

# [Press release: Welsh Secretary to mark centenary of Battle of Passchendaele](#)

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns will today (31 July) travel to Belgium to join thousands of descendants of First World War soldiers in services of remembrance for those who fought and died in the Battle of Passchendaele.

The battle of Passchendaele was fought near Ypres between 31 July and 10 November 1917, in battlefields that turned to liquid mud. It is remembered as one of the bloodiest of the First World War and one that took the lives of 2,992 soldiers from The 38th (Welsh) division.

Welsh poet Hedd Wynn, who was killed on the first day of Passchendaele, will also be honoured at the services.

The Secretary of State for Wales will honour the memories of the fallen Welsh soldiers at the UK Government and Welsh Government's centenary commemorations.

## **Welsh Secretary Alun Cairns said:**

The centenary commemorations of Passchendaele offer a unique opportunity to bring us together as a nation – to honour the lives and bravery of all those who served in the war – both in the military and on the home front.

I am privileged to be here to pay my own personal respects to the Welsh soldiers who played a pivotal role in the bloodiest of battlefields.

Whether we reflect on the horrors of war, remember family members who served, or visit a memorial, the centenary of the First World War provides an opportunity to better understand our past – and how it still shapes us today.

With no living veterans of the First World War, their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren stand at the heart of the UK Government's official centenary commemorations which will be held amongst the 12,000 gravestones and the Memorial Wall to the Missing at the Tyne Cot Cemetery.

Mr Cairns will then travel to the Wales commemorations at the Welsh National Memorial in Flanders where he will lay a wreath at the feet of the red bronze dragon on behalf of the UK Government. He will later join the First Minister of Wales Carwyn Jones on a tour of Artillery Wood Cemetery where Hedd Wyn was laid to rest.

Ahead of his visit to Belgium, the Welsh Secretary took the opportunity to

meet with veterans at the Cardiff branch of the Royal British Legion to underline the gratitude and respect the people of Wales have for the sacrifices they made.

### **Mr Cairns added:**

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 work that the British 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.

### **Notes to editors**

- The Centenary of Passchendaele, the Third Battle of Ypres is a key part of the UK Government's four year programme to commemorate the First World War.
- The Welsh Memorial is located at Boezingestraat 158, 8920 Langemark-Poelkapelle, Belgium.
- During the action of the Third Battle of Ypres 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.