

Students retrace steps of Canadian soldiers at this year's Canadian Battlefields Tour



King's History professor Graham Broad and Western professor Andrew Iarocci supervised a group of students at this year's Canadian Battlefields Foundation Study Tour from May 26 – June 9, 2013. The group had the opportunity to tour across the Canadian battlefields in Europe and learn about the role Canadians played in the World Wars. King's alumna Colleen Malloy '12 (History) shares her experience abroad and the important lessons learned on the trip.

The Canadian Battlefields Foundation aims to foster an awareness of Canada's involvement in the World Wars. Its bursary program allows twelve university students from across the country to travel to Europe and explore the battlefields, monuments, and cemeteries of the Wars. However, the Foundation offers more than just funding. It is a chance to learn about the sacrifices Canadians made for our freedom, mourn those sacrifices, and commemorate them. It is an educational and emotional journey that is sure to be incredibly rewarding.

I was lucky enough to be a part of this year's tour which focused on the Canadian campaigns in France and Belgium. The group spent two weeks retracing the steps of the brave Canadian soldiers who came before us. In doing so, we were able to explore the Wars in a way not even the best history books could allow us to do. We visited sites that were places of great sacrifice, bravery, destruction, life, and death. Although we had made a long, physical voyage to these spots, we arrived only to begin a new journey. This one took us to the far corners of our minds, encouraging us to contemplate the mechanics of tactical maneuvers, the meaning of war, and the importance of remembrance and commemoration.

From the Ypres Salient, to the beaches of Normandy and all the battlefields, monuments, and cemeteries that lay between, we learned more about Canada's collective and individual contributions to preserve peace and freedom. Participating in D-Day ceremonies alongside veterans who had fought in those momentous battles many years prior filled us with a sense of wonderment, pride, and gratitude. The Wars

are parts of the past that are still very much with us, something evident not only in the European landscape, but in the people themselves. We had the privilege of meeting some who lived through WWII and to this day, remain extremely aware of and forever grateful for the sacrifices Canadians made. Many of these Europeans were only too eager to share their memories with a group of traveling students who were just as anxious to hear the stories that never made it into the history books.

War is more than the battlefields in which deadly action took place. It is also about people, societies, and cultures. The trip was an opportunity to explore all of these aspects, thus satisfying the varying interests of its participants, and bringing us closer to an understanding of the past and its place in the present.

To learn more about the Canadian Battlefields Foundation Study Tour, please visit www.cbf-fccb.ca/