



## **Report of activities for 2025 for the Last Post Association vzw**

The Last Post Association is an independent, non-profit organisation based in Ieper. The Association organised the very first Last Post Ceremony on Monday 2 July 1928 and more than nine decades later is still responsible for the daily performance of this unique tribute under the Menin Gate Memorial to the Missing. All the Association's buglers, ceremonial assistants and directors are volunteers.

This document is the Association's annual report for the calendar year 2025 (01/01/2025 - 31/12/2025), its 97<sup>th</sup> year of activity.

### **1. The ceremonies**

During 2025, the daily Last Post Ceremony took place each evening at 8 p.m. under the Menin Gate.

The entire Last Post Association team merits a special word of thanks for their efforts during 2025. A special word of thanks is also due to the Mayor and Aldermen of the City of Ypres and its various public services (tourism, technical department, culture, etc.) for their cooperation in 2025. This applies equally to the local police force and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

The following is an overview of the main ceremonies in 2025:

- 11/02/2025: Tony Abbott, former Prime Minister of Australia
- 24/03/2025: Amb. Angus Campbell (Australia) and Jennifer Troup (New Zealand)
- 29/03/2025: Gent-Wevelgem cycling
- 22/04/2025: 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first gas attack
- 24/04/2025: Ambassador Anne Sheriff + Defence Attaché John Dickson (UK)
- 25/04/2025: ANZAC Day; Air Marshal Stephen Chappell, Australian Chief of Air Force
- 26/04/2025: Australia's Federation Guard (AFG) Catafalque Party
- 08/05/2025: V-Day - commemoration of the end of the Second World War
- 22/05/2025: Gov. Victoria, Australia, Margaret Gardner AC + HRH Princess Astrid; 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Marshal French (New Ypres League) - Lady Lucy French
- 14/06/2025: 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Royal British Legion Ypres Branch
- 21/06/2025: Christopher Luxon, Prime Minister of New Zealand
- 02/07/2025: 97<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the very first Last Post on 2 July 1928
- 02/08/2025: Honourable Artillery Company Regimental Band (HAC Band)
- 20/08/2025: Ambassador Pa Musa Jobarteh (Gambia)
- 22/08/2025: 52<sup>nd</sup> Four Days of the Yser
- 12/09/2025: Ambassador Angus Lapsley (UK Delegation to NATO)
- 26/09/2025: Ambassador Roman Vassilenko (Kazakhstan)
- 15/10/2025: Ambassador Frédéric Labarrère (Monaco)
- 11/11/2025: Armistice Day Commemoration
- 29/11/2025: Sean Fitzpatrick (former All Blacks captain, New Zealand) + Amb. J.Troup
- 12/12/2025: International Christmas Truce Tournament



## 2. Some other noteworthy events during 2025

### - Death of Jean Roose - 02/01/2025

On Friday 24 January 2025, Jean Roose passed away at the age of 97. He served as a bugler from 1960 to 1968. During this period, he played the Last Post on the 10,000<sup>th</sup> Last Post Ceremony on 8 October 1960 and was also present for the visit of Queen Elizabeth II and King Baudouin and their partners on 13 May 1966. Buglers Rik Vandekerckhove and Filip Deramoudt attended the funeral on Saturday 1 February 2025.

### - New Year's Reception at Talbot House - 06/02/2025

On Thursday 6 February 2025, the Last Post Association once again organised its New Year's Reception for its staff at Talbot House in Poperinge. Thank you to Simon Louagie for the warm welcome. After snacks and drinks, the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the LPA quiz was organised.

### - Reception at the British Embassy - 21/02/2025

On Friday 21 February 2025, a large delegation from the Last Post Association travelled by coach to Brussels at the invitation of the British Embassy. Following a tour of the Embassy, Defence Attaché John Dickson hosted a lunch and a number of gifts were exchanged. Afterwards, the delegation from the Last Post Association proceeded to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Brussels. A wreath was laid there and the buglers performed a tribute.

