



PRESS RELEASE - THE WESTERN FRONT WAY – October 2020

Winners of the ESDA/CiDAN European Award for Citizenship, Security and Defence; Remembrance and Reconciliation Category – October 2020

Ahead of Remembrance Sunday, a UK based charity wins a major European prize for creating the biggest single remembrance project on the globe; a long-distance walking and cycle path based on the First World War front line

The aim is for this path to be one of the biggest long-distance challenges in Europe

Led by a British Charity, but in collaboration with French and Belgium authorities and German support to make it a truly joint European commemorative effort.

For every metre of the Western Front Way (1000km/620 miles), 17 people were killed or lost their life in the First World War

Timing

Recommended for publication up to 11.11.2020 - Remembrance Day or weekend 12-13th November.

Summary

On Tuesday 13th October 2020 in Paris, the UK based Western Front Way charity was awarded the European Award for Citizenship, Security and Defence by the ESDA/CiDAN Jury in the category Remembrance and Reconciliation.

The Western Front Way is a long-distance walking and cycle path based on the First World War front line and is the biggest single commemorative project underway on the globe. It is a joint project between the UK, France, Belgium, and Germany where the Western Front Way historically reached, and represents a forward-looking approach to commemoration for all generations.

Previous winners of this specific category award include; 2019 - The Albert Schweitzer International Centre, located next to the German military cemetery in Niederbronn-les-Bains (Alsace/France). 2018 - Special Award - European values - to the associations 'Ad Augusta' (France) and Help for Heroes (United-Kingdom)

About the Western Front Way

<https://www.thewesternfrontway.com/>

The Western Front Way is a new long-distance walking and cycling route for peace and remembrance based on the front line of the Western Front from the First World War. The Western Front Way charity was founded in 2017, following the discovery of a letter by Sir Anthony Seldon in 2015, which had been written by young soldier, AD Gillespie, serving and subsequently killed in Loos in 1915. He wrote to his Headmaster, that, after the Great War had ended, he dreamt of creating a "*beautiful road...for all nations to walk together in peace once the conflict was over.*" Gillespie's great nephew Tom Heap is a trustee of the charity and has kept this vision alive along with the other trustees.



Over a hundred years on the charity and the vision, along with European partners and supporters (including key pockets at Vimy Ridge, Albert, Peronne, Auchy-les-Mines, Pfetterhouse, Soissons and in Belgium) have begun to make that vision a reality and are well underway in connecting the 1000km (620 mile) long walking and cycling route. The aim is for this path to be one of the biggest long-distance challenges in Europe and a focus for walkers, cyclists, fundraising activities, commemoration and memorial walks, historical and conservation walks, and a new and beautiful way to commemorate.

How to walk or cycle the Western Front Way

- The route is over 1000km (620 miles) in total. So far, 100km of the Belgium section is complete and in use by walkers and cyclists (Photos are available). The path here is marked by 450 waymarkers on posts along 100km of the route, with an additional 35 larger plaques on local points of interest and information boards at major hubs including Nieuwpoort, Diksmuide and Ypres.
- In France, we are close to marking a pathway all the way to Albert in the Somme, adding another 200km to the route. There are already larger plaques up on museums, tourist offices and memorials along this stretch.
- The charity has 700km still to waymark in the remainder of France, and we are continuing our discussions with French authorities on getting approval of the final route and permission to put way markers in place.
- Once the entire route is marked across both nations it would take roughly 50 days walking at 20km a day, or 16 days cycling at 60km a day to complete the Western Front Way.
- The path is offered in manageable sections which includes high profile locations alongside quieter, stretches of track through rural landscapes
- In the next few weeks the charity will be publishing our first dedicated detailed maps of the Western Front Way which will show all sorts of relevant details for walkers and cyclists including; tourist offices, hotels, cemeteries, memorials and transport hubs.

