generous grant from The Gillian Dickinson Trust, for which we are extremely grateful.



August 13th 2018



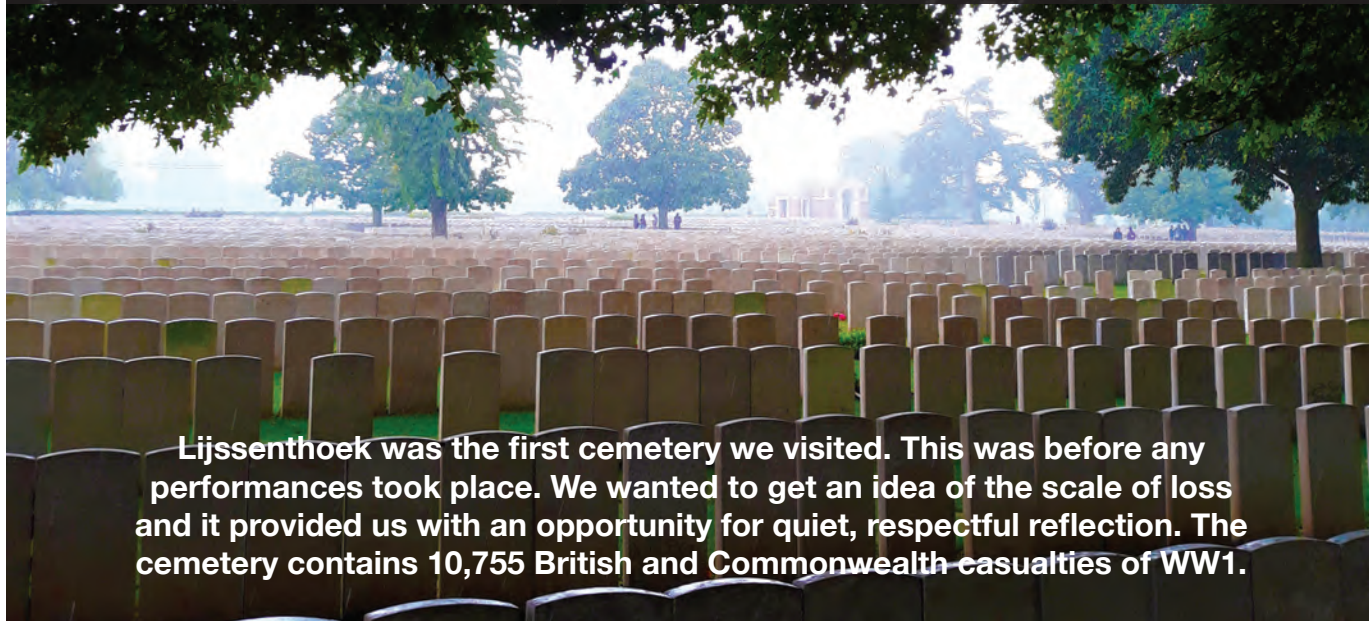
Arrival in Belgium and immediately taken to Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery in Poperinge, Belgium. This was the first Commonwealth cemetery that our young people visited and the impact of this initial visit was clear for everyone to see.

The whole group listened intently to Dr Bruce Cherry who explained to our young people that they shouldn't look at the grave stones as a piece of carved stone, but as the front cover of a book. Each book representing an individual with a life story. Whilst thinking about this, he asked them to look across the cemetery and to consider how many stories there were associated with each head stone.

Our young people were given the task of looking at the ages of the soldiers who had fallen and they learnt first hand that many of the soldiers who had lost their lives in WW1 were not much older than them! This prompted many of our young people to capture their thoughts on video and immediately connected them to the project. Reinforcing the fact that WW1 was not an old person's war, but very much about the bravery and sacrifice of young people who passionately believed in the cause and fought for our freedom, so that we could live the lives we do today.

Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery

Poperinge, Ypres Salient Battlefields, Belgium



Lijssenthoek was the first cemetery we visited. This was before any performances took place. We wanted to get an idea of the scale of loss and it provided us with an opportunity for quiet, respectful reflection. The cemetery contains 10,755 British and Commonwealth casualties of WW1.

QUOTES

Some quotes from the young people taking part in the project.