### - Restoration Menin Gate

The restoration, which began in April 2023, was completed in the spring of 2025. At the end of March 2025, the tower crane and the last scaffolding were dismantled, and the staircases and galleries of the Menin Gate were reopened to the public. On the evening of Thursday 3 April 2025, the new lighting was tested. The Last Post Association would like to thank the management and all staff of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission for their excellent cooperation during the extensive restoration work. The Commission can rightly be proud of the fine result.





On Monday 7 July 2025, the CWGC organised the official reopening of the restored Menin Gate in the presence of HRH Princess Anne of the United Kingdom and HRH Princess Claire of Belgium. On this occasion, they also jointly unveiled the new commemorative plaque marking the inclusion of the Menin Gate on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

- New Ambassadors Australia and New-Zealand - 24/03/2025

On Monday 24 March 2025, the new Ambassadors, Angus Campbell (Australia) and Jennifer Troup (New Zealand), were welcomed to Ypres. They hosted a reception at Salons Yperley and subsequently attended the Last Post, where they laid a wreath.

- 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first gas attack - 22 April 2025



On Tuesday 22 April 2025, the City of Ypres and the military and civil authorities commemorated the 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first gas attack on 22 April 1915. Bugler Tonny Desodt took part in the ceremonies at the Reconciliation Cross in Boezinge and at the Canadian memorial 'The Brooding Soldier' in Sint-Juliaan. In the evening, the event was also commemorated beneath the Menin Gate with the participation of the Belgian Navy Band.

- ANZAC Day - 25/04/2025

On Thursday 25 April 2025, the buglers of the Last Post Association first took part in the dawn service at Buttes New British Cemetery in Zonnebeke and in the ceremony at Tyne Cot Cemetery in Passchendaele.

They then proceeded to the Menin Gate for the special Last Post on ANZAC Day at 11.15 am. Ambassadors Jennifer Troup of New Zealand and Angus Campbell of Australia attended the ceremony. The College of Ypres, led by C. Barré, restarted the tradition with their musical contribution.

Air Marshal Stephen Chappell, Australian Chief of Air Force, took part in the daily Last Post on 25 April 2025 at 8.00 pm. And on Friday 26 April 2025, Australia's Federation Guard (AFG) Catafalque Party took part.

In gratitude for their daily dedication, all staff of the Last Post Association were invited to the barbecue hosted by the Embassies of Australia and New Zealand on Thursday 18 September 2025.



- Governor Victoria Margaret Gardner AC + HRH Princess Astrid - 22/05/2025

On Thursday 22 May 2025, Professor The Honourable Margaret Gardner AC, Governor of Victoria, Australia, paid a visit. HRH Princess Astrid of Belgium also attended the ceremony.



On 22 May, the New Ypres League was also a guest at the commemoration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Marshal French. Lady Lucy French, great-granddaughter of Marshal French, also attended the Last Post Ceremony on this occasion.

- 100 Years Royal British Legion Ypres Branch - 14/06/2025

On Saturday 14 June 2026, the Royal British Legion Ypres Branch celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Following a reception in the grounds of St George's Memorial Church, everyone attended the Last Post. The Royal Harmonie Ypriana provided the musical accompaniment for the ceremony, which was attended by Mark Atkinson, Director General of the Royal British Legion.

- Christopher Luxon, Prime Minister of New Zealand - 21/06/2025

On Saturday 21 June 2025, Christopher Luxon, Prime Minister of New Zealand, attended the daily Last Post. The following day, he also visited Tyne Cot Cemetery in Passchendaele and the New Zealand Memorial Park in Messines. Buglers Tonny Desodt and Raf Decombel performed the Last Post there.

