



Year 6 School Journey Hooke Court: Monday 26th November 2018!



After a short journey without any hiccups along the way (well, only the small difficulty of turning down the wrong country lane and having to reverse the double-decker coach safely back to where we needed to be!), we arrived at Hooke Court, Dorset.

There was no rest for the wicked here! We were straight in for lunch and met by Captain Alan and Captain Simon within the hour. Warm clothes on, boot laces tied up and standing to attention, our WW1 experience begun. Hands by our sides and most definitely not in our pockets (you know who you are if you didn't follow orders!), we set off to 'sign-on' to the British Army and pledge our allegiances to our crown and country. Not a Bic biro (other brands are available) in sight but instead we rolled back the clock to 1917 and used ink to sign the dotted line. We must admit, many of us didn't really know what we signed ourselves up to but then that isn't too dissimilar to how the young men felt who went off to war.

Sign-on complete, oath taken and payment received, it was time for weapons training. There were pistols which we learnt were used in a devastating way against members of the British Army, rifles, hand grenades and bayonets that had been taken from the Battle of the Somme – wow!

With weapons training now finished, it was time to learn how to march in formation and it must be said that Platoon B – headed up by Miss Mizon, Mrs Lunn and Ms Pidgeon – earned their stripes and came out on top. It was tricky learning all the different commands, learning the skill of balancing our rifles, staying in straight lines and marching in perfect synchronicity yet we did it and by the end had two perfect platoons ready for battle! We predict there might be some fine officers who come out from here and proceed through the ranks the next two days!

A little bit of well-deserved down time was to follow with dormitories being announced, beds being made and bags being unpacked. So far, so good! But it's fair to say...some were better at making their beds than others and they've been told that upon returning to home they need to help in the home and make a few more beds!

Boots laced up once again, and this time as many layers on as possible. It was time for dinner (pasta Bolognese with apple crumble for dessert) and then an evening round the campfire in our trench camp. Despite the biting cold, across the fields we marched and were in awe at watching the moon rise and seeing it turn from a deep, rich red, through to orange and finally the glistening white we know and love. Not to mention we were able to stop and spot the constellations too with Captain Alan giving us a lesson in star-gazing.

It wasn't long until we were sat round Captain Simon's fire, passing the time with well-known songs sung by the young men who went to war and telling stories. Think 'Run, Rabbit, Run, Rabbit' and 'It's a long way to Tipperary' to name just a couple of the tunes we learnt!

As it was time to depart, the mist set in over No-Man's-Land and we had to negotiate our way through the trenches in the cold, dark conditions just as the men did in 1917. We had to avoid the low ceilings, barbed wire and other creatures scuttling in the night but we made it back to the safety of our dormitories and all tucked up by 10pm ready for a good nights sleep.

Check back in tomorrow at 9am for the next instalment of life here in 1917...it's a long day out in the trenches for us troops where we'll be cooking our lunch over a fire in camp, learning how to go 'over-the-top', earning our opportunities for promotion to Officer and spending the evening having dinner in the Officer's Mess! We wonder who will be the unlucky ones to not survive life in the trenches and must serve the troops?

Please follow the link to see images and videos from throughout our first day here. When we return we will upload them all to the school website! <https://twitter.com/StStephensCofE>