“There was a young boy of thirteen who enlisted, underage, and he is buried here. That’s about the same age as me now. To think that, at thirteen, that would be my life over, is a very scary thought.”

“It really hit home for me when I understood how many men died without being identified. They only have ‘Known Unto God’ on their grave stone. Thinking about all those families at home that didn’t know the fate of their sons, brothers, fathers, is quite emotional.”

“Nellie Spindler is buried here - she was a staff nurse and died in a shell attack at Passchendaele - she is the only woman killed on The Western Front. She was buried with full military honours.”

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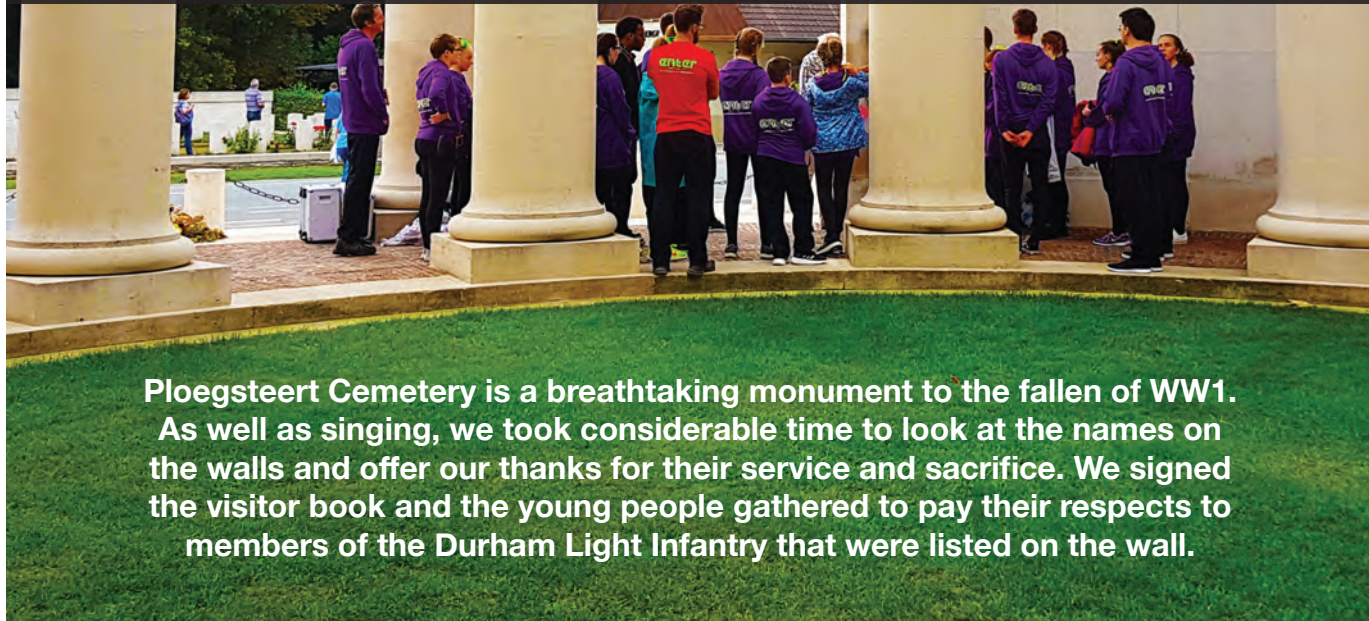


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Ploegsteert Wood Military Cemetery

Warneton, Ypres Salient Battlefields, Belgium



Ploegsteert Cemetery is a breathtaking monument to the fallen of WW1. As well as singing, we took considerable time to look at the names on the walls and offer our thanks for their service and sacrifice. We signed the visitor book and the young people gathered to pay their respects to members of the Durham Light Infantry that were listed on the wall.

Ploegsteert Wood

“Teach them and they will remember.”

At Ploegsteert Wood the young people asked if it would be possible to sing The Lord's Prayer and 'Carved In Stone'. This request was prompted by the young people's experience of looking at the names on the wall. They were particularly moved when they came across a list of names dedicated to those members of The Durham Light Infantry who lost their lives.

Although this was intended to be a private commemoration, a crowd soon gathered around them and showed their appreciation by applauding and talking with the young people about their experience so far on the project and the relevance of the memorial to their own family's heritage.