- LPA-delegation to Halifax (Canada) - 22/06/2025

On Thursday 19 June 2025, the Ypres Last Post Association travelled to Halifax, Canada. The delegation consisted of buglers Rik Vandekerckhove and Bavo Ketels, accompanied by Patrick Donck (director). They travelled to Canada for the unveiling of the restored Last Steps Memorial Arch. From the port of Halifax, some 350,000 Canadian men and women took their final steps as they boarded ships bound for Europe during the First World War. On Sunday 22 June, the buglers from Ypres played the Last Post at the unveiling of the restored monument.



- 97 Years Last Post - 02/07/2025

On Wednesday 2 July 2025, the 97<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the very first Last Post, which took place on Monday 2 July 1928, was celebrated. It was the 33,646<sup>th</sup> day that the daily tribute had been played beneath the Menin Gate.

- Reception for the Ploegsteert Last Post Committee - 23 October 2025

Every first Friday of the month, a Last Post ceremony takes place at 7.00 pm at the Ploegsteert Memorial. The Ypres Last Post Association hosted the Ploegsteert organising committee in Ypres on the evening of Thursday 23 October 2025.

- The last appeal, Diksmuide - 10/11/2025

On the morning of Monday 10 November 2025, a ceremony was held in the Dodengang in Diksmuide to commemorate a Belgian soldier whose remains had previously been found there during excavation work. Bugler Tonny Desodt took part in the ceremony, which was also attended by Theo Francken, Minister of Defence. After the ceremony, the soldier was taken by horse and cart to the military cemetery in De Panne, where he was buried that afternoon.

- Armistice - 11/11/2025

On Armistice Day, Tuesday 11 November 2025, the special Last Post was held at 11.00 am. This took place once again beneath the Menin Gate, now that the restoration work had been completed. The weather was fine on 11 November and all the elements of the traditional Armistice Day commemoration were present: the poppy parade, the British Devon Fire & Rescue Service Band and the West Yorkshire Police Band, the Ypres Surrey Pipes & Drums, the Royal Harmony Yprians and the Chorus choir, the usual sections for VIPs, guests,



members of the LPA, etc... The poppy drop was also able to take place once again beneath the Menin Gate.



Flanders Minister-President Matthias Diependaele was present and delivered the exhortation. Minister Melissa Depraetere was also present. A large number of Ambassadors, military attachés and representatives of the CWGC also attended the special Last Post. In the market square, everyone could follow the ceremony on the big screen, and the Last Post Association once again provided an information stand beneath the Nieuwerck this year.

- Concert The Great War Remembered - 09 & 11/11/2025

The Great War Remembered Concert took place for the 20<sup>th</sup> time at St Martin's Cathedral. Once again, three performances of the concert were organised: on Sunday 9 November 2025 at 5.00 pm and 8.15 pm, and on Tuesday 11 November 2025 at 5.00 pm. In 2025, too, a seating plan, numbered seats and e-tickets only were used. All performances were completely sold out, attracting a total of 2,700 attendees.



The soloists at the 2025 concert were Wannes Cappelle, Michiel Libberecht, Lies Verholle, Frans Grapperhaus, Ian Ji, Lowie Vercammen, Stuart Samson MBE and Benjamin Luyckx.



Debbie Manhaeve recounted the story of Charles Steverlynck, a soldier during the First World War and later founder of Picañol.

The Royal Ypriana Wind Band, the choir and the Chorus Youth Choir, and the Ypres Surrey Pipes & Drums provided the music and singing.

A special word of thanks to conductors Nico Logghe and Tineke Devoghel and Geert Gombeir for the production, but also to everyone else who contributed to the highly successful 2025 concert. In particular, thanks also to Mathieu Mottrie for this outstanding edition, and to all the staff of the Last Post Association for their cooperation on the concert. Finally, thanks to all external partners for the very smooth and pleasant collaboration.

- Sean Fitzpatrick, former captain of New Zealand's All Blacks - 29/11/2025

On Saturday 29 November 2025, Sean Fitzpatrick, former captain of New Zealand's All Blacks, was a guest at the daily Last Post ceremony. He delivered the exhortation during the ceremony, which was also attended by Ambassador Jennifer Troup and TV presenter Jude Dobson.

