



Activity report 2018 Last Post Association, Ieper (Belgium)

The Last Post Association is an independent, voluntary, non-profit organization. It was the Association that first founded the Last Post Ceremony back in 1928 and it is the Association that today is still responsible for the day-to-day organization of this unique act of homage at the Menin Gate Memorial in Ieper.



This document is the activity report for the year 2018 (01/01/2018 - 31/12/2018), the 90th year of activity of the Last Post Association.

1. The ceremony

The daily Last Post has been performed each single day of the year 2018 at 8.00 PM under the Menin Gate. Again, many visitors attended the daily ceremony.

Please find below an overview of the most important ceremonies under and outside the Menin Gate in 2018:

- 17/01/2018: Brigadier E. Williams & Brigadier C. Parsons NZDF London
- 29/01/2018: Farewell to Commander Emma Gaudry and Sophie Rice (Australia)
- 14/02/2018: Ron Mark, Minister of Defence of New Zealand
- 05/03/2018: Joseph Mwanamvekha, Minister for Agriculture for Malawi and Geert Bourgeois, Minister-President Flemish Government
- 19/03/2018: Wolfgang Schneiderhahn, Chairman Volksbund für Kriegsgräber Fürsorge
- 24/03/2018: UCI & organization Gent-Wevelgem



- 04/04/2018: The 31,000th Last Post
- 06/04/2018: Lieutenant General Richard Nugee, Chief of Defence People UK
- 09/04/2018: Dr Brendan Nelson, Australian War Memorial
- 13/04/2018: Winston Peters, Minister of Foreign Affairs New Zealand
- 23/04/2018: England Rugby Football Union
- 23/04/2018: Delegation Last Post Association to New York
- 25/04/2018: Anzac Day
- 27/04/2018: Major General Greg Melick, Australian War Memorial
- 28/04/2018: Delegation Parliament New Zealand
- 08/05/2018: Commemoration of the end of the Second World War
- 11/05/2018: 100 km of Ieper
- 31/05/2018: Australian Cricket Team
- 16/06/2018: Order of St John & St John Ambulance
- 30/06/2018: Lieutenant Governor Judy M. Foote, & Dwight Ball, Premier of Newfoundland-Labrador
- 05/07/2018: 90 Years Last Post Association



- 06/07/2018: Andrew King, Mayor of Hamilton (New Zealand)
- 16/07/2018: Delegation Parliament New Zealand
- 08/08/2018: The Great Pilgrimage 90
- 23/08/2018: The Polish Ambassador
- 24/08/2018: The Fours Days of the Yser
- 27/08/2018: Gerdi Verbeet, national chairman Committee 4 & 5 May (Holland)
- 07/09/2018: Band of the Scots Guards
- 03/10/2018: Victoria Police Shrine Guard (Australia)
- 24/10/2018: COMECE (Commission of Bishops to the European Union)



- 05/11/2018: The unveiling of the replica lions of the Menin Gate and the lying in state of two unknown Australian soldiers
- 09 & 11/11/2018: Concert The Great War Remembered
- 11/11/2018: Commemoration Armistice
 - o at 11.00 AM – traditional ceremony
 - o at 8.00 PM – official ceremony with Belgian King Filip and Queen Mathilde
- 22/11/2018: Honorary citizenship of the City of Ieper for Dr Brendan Nelson, AWM
- 29/11/2018: Farewell to Scott Clingan, Andrew Coburn & Jennifer Stephenson (Australia)
- 07/12/2018: International U12 Christmas Truce Football Tournament
- 15/12/2018: Sir Michael Morpurgo

In brief: the year 2018, the last year of the centenary commemoration, was again a very busy year in the history of the Last Post Association. The hard work of the ceremonial assistants of the Last Post Association and the presence of the police were really needed and is highly appreciated.

2. Some remarkable facts of the year 2018

- Farewell to Commander Emma Gaudry and Sophie Rice (Australia) – 29/01/2018

On Monday 29 January 2018, the Last Post Association said goodbye to Commander Emma Gaudry and Sophie Rice. For many years, they worked at the Australian Embassy in Brussels and attended the ceremony on numerous occasions.

- The 31,000th Last Post – 04/04/2018

On Wednesday 4 April 2018, the daily Last Post was performed for the 31,000th time at the Menin Gate. For the first time, everyone could follow the ceremony through a livestream on the Facebook page of the Association.



