

PRESS RELEASE

LIGHT IN THE DARKEST HOUR – FIRST & LAST - Brings the Boys Home 100 years Later

UK EVENT DATE: SHORNCLIFFE MILITARY CEMETERY, SUNDAY 11TH NOVEMBER 2018

On Saturday 10th November in Mons, Belgium, the UK heritage Charity the Shorncliffe Trust will be starting a wholly unique commemorative journey, that sees two specially commissioned Lanterns bring the “Spirit” of all those Canadians and British soldiers back home to the UK and Canada.

The “flame” from Mons, will be carried by representatives of the Trust to the St Symphorien Military Cemetery, where lanterns will be placed on the graves of the “First & Last” British and Canadian Soldiers who lay side by side.

The two specially created Lanterns “Maple” & “Tommy” will then be transported back to Shorncliffe Camp, Folkestone which the Canadian Army called “home” in WW1. The two Lanterns have been custom designed for the 2018 “Light in the Darkest Hour” (LITDH). The Canadian “Maple” Lantern incorporates an original WW1 Canadian Maple Leaf cap badge as its emblem, whilst the British “Tommy” Lantern has an original WW1 brass British general service uniform button as its emblem.

On the 11th November at Shorncliffe Camp, Folkestone the Lanterns will return through the gates of the Camp and onwards to Shorncliffe Military Cemetery, where the flame from Mons will light 500 lanterns on the Graves of British, Canadian (305 soldiers), Chinese, South African, American, Australian, Irish and Portuguese WW1 graves.

The next leg of the Lanterns will be to transport the “Maple” Lantern home to Canada and finally bring the spirit of all those men and women who never returned – back home to their communities and families.

Shorncliffe Camp was home to the Canadian Army in WW1 and their sons are still remembered every Canada Day at Shorncliffe by the local children who place flowers on their graves a proud tradition that started in 1919 as the Canadians finally went home.

Sir Peter Jackson and Sir Michael Morpurgo are supporters of The Shorncliffe Trust who are fighting to save the WW1 heritage at Shorncliffe Camp which is being demolished for housing and to preserve the original WW1 training trenches that are still there.

Light in the Darkest Hour 2018 is also dedicated to the families of the fallen – the “pieces” that had to be picked up, the lives, families and communities that had to be rebuilt after the war, to all our families whose loved ones served during 1914 to 1918. Light in the Darkest Hour 2018 hopes to help heal that sense of loss still felt by so many families in the UK and Canada of not knowing where they are or having chance to visit the fallen.

NB: Members of the public are invited to dedicate individual lanterns to be placed on the WW1 graves to their own loved ones with donations made supporting the educational purposes of the Trust. Further details will be available on the Trust’s website.

*The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die.*
In Flanders Field, John McCrea 1915

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Editors Notes:

- Shorncliffe Camp was the birthplace of the first Royal Canadian Regiment in 1850
- During WW1 60,000's Canadian's called Shorncliffe their "home"
- The local communities became so close to the Canadian soldiers, they even picked up the language "EH"!
- 305 Soldiers from WW1, from across Canada are buried at Shorncliffe Military Cemetery
- Shorncliffe Military cemetery is an active cemetery and holds 3 VC winners.
- The Shorncliffe Trust is an educational organisation and hosted a special commemoration for over 300 Canadian Cadets in 2017 – to mark the 100th Anniversary of Vimy.
- The First and Last Cemetery; St. Symphorien Military Cemetery is located just outside of Mons. This cemetery is significant as it is recognised as the final resting place of the first and last commonwealth casualties of the First World War. John Parr was killed on 21st August age just 17. The last recognised British casualty of the war died on 11th November 1918 and is Pvt George Ellison, age 40; on the same day at 2 minutes before the 11am ceasefire; the last Canadian Casualty is recorded as 25-year-old; Pvt George Lawrence Price, of the 28th 'Northwest' Battalion Canadian Infantry (Saskatchewan Regiment) aka. 'the Nor'westers'.



"Maple & Tommy"
The LITDH 2018 Lanterns



Press Release Issue Date: 28th October 2018

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