- Farewell Air Vice-Marshal Di Turton - 18/12/2025

On Thursday 18 December 2025, Chairman Benoit Mottrie presented a gift to Air Vice-Marshal Di Turton, Australia's military representative to NATO and the EU. This took place during the lunch she hosted at Salons Merlijn in Beselare to mark her departure from Belgium.

### 3. Personnel

2025 was the Last Post Association 97<sup>th</sup> year of activity. On 31 December 2025, 30 people were actively engaged on behalf of the organisation in an official capacity namely:

- Executive board (3): Benoit Mottrie, Philip De Bruyn and Mathieu Mottrie
- Board of directors (7): Guy Gruwez, Carl Denys, Hans De Keyser, Philippe Dochy, Patrick Donck, Cédric Jacques and Jacques Ryckebosc
- Member added (1): Jorn Kestelyn
- Buglers (8): Rik Vandekerckhove, Tonny Desodt, Raf Decombel, Jan Callemein, Christophe Wils, Filip Deramoudt, Bavo Ketels and Lars Vandenbussche
- Pipers (3): Pierre Dervaux, Gil Vermeulen and Els Vandooren
- Ceremonial assistants (4): Jens Leupe, Johan Moors, Youri Van Miegroet and Emmanuel Waelkens
- Photographers (2): Francis Vanwynsberghe and Eric Compernelle
- Didgeridoo (1): Tijs Lozie
- Secretariat (1): Jan Malsaert

### 4. Operational working

In terms of its internal organisation, the Last Post Association and its full complement of accredited personnel worked hard throughout the year to optimise the performance of the Last Post Ceremony and all matters pertaining to it.

The secretariat work of the Last Post Association was further carried out by Jan Malsaert.



## Staff

- On 9 September 2025, Tonny Desodt celebrated 30 years as a bugler.
- On 1 December 2025, Christophe Wils celebrated 15 years as a bugler.
- On 6 December 2025, photographer Eric Compernelle received his BEM at Talbot House from Ambassador Anne Sherriff and Group Captain John Dickson.
- On 12 December 2025, Gil Vermeulen marked 10 years as a piper.
- The monthly rehearsal for the buglers was held every month.
- Bart D'Hulster has not been active since December 2025.

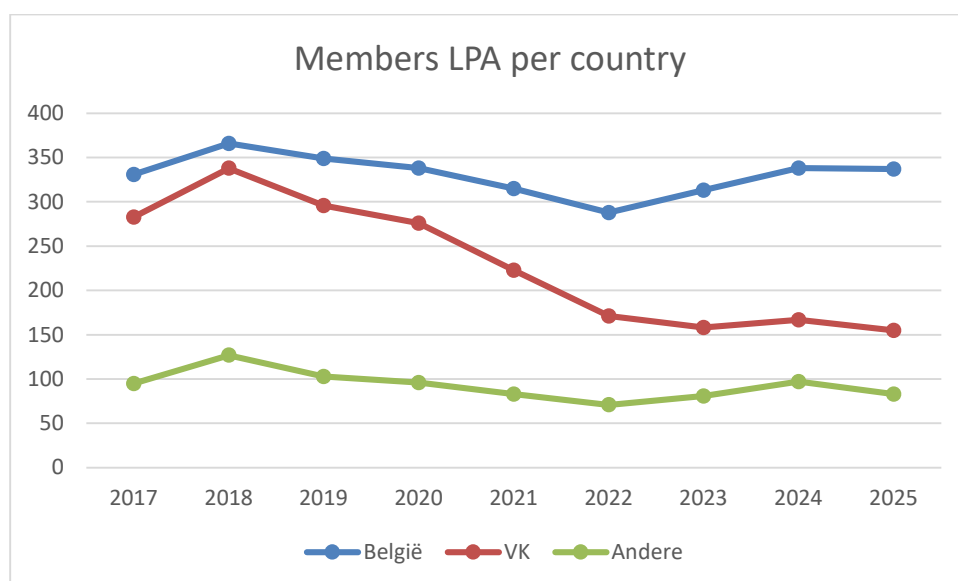
## Membership

During 2025, a major effort was made to check and update the Last Post Association's database of contacts and members, which currently contains ± 12,820 records.