A woman who was part of another visiting party said, “That singing was an unexpected pleasure. So moving. Your young people deliver with such understanding and respect. Thank you for that experience.”

QUOTES

Some quotes from the young people taking part in the project.



“It’s very moving to see the great number of names on the wall on the inside of the memorial. It shows the mass death that occurred during World War One.”

“It’s very moving to look at the regimental badges on the graves and to recognise that these men had probably become great friends and were witnessing their comrades die in awful circumstances, every day.”

“Very moving to stand in this place and sing an original song. I hope the soldiers know that we are remembering them through our singing and we will never forget them.”

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Enter CIC - August 2018

Lone Tree Crater / Pool of Peace

Visiting the Pool of Peace and comprehending how a WW1 mine crater could eventually result in an environment with such a sense of calm and beauty.

This environment prompted many meaningful discussions and developed young people's knowledge of exploding mines and the lasting impact of the resulting craters.

Our guide informed us that this mine crater will be over 100 feet deep.





Christmas Truce Memorial

Messines, Ypres Salient Battlefields, Belgium

INNOVATIONS OF THE WAR

Whilst at the Christmas Truce Memorial, our guide informed the students about a number of innovations that the Great War provided. Innovations such as plastic surgery, disposable tissues, war planes, air traffic control, tanks, sun lamps, mustard gas, wristwatches, zippers, sound ranging, industrial fertilisers, portable X-rays, sanitary towels and even drones. The Kettering Bug was one such drone.



We noted a small monument which had been placed in the very field where the Christmas Truce is believed to have taken place. The young people were able to discover a trench and imagine the conditions that soldiers had to endure on a daily basis.

They were also given information about the many innovations that the Great War facilitated, even ones we consider as uniquely British, such as fish and chips - this was a Belgian delicacy before it was a British staple. The men would get their pay and go straight to a local restaurant to get warm food. This information allowed the young people to see the soldiers as ordinary people, not military machines merely trained for war.

The young people sang 'Silent Night' on the field in both English and German.

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HEAVEN IN THE MIDDLE OF HELL

We learned the history of the chaplain, Neville Talbot and Philip ‘Tubby’ Clayton. They opened the House to entertain the troops, which was one of the most famous venues on the Western Front.



Here we performed our full programme of pieces in the famous gardens. Also, we performed in the Concert Hall and in the Chapel at the very top of the house. We sang an a capella version of The Lord's Prayer in the Chapel. We were tracing the footsteps of the soldiers and it was extremely powerful to be treading the same boards in the Chapel as the soldiers, when saying their prayers before returning to The Front.

We drew crowds at this venue and at the end of the performance, we were approached by many people. One person was a British historian and WW1 author. He and his wife were in tears and couldn't believe that young people would be able to capture the uplifting ethos of Talbot House so empathetically. He wishes to engage Enter's young people in a project in the future and is sending our young people one of his books, to aid their research of WW1.

“We met you last week, together with your incredible young people at Talbot House and then again in Ypres. The young people, the presentation and the whole ethos of the project impressed us profoundly.”

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“I CAN’T IMAGINE THE NOISE.”

In November 1914, during the First Battle of Ypres, Hill 60, due to its height, provided an excellent vantage point. The British blew several mines under the area and these craters can still be seen today. The fierce fighting resulted in three Victoria Crosses being awarded.



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At Hill 60 our young people learned how close the Front Line was between Allies and the German troops. This shocked them as it appeared that only 10 feet separated one line from the other. They also learned how the British modified the captured German bunkers to 'about face' and be ready to fight the enemy.

St George's Memorial Church

Ypres, Belgium



St George's Memorial Church was built to commemorate over 500,000 British and Commonwealth troops who died in the three battles fought for the Ypres Salient.

“THANK YOU”

“How can we ever put into words the emotion we have witnessed today in this heartfelt performance?”

One of the main comments that I would like to express is this; John McCrae would have been moved so deeply that he would have said, ‘thank you’.

What he did and suffered was for the future of people like you.

Thank you.”

**Dame Patricia C. Hawkins-Windsor,
M.B.E. Knight of the Order of
Leopold II**

Our young people were delighted to perform in this historic and important landmark. At the end of their performance they received a tearful standing ovation from the assembled congregation.