- Delegation Last Post Association in New York

On Monday 23 April 2018, the Last Post Association travelled from Ieper to New York. The members of the delegation were director Mathieu Mottrie and buglers Rik Vandekerckhove and Filip Deramoudt. They travelled to New York on the invitation of Belgian King Filip, Queen Mathilde and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Didier Reynders.



The visit was part of the Belgian campaign for the UN Security Council. In one of the UN-buildings, the King and Queen opened the exhibition *World War One – Far From Home*. On the request of the King and Queen, the buglers of the Last Post Association attended a remembrance ceremony and played the Last Post.



- Anzac Day: 103rd anniversary of the landing at Gallipoli – 25/04/2018

Each year, on 25 April, the day of the landing at Gallipoli (Turkey), Australia and New Zealand remember their fallen of the Great War. The buglers of the Last Post Association sounded the Last Post during the dawn service at Buttes Cemetery at Zonnebeke. Important delegations from Australia and New Zealand attended the daily Last Post on 24 & 25/04/2018 as well as the special Last Post on Tuesday, 25 April 2018 at 11.15 AM.

- 90 Years Last Post Association – 05/07/2018

At the occasion of the 90th anniversary of the Last Post Association a special ceremony took place at the Menin Gate on Thursday 5 July 2018. The Chorus Choir and the Australian Army Band participated in the ceremony.

The ceremony was attended by Darren Chester, Minister of Veterans' Affairs of Australia and mayor Andrew King of Hamilton, New Zealand (the city of whom the Last Post Association holds the city keys). And by many other VIP's and members of the Last Post Association from Belgium, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Germany, Ireland, the United States, Australia, New Zealand and different other countries.



Before and after the ceremony, a reception took place in the inner court of the cloth hall with a number of speeches. The reception was also a moment to say thank you to all the members who support the work and mission of the Last Post Association.



This ceremony was also livestreamed on the Facebook page of the Last Post Association.

- The Great Pilgrimage 90 – 08/08/2018

In the biggest membership event in its history, The Royal British Legion recreated its 1928 pilgrimage to World War One battlefields on Wednesday, 8 August 2018. A decade after the end of WW1, ± 10,000 veterans and war widows visited the battlefields of the Somme and Ypres before marching to the Menin Gate in Ypres on 8 August 1928.

Exactly 90 years later, ± 2,500 Legion members recreated the 1928 Great Pilgrimage to visit the same battlefields and then, on 8 August 2018, carried their standards along the same route to the Menin Gate, and commemorated the last 100 days of WW1 and represented an entire generation that served while defending their country. A special Last Post was organized on 08/08/2018 at 12.00 o'clock.



A big thank you goes to John Underhill, patron of the Last Post Association, who co-initiated this event.

- Band of the Scots Guards – 07/09/2018

On Friday 7 September 2018, the Last Post Association again welcomed the Band of the Scots Guards in Ieper. The Band played during the daily ceremony and the public was able to admire their musical talent after the ceremony.

- Inauguration of the replica lions of the Menin Gate and the lying in state of two unknown Australian soldiers – 05/11/2018

On initiative of Dr Brendan Nelson, patron of the Last Post Association and director of the Australian War Memorial, the original stone lions of the Menin Gate returned to Ieper in 2017. In 1936, the City of Ieper donated them to Australia as a token of appreciation for their part in the Great War. Since many years, these lions now stand in the entrance hall of the Australian War Memorial.

From the moment of their unveiling the lions were a point of interest for many people and many pictures were taken of the lions. A lot of people wanted the lions to remain in place on a permanent basis as they were an added value to the Menin Gate. On 25 September 2017, the Australian Government announced, through Minister for Veterans' Affairs Dan Tehan, that they would donate replica lions to the City of Ieper.



On Monday 5 November 2018, the replica lions were officially unveiled during a special ceremony which took place at 6.00 PM. The ceremony was organized in collaboration with the City of Ieper, the Australian Government and the Australian War Memorial. All the people of Ieper were welcome to participate in this historical event. After the unveiling, the public was able to watch a documentary on big screen about the return of the original stone lions from Australia to Ieper in 2017.



