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JOURNEY to DUNKIRK, THE WESTERN FRONT
& NORMANDY
10 – 15th September 2009

Day One Thursday

After our ferry crossing we will drive to **Dunkirk**. We will start our tour at the sea front at **Malo-les-Bains**. From here we can view the **East Mole** from which the majority of the soldiers were evacuated during **Operation Dynamo**. Our next stop will be the **Dunkirk CWGC Memorial** and cemetery. We will then move east to **Bray Dunes** and **La Panne** where the beach evacuations took place. We will take lunch at **Furnes** (Veurne) on the edge of the defensive perimeter set up by the BEF. At Furnes the Grenadier and Coldstream Guards held off attempts by the Germans to cross the canal for 3 days. After lunch we will visit **Esquelbecq**, scene of an infamous massacre of British troops by the SS. Our last stop of the day will be at **Cassel**. This town was one of the many strongpoints used to delay the German advance on Dunkirk. Two battalions fought to the end to hold this town and gain time for their comrades at Dunkirk. Our Hotel for the next 2 nights is the **Ariane** at Ypres.

Day Two Friday

The morning will be spent in the **Ypres Salient**. We will start on the northern side and cover the events of the **2nd Battle of Ypres** when poison gas was used for the first time by the Germans. We will then move east to **Passchendaele**, an area infamous for the appalling conditions during the **3rd Battle of Ypres**. At **Tyne Cot** we can see the largest CWGC cemetery in the world with nearly 12,000 graves and a memorial to 33,000 men who have no known grave. We shall also visit the **Passchendaele museum** at Zonnebeke.

After lunch, the afternoon will be spent on **Messines Ridge**. On the ridge we will visit an archaeological site exposing German trenches and blockhouses. We will also visit the New Zealand and Irish memorials to commemorate their participation in the capture of the ridge in 1917. Our final stop will be **Plugstreet Wood** and one of the sites of the famous **Christmas Truce of 1914**. This evening we will attend the **Last Post Ceremony at the Menin Gate**.

Day Three Saturday

Today we travel to the area of the 1916 **Battle of the Somme**. En-route we will visit the Canadian memorial on **Vimy Ridge**. Once we arrive at the 'Somme' we will start our tour on the northern edge of the battlefield. Our first stop will be the Sunken Road at **Beaumont Hamel** where the attack of the 1st Lancashire Fusiliers was recorded on cinematography for the first time in modern warfare. Just a short distance takes us to **Newfoundland Park** where we can view and walk through original trench-lines of 1916.

After lunch we will visit the **Ulster memorial** tower near Thiepval Wood before moving on to the **Thiepval Memorial**. The memorial commemorates the names of 73,000 British and South African

soldiers killed on the Somme in 1916 and 1917 who have no known grave. Our next stop will be to **Albert**. The town was held by the British until the German offensive in March 1918, there will be an opportunity to visit the WW1 museum in the town centre.

We now move to the south side of the battlefield and the area of **Delville and High woods**. It was here that the only cavalry action of the Somme took place on the 14th July 1916. Almost 2 months later tanks went into action over the same area of ground. A drive of 45mins will take us to our accommodation at the '**Beatus**' Hotel, Cambrai.

Day Four Sunday

We will leave the hotel at 8.30am for a 1½ hr drive to the **Armistice Museum at Compiègne**. The museum closes at noon when we will depart for Normandy. The drive will take about 3½hrs and allowing for a lunch and coffee shop we should arrive around 5.00pm. After checking in at the Le Clos Normand hotel we can take a 5min drive to **Sword beach** and enjoy a short stroll before returning for our evening meal.

Day Five Monday

The morning will be spent on **Sword Beach**. Low tide is at 1.37pm, at 11.37am it should be at a level close to **H+1 on D-Day** when **LST826 landed the guns of the 76th Field Regiment**. LCT826 beached on **Queen Red** opposite **strongpoint COD** and we shall endeavour to be at this point at 11.37. As well as visiting COD we shall also view some of the other strongpoints that were captured that morning and also the museum housed in the German watchtower at Ouistreham.

After lunch we will move west along Juno to GOLD beach. At **GOLD Beach CSM Stan Hollis** of the Green Howard's won the only **VC** awarded on D-Day and we will follow his action inland to the village of Crépon. Our next stop will be a **German gun battery at La Longues**, this is one of the few batteries that still houses the original guns from D-Day. From the observation post we will be able to see the remains of the **Mulberry harbour at Arromanches**.

Day Six Tuesday

Our last morning will be spent at **Pegasus Bridge** where we will follow the story of Maj John Howard and the **Ox & Bucks Light Infantry** when they landed in their gliders alongside the bridge. Our route to the bridge will follow that of **Lord Lovat's Special Service Brigade** as it marched up from Sword Beach. We will leave the area at 11.35 for our drive to catch the 16.35 ferry at Calais.

***“When you go home tell them of us and say, for your tomorrow we gave our today”
Kohima, 1944***

Our Companions:
Stan and Margaret Stirton
David Morrison

Guide: Sqn Ldr Chris Wesley RAF Retd.