The Last Post Association's number of members in recent years is as follows:

- number of lifetime members: 124 on 31/12/2025 (+ 12 in 2025)
- number of ordinary members:
  - 2015: 441
  - 2016: 540
  - 2017: 687
  - 2018: 790
  - 2019: 726
  - 2020: 702
  - 2021: 621
  - 2022: 543
  - 2023: 552
  - 2024: 602
  - 2025: 575

This means that on 31/12/2025 there was a total of 699 lifetime and ordinary members.





The chart above shows the number of members of the Last Post Association by country of origin. In 2017 and 2018, 46.7% and 44.0% of members were from Belgium, compared with 39.9% and 40.7% from the United Kingdom respectively. By 2025, the difference was significantly greater: 58.6% from Belgium compared with 27.0% from the United Kingdom.

### Social media

The Last Post Association makes every effort to be present on social media, where it provides its members, visitors and followers with relevant information about the organisation.

Some figures:

- Facebook: 32,137 followers on 28/01/2026 (+ 2,9% compared to 2024)
- Twitter: 2,624 followers on 28/01/2026 (- 0,8% compared to 2024)
- YouTube: 1,480 subscribers on 28/01/2026 (+ 17,5% compared to 2024)
- Instagram: 2,577 followers on 28/01/2026 (+ 16,4% compared to 2024).

### 100 Years of the Last Post Association

The Last Post Association will celebrate its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary on 2 July 2028. To this end, a great deal of preparatory work was carried out in 2025, and numerous internal and external meetings were organised and attended.

### **5. Word of thanks**

The Last Post Association wishes to thank everyone who contributed towards making 2025 another successful year:

The City of Ieper, Mayor Katrien Desomer, Alderman Diego Desmadryl and all other members of the city council for their continued assistance and co-operation throughout 2025. Collaboration with the various city services, such as tourism, culture and the technical department, was also excellent, for which the Association is most grateful.

The daily Last Post Ceremony would not be possible without the much-valued assistance of the local police, who halt the traffic passing under the Menin Gate from 1930 hours to 2030 hours each evening.

The Last Post Association would also like to thank the entire team of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission for their commitment and dedication to the commemoration of the war dead and for their maintenance of the Menin Gate Memorial.

Thanks are also due to the volunteers of the Association:

- The 8 buglers, who during their alternate 'on-call' weeks are present at the Menin Gate each evening. The two teams of buglers consist of Rik, Tonny, Filip and Lars on the one hand and Raf, Jan, Christophe and Bavo on the other hand.
- The 4 ceremonial assistants for their tireless efforts.
- Pipers Pierre Dervaux, Gil Vermeulen and Els Vandooren for their presence at special ceremonies.
- Photographers Eric Compennolle and Francis Vanwysberghe for capturing many ceremonies.



- Tijs Lozie who plays the didgeridoo.
- All members of the board of directors for their efforts in various fields.
- Jan Malsaert for his performance of the organisation's secretarial duties.

## **6. Monthly meetings**

The board of directors held its meetings on the first Monday of each month.

## **7. Newsletters**

In 2025, four newsletters were sent by e-mail.

## **8. Objectives for the year 2026**

- ensure the continuity of the daily ceremony
- the commemoration of the Armistice on 11/11/2026
- the concert The Great War Remembered 2026
- maintain the number of members
- the further preparation and development of the programme for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the very first Last Post on Sunday 2 July 2028
- the reinforcement of the board of directors