The daily Last Post took place at 8.00 PM with the lying in state of two Australian soldiers of World War I, whose remains were recently discovered. The burial of soldiers took place the next day at Tyne Cot Cemetery at Passendale.

- Armistice: 11 November 2017

Together with the city of Ieper, the Last Post Association organized the 11.00 AM special ceremony at the occasion of the centenary anniversary of the Armistice of 1918. The ceremony was musically supported by the Royal St. Martin's and St. Nicholas Men Choir and the Ypriana Band. The public could again follow the ceremony on the large screen on the market square in Ieper.

The official ceremony for the centenary of Armistice took place at 8.00 PM in the presence of Belgian King Filip and Queen Mathilde. The public was also able to follow this ceremony on the big screen on the market square.

On 11 November 2018 a record number of remembrance visitors were in Ieper. All hotels and accommodation facilities were fully booked from months before. The Flemish television VRT made a live broadcast from the market square in Ieper.

On initiative of the Royal British Legion Ieper thousands of red cardboard poppies were planted on the grass next to the Menin Gate.



The Last Post Association had an information stand under the Nieuwerck on the market square of Ieper and this as well on Saturday 10 as on Sunday 11 November 2018. The new ties of the Last Post Association were on display and available.



- Concert The Great War Remembered – 11/11/2018

On 11 November 2018, the 15th edition of the Great War Remembered Concert took place in the St. Martin's Cathedral in Ieper. For the 9th consecutive year the Last Post Association worked together with the Royal Yprian Band under the lead of director Nico Logghe. The Chorus Choir from Ieper again participated and was reinforced by the Altra Voce Choir from Kortrijk. The Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Corps of Drums also participated in the concert.

The theme of the concert was 'Armistice' since it was exactly 100 years after the end of war on 11/11/1918. The concert was organized in the broader remembrance programme for Ieper and Zonnebeke which was realized under the initiative of Geert Bourgeois, Minister-President of Flanders and by Westtoer. Through their financial support a number of additional efforts could be made for the concert 2018: a professional director with Bart Cafmeyer and the presence of solo artists Wannas Cappelle, Ralph McTell, Ozark Henry, Lies Verholle and Mark Ellis Gough. Extra efforts on sound and light and a led screen further improved the concert.

The central theme throughout the concert was the story of the Belgian soldier Emiel De Zegher who married with Wini Crawford from Great Britain.



Due to the overwhelming request for tickets, three editions of the concert were organized. And this for the first time on Friday 9 November at 8.30 PM and on Sunday 11 November 2018 at 2.30 PM and 5.00 PM. The Last Post Association welcomed more than 2,500 spectators for the concert.



For the first time, the members of the Last Post Association could benefit from a priority period to order their tickets for the concert.

The excellent collaboration and support of the following organizations contributed to the success of the event: the city of Ieper and its different services (tourism, cultural centre and technical service), as well Dean Hemeryck and his team. The Last Post Association highly appreciates their support. Also, a special thank you to coordinator Mathieu Mottrie for his efforts.

A DVD of the concert 2018 will be realized in 2019.

- Dr Brendan Nelson, honorary citizen of the City of Ieper – 22/11/2018

On Tuesday 22 November 2018, Dr Brendan Nelson, director of the Australian War Memorial, was officially appointed as honorary citizen of the City of Ieper. As Australian Ambassador he attended the Last Post ceremony on more than 100 different occasions. Later he became the director of the Australian War Memorial and took the initiative to bring back to Ieper the original stone lions of the Menin Gate in 2017. He also played an important role in the donation of the replica lions of the Menin gate to the City of Ieper. Congratulations to Dr Nelson who's also a patron of the Last Post Association.



- Farewell to Scott Clingan, Andrew Coburn and Jennifer Stephenson (Australia) – 29/11/2018



On Thursday 29 November 2018, the Last Post Association said goodbye to Scott Clingan, Andrew Coburn and Jennifer Stephenson. On behalf of the Australian Army and Embassy, they had been responsible for the organization of many ceremonies in Belgium and Northern France during the centenary period 2014-2018.

