

Press release: Welsh Secretary meets Welsh Veterans in Cardiff

Commonly known as Passchendaele, the battle is remembered as one of the bloodiest campaigns of the First World War.

Units of the 38th Welsh Division, which had fought bravely in the actions at Mametz Wood a year previously, found themselves on the front line at Passchendaele. The renowned Welsh language poet, Hedd Wyn was also killed in battle here on 31 July 1917 and is buried at the nearby Artillery Wood cemetery, close to Ypres.

Ahead of his visit to Belgium this weekend, the Welsh Secretary has taken the opportunity to meet with veterans at Royal British Legion's Cardiff Pop In to underline the gratitude and respect the people of Wales have for the sacrifices they made

Mr Cairns recognises the importance of honouring Welsh Veterans:

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

The First World War centenary commemorations are playing a crucial role in educating and connecting current and future generations with the stories of every man or woman whose lives were touched by this significant event in our history.

We are privileged to have a long and proud military history in Wales and it is a huge honour today to meet with Welsh veterans that have lived through a range of conflicts over the years. The sacrifices that they and so many others made to ensure our future security cannot be forgotten and it is crucial that it is understood and appreciated by those growing up today.

The work that the Legion does to improve the lives of the armed forces community cannot be underestimated. It plays such a critical role from awarding grants, offering emotional support and comradeship and ensuring the nation comes together to remember. These veterans truly are an inspiration. They gave so much and for that we owe them a great deal.

Ant Metcalfe, Wales Area Manager, The Royal British Legion said:

We look forward to welcoming the Secretary of State and members of our veteran community to the Pop In today to discuss current veterans issues as well as the importance of remembering the fallen from past conflicts. As the nation's biggest Armed Forces charity and the custodians of Remembrance the Legion work to provide care

and support to all members of the British Armed Forces past and present and their families.

Notes to editors

Welsh forces in Passchendaele

- The Third Battle of Ypres is of particular resonance for Wales as it claimed the lives of many Welsh soldiers including the renowned Welsh language poet, Hedd Wyn. Hedd Wyn was killed on 31 July 1917 and is buried at the nearby Artillery Wood cemetery, close to Ypres.
- Units of the 38th Welsh Division, which had fought bravely in the actions at Mametz Wood a year previously, found themselves on the front line at the Third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele). The 38th (Welsh) Division were heavily involved at Pilckem Ridge. Alongside the experienced troops were who had seen action in the Battle of the Somme were new recruits who had been conscripted in early 1917.
- During the action three Welshmen won the Victoria Cross, Sergeant Ivor Rees 11th South Wales Borderers, Corporal James Llewellyn Davies 13th Royal Welsh Fusiliers and Sergeant Robert Bye 1st Welsh Guards. The 38th (Welsh) Division sustained a total of 2,922 casualties during the actions of 31st July and 2nd August.