Remembering Trinity’s Fallen in the Third Battle of Ypres

‘I died in hell - (They called it Passchendaele)’ – Siegfried Sassoon

Ten members of Trinity College gave their lives in the Third Battle of Ypres. One of the most terrible battles of the First World War, it was fought in appalling conditions over 105 days between 31 July and 10 November 1917. The battlefield around the town of Leper (Ypres) had been bitterly contested twice before, in the autumn of 1914 and the spring of 1915, and when the shattered ruins of the small village of Passchendaele were finally gained, it was a hollow victory, won at a terrible cost. The fallen numbered 325,000 allied troops, and 260,000 Germans, killed by shelling and rifle fire or dead from infected wounds or simply drowned in the deep and filthy Flanders mud. Over 90,000 of the fallen were never identified; the bodies of 42,000 were never recovered.

On 31 July the fallen of both sides were commemorated in international events held at the Menin Gate in Leper, and at the nearby Tyne Cot Cemetery and Memorial. The Menin Gate records the names of those with no known grave who fell in the Ypres Salient before 17 August 1917, and the Tyne Cot memorial, those who fell after that date.

This photograph of the Tyne Cot memorial stone shows, at the top, wreaths laid by HRH the Prince of Wales, and by His Majesty King Philippe of the Belgians. King Philippe is a member of Trinity College, who studied a special course in constitutional history here in 1983. At the bottom right of this photograph is Trinity wreath laid on behalf of the College by Mr Gordon Davies, great-nephew of David Davies (1915). David was killed in command of a tank on the first day of the battle, and the day before his 20th birthday. We are deeply grateful to Gordon, who, over several days visited and photographed the graves or memorials of each of ‘our’ men.

We Will Remember Them.
Neville E. Baker (1913), Lieutenant, Royal Engineers, attached Tank Corps
Killed in action 31 July 1917, Aged 21
Buried in the Voormezeele Enclosures

David J. Davies (1915), Lieutenant, Machine Gun Corps, attached Tank Corps
Killed in action 31 July 1917, Aged 19
Commemorated on the Menin Gate
William E. Roper (1911), Captain, King's Own (Royal Lancaster Regiment)
Killed in action 31 July 1917, Aged 25
Buried at Vlamertinghe New Military Cemetery

Harold Vaughan (1896), Lieutenant, Royal Field Artillery
Killed in action 31 July 1917, Aged 40
Buried at Canada Farm Cemetery
Maurice Cane (1902), Second Lieutenant, Royal Field Artillery
Killed in action 4 August 1917, Aged 35
Buried at New Irish Farm Cemetery

Noel G. Chavasse (1904), Captain, Royal Army Medical Corps
Died of wounds 4 August 1917, Aged 32
Buried at Brandhoek New Military Cemetery
Laurence A. Joscelyne (1915), Second Lieutenant, Somerset Light Infantry
Died of wounds 1 October 1917, Aged 19.
Buried at Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery

George M. Thornton (1901), Captain, Seaforth Highlanders
Killed in action 22 August 1917, Aged 36
Commemorated on the Tyne Cot Memorial
Alexander E. Barrow (1907) Lieutenant, The Queen's (Royal West Surrey Regiment)
Killed in action 4 October 1917, Aged 29
Commemorated on the Tyne Cot Memorial

Arthur G. Rigby (1912), Captain, West Yorkshire Regiment (Prince of Wales's Own)
Killed in action October 12 1917, Aged 24
Commemorated on Tyne Cot Memorial