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COMMENTS

“Thank you so much for an inspirational and moving performance. You were all amazing.”

“Totally moved to tears.”

“A very moving performance. We were honoured to be here.”

“Congratulations to all of you. It is important to never forget what sacrifices were made for our own freedom.”

“Beautiful performance. Perfect action and coordination. Lovely voices. Well done all.”




“A beautiful, moving performance.”

“Simply beautiful. Congratulations to all of the young people.”

Cloth Hall

Ypres, Belgium



The original Cloth Hall (1300s) lay in ruins after artillery fire destroyed it during WW1. It was meticulously rebuilt in every detail from 1933 to 1967 and houses the In Flanders Fields Museum.

PERFORMING IN THE CENTRE OF HISTORY

"It was a memorable, emotional and superb performance."

K. Lybaert



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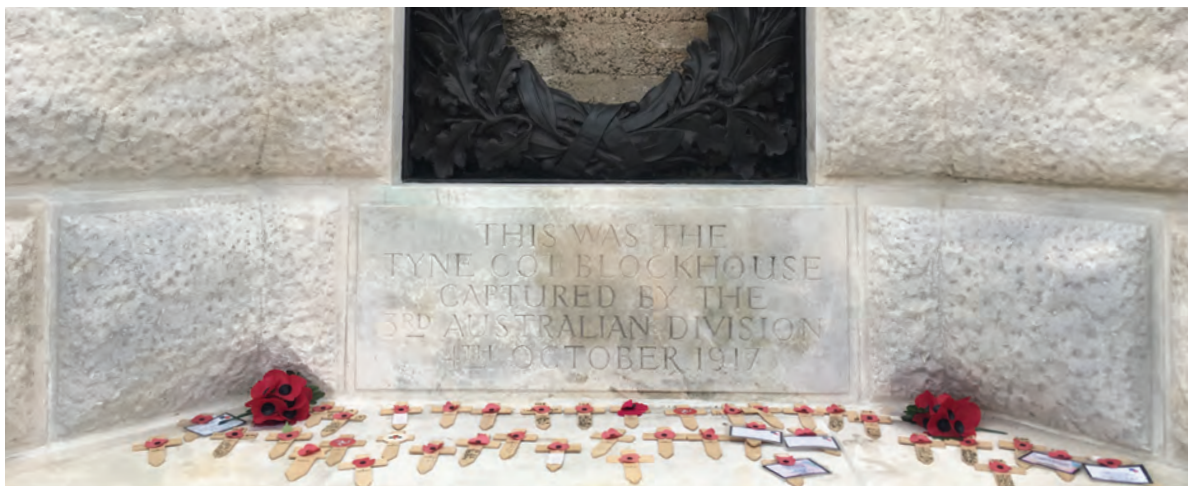
Our young people were approached by veterans at the end of this performance. The veterans and their relatives who witnessed the performance were in tears and wished to express both their appreciation of the performance and their gratitude for 'remembering'. It was a wonderful opportunity for our young people to visit an iconic landmark that is a symbol of strength and rebirth.



Tyne Cot is the largest British and Commonwealth war grave cemetery in the world. Our young people were so moved by the sheer number of graves and names on the walls that we asked the CWGC stewards if we could perform Carved in Stone and The Lord's Prayer. They replied, "It is a rare request, but please do so - it would be most appropriate." At the end of the performance, a number of people, including a German family, thanked the young people for their contribution to their own remembrance.



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Our young people were particularly interested to discover that the name, Tyne Cot, was linked directly to the Northumberland Fusiliers. On taking the area from the Germans, the Fusiliers noted that the German bunkers looked like the small cottages they had seen along the Tyne river.

Essex Farm Cemetery

John McCrae's Farm, Flanders Fields, Belgium

In Flanders Fields
—
*Between the crosses, row on row,
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.*

*We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved, and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders Fields.*

*Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw*

IN FLANDERS FIELDS, THE POPPIES BLOW

Essex Farm was the location of an Advanced Dressing station during the Great War. John McCrae is famously the author of the poem, In Flanders Fields. Our young people visited the bunkers, which still remain at the Farm. As a homage to John McCrae, our young people performed his world-famous poem, In Flanders Fields inside the AD bunkers.



