


As the FA Cup Comes to Aireville, students pay their own unique tribute to Heroes of the Great War *read on*

Aireville students have taken part in two major events remembering the courage and sacrifice shown by the generation who served in the Great War (1914 - 18). In the month when the last British combat veteran of the First World War passed away, 47 students and staff made their annual pilgrimage to some of the key sites of the war. However, this year's event was unique in also marking the centenary of Bradford City's FA Cup Final triumph, and the tragic fate that befell some of the nation's football heroes just a few years later. Bradford City's Captain, and scorer of the winning goal in the 1911 Cup Final, Jimmy Speirs, was killed at Passchendaele in 1917. By this time the war had already claimed the life of Donald Bell, who played for Bradford Park Avenue FC. Bell was the first professional footballer to volunteer for service in 1914 and won the Victoria Cross before he was killed on the Somme in 1916.

With generous financial support from the Professional Footballers' Association and from Toffs Limited, the link between the War and football was marked by each member of the tour party being provided with a vintage-style football shirt to be worn in tribute to the fallen heroes. To celebrate this special event representatives from the PFA, Bradford City FC, Bradford Park Avenue, the Yorkshire Regiment, local dignitaries and from other local organisations were invited to Aireville on 26th April when they met students and learned more about the connections between Craven, football and the First World War.

Lest we Forget  Staff and students remember the fallen heroes of Craven in France and Belgium

As staff and students left for their annual pilgrimage to the Battlefields of France and Belgium emotions experienced ten days earlier at Aireville became even more poignant, with moving scenes not only at the gravesides and memorials to Jimmy Speirs and Donald Bell, but also at the sites where so many of the young men of Craven gave their lives between 1914 and 1918. History teacher and lifelong Bradford City fan, Mr. Fitzgerald, led a fitting tribute to Jimmy Speirs and students remembered his achievements, and those of Donald Bell, with a minute's applause. Aireville students also laid a wreath at the Menin Gate in Ypres, where a memorial service continues to be held every day to remember the human cost of the Great War.

Other highlights of the four day trip were visits to the vast memorials at Thiepval and Tyne Cot, and to the Canadian memorials at Vimy Ridge and the French National Cemetery at Notre Dame de Lorette. There were also pilgrimages to some of the less well known locations where local casualties lie buried, such as Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery, where local man, Reuben Smith, was buried in 1917. Reuben was one of six brothers from Addingham who all served. At this same cemetery the group took part in one of the most poignant moments of the visit when Year 10 student Jack Andrews was able to pay his own personal respects to his ancestor, Richard Oldfield, who was killed in 1915 - aged just 19.