



## The Journey

My journey to Caestre started when I received a phone call from Pipe Major Andrew Venters asking me why I had not put up a request from Pipe Major Yves Holbecq of the Somme Battlefield Pipe Band requesting an advert to go on the Cabarfeidh website regarding a service they were holding for seven Seaforth Highlanders, soldiers of the 7th Bt Seaforth Highlanders who were killed in a barn at Le Thieushouck-Fletre, on June 6th 1918. I advised P.M. Andrew Venters that I had not received such an e mail but I would look into it right away.

I got in touch with P.M. Holbecq and asked him to forward me the details of the service and I would put it on the website which I did. He was so pleased with the prompt service he received from Cabarfeidh .com that he invited me across to the service. After discussing with she who must be obeyed and my good friend Frank Early who lives in Belgium, to arrange accommodation which he kindly granted, I then decided to get in touch with Ian ( Shumph ) MacKenzie to see if he would like to accompany me which he did. I also approached Major General Peter Grant Peterkin to see if the association could help in any way to fund my journey and within two days he came back to let me know that himself and Brigadier Nick Ridley had decide to allow me £200 from the Association funds towards my expenses, for which I thank them both very much.

## Lets go back seven years

Seven years ago Mr Didier Godders bought a farm at Le Thieushouck-Fletre in France. After purchasing the farm he found out that his barn had been blown up by the German army along with seven Seaforth Highlanders of the 7th Bt Seaforth Highlanders during the First World War. After the war the barn was rebuilt and stands in the same place today. He was also advised that the soldiers were buried at Caestre Military Cemetery about 2 Kms away from the farm in the middle of a farmer's field. He then decided that he wanted to find out if there was any family alive who were related to the soldiers. He started his search by placing an appeal in some Scottish newspapers and eventually traced families of each of the seven soldiers. He then decided that he would like to turn the barn into a Museum in their honour and invite the families across to the ceremony. Two of the families of the seven soldiers accepted the invitation.

## The Ceremony

On Friday 8th June we flew out to Brussels where we were picked up and taken to the home of my friends Frank and Brigette Early. On Saturday the 9th June Frank and Brigette drove us to the area of Ypres where we first visited a Monastery Brewery and then we went to meet up with the families of the soldiers at a local restaurant at Fletre, where we also met for the first time Didier Godders. During my conversation with him he took me by surprise when he asked if Ian and I would unveil the Seaforth Highlanders plaque the next day at his farm. You can imagine how honoured I felt to be asked to perform this ceremony as I know Ian did.

In the evening we attended the ceremony at the Menin Gate after having a lovely meal in one of the many restaurants in Ypres and tasting one or two of the local beers.

## Sunday Service.

On Sunday 10th June 2012 we assembled at Caestre near the City hall, along with the soldiers' families, Harmony Brass band, Standard Bearers, Officials, the Somme Battlefield Pipe band, and a First World War Re-enactment group. We then marched to the cemetery about 1 km away. A service was held and wreaths were laid.

Ian and I laid the wreath on behalf of The Seaforth Highlanders association.

The service finished by singing the British and French national anthems.

We then made our way to Le Thieushouck where there were speeches by Mr Godders and Ms Ricour, Lady Mayor of Fletre.

The unveiling of both the plaques then took place. The first plaque was in memory of the seven fallen soldiers and had their name rank and number engraved on the plaque. (see photo) The other plaque was a replica of a plaque erected by the Seaforth Highlanders to the memory of all Seaforth Highlanders of the ten battalions who gave their lives in the 1914 – 1918 war.

At this point the families presented Mr Godders and the lady Mayor Ms Ricour with framed prints of the Seaforth Highlanders.

We were then given a conducted tour round the small museum and a lunch in Mr Godders garden. Entertainment was provided by the Re-enactment group which you will see in the photographs.

The day ended with much hand shaking and kissing of cheeks to the many friends we had made.

Please see photos on Photo page.

If you require further information please get in touch.

Seoras McIntosh

15-06-2012