3. People

The year 2018 was the 90th year of activity of the Last Post Association. On 31/12/2018 the organisation consisted of 27 people:

- The Board of Directors (3): Benoit Mottrie, Guy Gruwez and Philippe De Bruyn
- The members:
 - o *Working members (8)*: Carl Denys, Philippe Dochy, Mathieu Mottrie, Jacky Platteeuw, Patrick Donck, Charles Vermeulen, Jacques Ryckebosch and Hans De Keyser
 - o *Added member (1)*: Cédric Jacques
- Buglers (7): Rik Vandekerckhove, Dirk Vandekerckhove, Raf Decombel, Tonny Desodt, Jan Callemein, Christophe Wils and Filip Deramoudt.



- Pipers (2): Pierre Dervaux and Gil Vermeulen
- Ceremonial-assistants (3): Brian Claeys, Emmanuel Waelkens and Gilbert Denturck
- Photographer (1): Francis Vanwynsberghe
- Secretaries (2): Ian Connerty and Jan Matsaert

4. Work of the LPA

Every first Monday, the board of directors held their monthly meeting. The entire board of the Last Post Association closely worked together to further optimize the work of the Association and to take care of the daily and special ceremonies.

The secretariat of the Last Post Association was performed by Ian Connerty and Jan Matsaert. Ian Connerty remains responsible for the follow-up of the many requests to participate in the ceremony. He also coordinates all requests from choirs, bands, pipers, ... He also takes care of the organization of the special ceremonies. And the Association can always count on Ian on many other occasions.

Jan Matsaert is responsible for the membership recruitment, the bookkeeping, the communication, follow-up of the meetings of the board, support for the concert and several other subjects.

- Fixed rehearsals buglers

The monthly rehearsal for the buglers took again place in 2018, and this to guarantee the quality of the playing during the ceremony. Many thanks to Roland Neyrinck for leading these rehearsals which take place in the buildings of the Ieper Fire Department.

- Subvention Flanders

In January 2018, Geert Bourgeois, Minister-President of Flanders and also for Foreign Affairs, granted a subsidy of 60,000 EUR to the Last Post Association. And this for the reinforcement of their administrative and organizational capacity in 2018, but also beyond the period of the centenary, for the years 2019 and 2020. Thanks to this support, the Last Post Association is able to guarantee a high-quality welcome to the many international guests and to organize the special ceremonies. The international position of Flanders in general and Ieper in particular for remembrance tourism is stressed in this manner.

- Update Last Post App

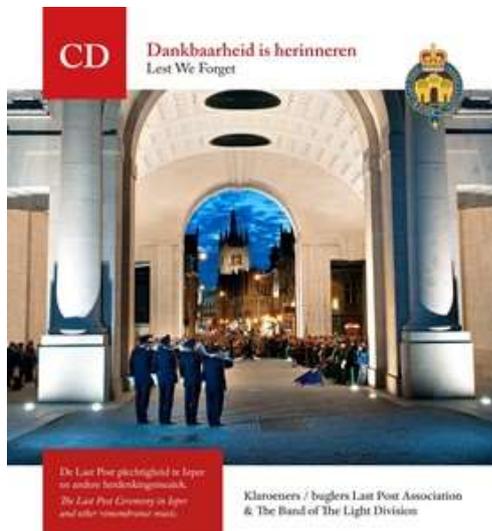
The app of the Last Post Association was officially launched at the occasion of the 30,000th Last Post in July 2015. In 2018, an update of the app has been realized so that the app can now be used on the latest smartphones and also on tablet.

The basis functionalities of the app have all been maintained, but many updates on the content have been performed. Mainly in the list of soldiers with extra nationalities, brothers, emblems of unities and a lot of additional information on individual soldiers.

Further efforts to promote the app remain necessary.



- Update Last Post CD



The existing CD obtained a completely new look and feel in 2018. A new stock of CD's was ordered and is available for merchandising.

- Ties and scarfs

The new ties of the Last Post Association were officially presented at the occasion of Armistice 2018. These ties are worn by the people of the Association, but members of the public can also buy the ties.

Further on scarfs with the LPA-badge were bought for all the people of the Association.

- Memberships

In 2018, a special effort was done for the screening and completion of the database of the Association. This database now contains approximately 10,600 contacts.

The number of members of the Last Post Association has increased significantly in recent years:

- number of lifetime members: 63 on 31/12/2018 (+ 19 in 2018)
- number of members:
 - 2015: 441
 - 2016: 540
 - 2017: 687
 - 2018: 790

This brings the total to 853 members and lifetime members on 31/12/2018.