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Some of our young people were able to identify a number of graves that had their own surname inscribed upon them. Many said that they would look into researching their own family's contribution to WWI.

Menin Gate

Ypres, Belgium



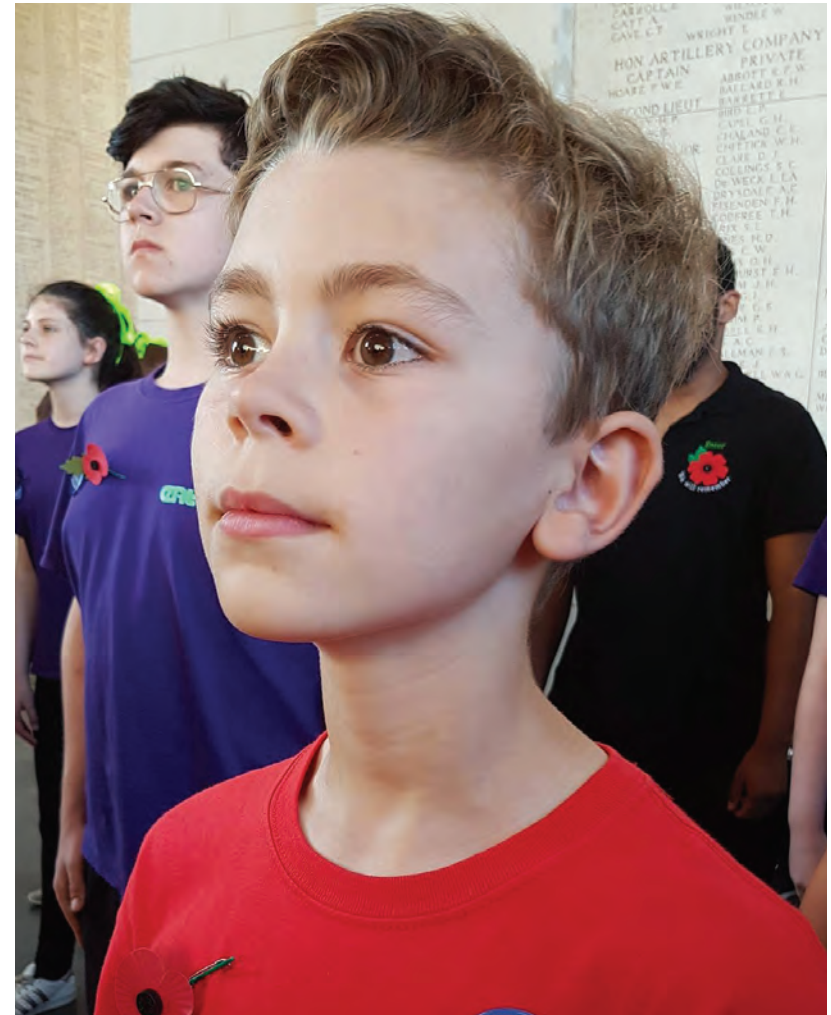
“YOU WENT FROM BEAUTIFUL TO SUBLIME”

The highlight of our tour was performing two original songs at The Menin Gate. We were granted special permission by the Last Post Association to sing two original songs, rather than hymns. The two songs, ‘The Call’ and ‘Carved in Stone’ were written by local composer, Paul Flynn.

Carved in Stone was specially written for our Menin Gate performance and it brought a tear to many people’s eyes.

Our young people were invited to meet the Last Post buglers, as well as servicemen and women.

There were over 3000 people in attendance at the ceremony, which was both moving and inspiring.



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“I’m from Australia. I’ve attended this service over 25 times before and those young people are the best thing I have ever seen at The Menin Gate.”

“Wow! Those young people are very special.”

“Those young people were special - they truly sang from the heart. So powerful.”

“We need more of this.” **Last Post Association representative.**



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Langemaerk German Cemetery

Langemark-Poelkapelle



Our young people wanted to visit this German war cemetery to pay their respects to all of the dead.

Our guide told us that he has rarely seen any German visitors at Langemark.

It is as if they did not want to visit a dark time in their history.

We met and paid our silent respects.

