

Trinidad and Tobago lays wreath during commemoration of Memorial Day in Belgium

On the occasion of Memorial Day, the Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs is pleased to inform that on 11 November 2021, representatives of the Embassy of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago to the Kingdom of Belgium laid a wreath on behalf of Trinidad and Tobago to honour our country's war dead during the commemoration of the 103rd Anniversary of the signing of the armistice on 11 November 1918 which ended the First World War on the "eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month" in 1918. Addressing the gathering and also laying a wreath was His Excellency Alexander De Croo, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium.

The commemoration took place at the Menin Gate in Ieper or Ypres, Belgium located in Flanders Fields which inspired the use of the poppy to become the universal symbol of remembrance.

Notably one of the most well-known memorials in the world, Menin Gate shows the names of over 54,000 members of the British and Commonwealth forces who died in Ieper/Ypres or have no known grave, as well as all who served there.

The Embassy of Trinidad and Tobago expressed an interest in paying its respects at Menin Gate after conducting significant research through the Commonwealth War Graves Commission which revealed the existence of war graves in Belgium of ten (10) persons connected to Trinidad and Tobago who paid the ultimate sacrifice during World Wars I and II. They served with the British or Canadian forces and were said to have been born in, were from or whose parents were from Trinidad.

Participation in this Special Last Post was the culmination of the Embassy's own floral and flag tribute to these ten (10) deceased who are buried in Commonwealth war cemeteries in Belgium. With the greatest of respect to existing family members of the deceased, the Ministry is publishing the names of the Trinidad and Tobago nationals for the purposes of the historical record of our countrymen's service to the war effort at the time. They are:

- James Syder who died at the age of 23
- Sydney George Syder who died at the age of 21
- Oliver Vernon Gibbon who died at the age of 24
- Hugh Hay Miller who died at the age of 22
- Ruthven Ignatius Pegus who died at the age of 27
- Philip McIntosh Mc Donald whose age at death is unknown
- Frank Vernon Bonyun who died at the age of 18
- Clement Forte Cave who died at the age of 24
- Thomas Michael Cipriani who died at the age of 22
- Collins Alwyn Joseph who died at the age of 28

The Embassy's tribute was in accordance with guidance on military protocol for such occasions provided by the Ministry of National Security and the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force.

Since 11 November 1929, the Last Post ceremony takes place at 8 p.m. every day of the year underneath the Menin Gate in Ieper, Belgium, except during the Second World War. It typically comprises a parade, a halt of traffic, a call to attention, the Last Post, one minute's silence, the laying of wreaths, flags, banners, standards and reveille.

On special occasions however, such as on 11 November 2021 at 11 a.m., a Special Last Post is held. Embassies of a very limited number of nations are invited to attend the event.

The Embassy of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago in Belgium was honoured to have been successful in its request to pay its respects to our fallen on this occasion. It was a moving and solemn occasion.

The officials of the Embassy ended by visiting the Tyne Cot Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery and Memorial, reported to be the largest war cemetery for Commonwealth forces in the world.

Persons seeking further information can visit the website of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission: <https://www.cwgc.org/>

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