The numbers of members increased by 22 % in 2016, by 27 % in 2017 and by 15% in 2018. The Last Post Association hopes to maintain this number of members in 2019 and, if possible, to realize a further increase in 2019.

- Website

In 2018, the website of the Association was continuously updated: the calendar, news items, the different newsletters, the concert, new photo galleries, the 'FAQ'-page, ...

Through the website visitors can order the Last Post lapel badges, cd's and the DVD of the concert 2015 and the new ties. And many people did so.

Numbers of visitors to the lastpost.be website:

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Visitors	159 188	144 230	110 498	142 503	101 630
Unique visitors	115 381	102 782	78 568	99 187	62 378
Pageviews	668 402	511 852	380 641	493 197	391 002

2014 was the absolute top year in the interest for the Great War in general and for the Last Post in particular. 2015 was less busy and this decrease continued in 2016. In 2017, the number of visitors again increased and this due the many events related to the centenary of the 3rd Battle of Ieper. In 2018 the website registered less visitors.

Origin of the visitors of the website:

1. Belgium	48,03 %
2. Great Britain	29,65 %
3. Netherlands	6,31 %
4. United States	3,54 %
5. Canada	2,66 %
6. Australia	2,49 %
7. France	1,91 %
8. Germany	1,38 %
9. Ireland	0,52 %
10. New Zealand	0,37 %

The top 5 represents more than 90 % of the visitors.

The Last Post Association is planning an update of its website in 2019, mainly to give it a new look and feel and to integrate a state of the art webshop.

In 2018 six newsletters were sent out by e-mail.



- Social media

The Last Post Association makes important efforts to be present on Facebook and Twitter. In this way, information is provided to the visitors, to the members and the people following the Association on these media.

Numbers:

- Facebook: 14.691 likes on 28/03/2019 (or +40 % compared to 2017)
- Twitter: 1.817 followers on 28/03/2019 (or +13 % compared to 2017)

In 2018, and this for the first time, a number of ceremonies or part of them were livestreamed on the Facebook page of the Last Post Association. A few figures dated 28/03/2019:

Date	Event	Number of involved people	Viewed	Shared
04/04/2018	31.000 ^e Last Post	186 121	90 233	1 422
25/04/2018	Haka after Anzac Day	966 571	513 749	8 939
24/06/2018	Ons Verlangen Beverst	710 571	328 337	5 304
05/07/2018	90 Years LPA	306 037	137 243	1 554
08/08/2019	The Great Pilgrimage 90	138 068	65 740	768
11/11/2018	Concert TGWR	217 000	115 000	1 585
11/11/2018	Concert TGWR (2)	178 000	88 868	1 270

4. Thanks to

The Last Post Association wants to thank each and every one who played a role in the busy year 2018:





The city of Ieper and in particular former mayor Jan Durnez, former first alderman Jef Verschoore and the city administration for the always smooth and good collaboration in 2018. In 2019, the Last Post Association looks forward to a good collaboration with the newly formed city administration. The Association can always count on the different services such as tourism, culture department, technical service, ...

We can further not forget the efforts made by the police: traffic is held each day from 7.30 PM till 8.30 PM. A special thank you for all the efforts of the police people is therefore certainly justified.

The Last Post Association would also like to thank Liz Sweet and Richard Nicholl from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission for their commitment and dedication to the organisation.

A big thank you to all the LPA-people:

- The 7 buglers who are consciously present during their week of service. The two teams of buglers which consist of Rik and Dirk Vandekerckhove, Tonny Desodt and Filip Deramoudt on one side, and Raf Decombel, Jan Callemein and Christophe Wils on the other side.
- The 3 ceremonial assistants for their efforts. Due to the large crowds, their early presence is really necessary.
- Pipers Pierre Dervaux and Gil Vermeulen who are present on special ceremonies.
- All members of the board for their many efforts.
- Ian Connerty and Jan Matsaert who take care of the secretariat.

Also, thanks to Eddy Vandermeersch who stopped his activities as a ceremonial assistant in 2018.

On 15/12/2018 a moment of thanks was organized for all the Last Post people and their partners in the cafe of the In Flanders Fields Museum. On this occasion, a presentation was shown with an overview of all the important ceremonies during the centenary commemoration 2014-2018.