

Press release: PM to pay a nation's respects at Armistice Commemorations in Belgium and France

Prime Minister Theresa May will visit Belgium and France today (Friday 9 Nov) to pay a nation's respects and remember those who died in the First World War.

She will attend ceremonies alongside French President Emmanuel Macron and Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel and lay wreaths to the fallen at two of Europe's most prominent war memorials.

Prime Minister Theresa May said:

A century ago British forces fought side by side with our allies in Europe on the Western Front. Today in France and Belgium we reflect on our shared history, but also look ahead to our shared future, built on peace, prosperity and friendship.

At St Symphorien I will have the honour of laying a wreath on behalf of a nation at the graves of both John Parr and George Ellison, the first and last UK soldiers to die during the War. That their graves lie opposite each other is a fitting and poignant symbol that brings home the eternal bond between them, and every member of the Armed Forces who gave their lives to protect what we hold so dear.

We remember the heroes who lost their lives in the horror of the trenches. As the sun sets on one hundred years of remembrance, we will never forget their sacrifice.

The Prime Minister will start the day with a visit to St Symphorien Military Cemetery in Mons. There she will lay a wreath at the graves of John Parr, the first UK soldier to be killed in 1914, and the last, George Ellison, who was killed on the Western Front at 9.30am before the Armistice became effective at 11am.

She will be joined by Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel. The pair will then attend a reception in Mons where they will meet British and Belgian serving armed forces.

The PM will then travel to France where she will meet President Macron in Albert, an historic town at the heart of the Somme region, which suffered significant bombardment during the First World War.

The leaders will hold a private meeting and a working lunch before departing for a wreath laying ceremony at the Thiépval Memorial. The memorial is the

site of a major annual commemorative event for the Missing of the Somme and bears the names of more than 72,000 members of the Armed Forces who died in the battle.

A special wreath will be made for the occasion combining poppies and le bleuets, the two national emblems of remembrance for Britain and France.

On Saturday, the Prime Minister will attend the Royal British Legion Festival of Remembrance at the Royal Albert Hall.

On Remembrance Sunday, she will lay a wreath at the Cenotaph and attend the national service to mark the Centenary of the Armistice at Westminster Abbey.