About ESDA/CIDAN

<https://cidan.org/home/>

CiDAN is a French based organisation “Civisme Défense Armées Nation” (CiDAN), which holds the European Awards for Citizenship, Security and Defence in conjunction with the inter-parliamentary “European Security and Defence Association” (ESDA). The competition is open to all European citizens and legal organisations including armed forces units and military staff, and public and private educational establishments in all the Member States of the Council of Europe. The main purpose of the awards is to recognise outstanding efforts towards promoting European citizenship and European security and defence awareness. This is done via various categories including;

- Promoting the European values
- Tangible and visible achievements in promoting the European security and defence,
- Promoting European citizenship
- Reinforcing resilience against all threats
- Promoting the key European security interests
- Promoting the need for a powerful European Technological and Industrial Base
- **Remembrance ceremonies and activities, in a spirit of reconciliation.**

The Western Front Way won the category; Remembrance ceremonies and activities, in a spirit of reconciliation. The vote was unanimous, the joint chairmen being Robert Walter; President of the



inter-Parliamentary European Security and Defence Association (ESDA) and Jacques Tissier; President of the French Association “Civisme Défense Armée Nation”(CiDAN).

This is the 10th Anniversary of the award, and the award ceremony will take place on Tuesday 24th November in Berlin. Rory Forsyth, CEO of the charity, will also be presented with the Medal of the President of the French Republic and will accept the award on behalf of the Western Front Way along with fellow trustees of the charity.

The charity sees this prestigious honour as greatly adding to the current momentum to complete the pathway for all nations to enjoy for the next centenary and beyond. From the point of view of the charity, alongside the magnificent day recently in October 2020 when the Belgium Western Front Way section of 100km was officially marked and open, Rory Forsyth said, “this is proof that all of Europe is still united when it comes to remembrance and reconciliation”.

European Collaboration

Since inception in 2017, the charity has worked in Belgium with Westtoer, the provincial tourism authority of West-Flanders, and the tourism offices of the Flemish Front Cities Nieuwpoort, Diksmuide and Ypres. In France, working with Regions, Departments, local governments and local communes to mark a pathway of the walk, and agree how best to see the idea of the peace walk can take hold in the imagination of people not only of the four nations, but globally. The future of commemoration is a collaborative endeavour between all nations, and this required the help and partnership of museums, memorials, tourist offices, hotels, walking groups, mapmakers, mayors, other charities and restaurants.

The Belgian, French and German Embassies in London have been immensely helpful, as have their counterparts in the respective nations.

The logo of the Western Front Way also combines the four flowers of nations involved in the project. A cornflower (blue) is the remembrance flower of France; a daisy (white/yellow) is the remembrance flower of Belgium; the Forget Me Not (purple), is the remembrance flower of Germany and the Poppy (red) the remembrance flower of Britain and the Commonwealth.

About the Western Front – in Modern Context

- Stretching from the Swiss border to the North Sea, the line of trenches, dug-outs and barbed-wire can still be seen in a lot of locations along the front, which the route displays prominently
- For every metre of the Western Front Way (1000km), 17 people were killed or lost their life in the First World War
- The First World War was global in scale and impact, and the interest of the route is global in reach because of this.
- 1917 - the 2019 British war film directed and produced by Sam Mendes, and written by Mendes and Krysty Wilson-Cairns - multi Oscar winning brought the graphic reality of the Western Front trenches and the reality of World War One to a new audience
- The WFW is a new and interactive way to engage with a conflict of over 100 years ago and learn from it
- A new way to engage schoolchildren from all nations in understanding the conflict
- Promoting mental health and peace



QUOTES FOR PRESS

Rory Forsyth, CEO of WFW

Thanks to the Jury of ESDA/CIDAN to whom the charity is extremely grateful, this is proof that all of Europe is still united when it comes to remembrance and reconciliation.

Sir Anthony Seldon, Official No10 Downing Street Biographer and trustee of the charity who discovered the letter

I have seen this 620-mile pathway as a major bridge to continuing friendship with Europe. Post Brexit, it becomes even more important.

Tom Heap, BBC Presenter and great nephew of AD Gillespie who wrote the original letter in 1915

I love to imagine how my great uncle would have welcomed this prize; quite literally his dream come true. Proof that the spirit of harmony and peace triumphs over war.

AD Gillespie, 19th June 1915, The Western Front

when peace comes, our government might combine with the French government to make one long avenue between the lines from the Vosges to the sea...I would make a fine broad road in the 'No-Mans Land' between the lines, with paths for pilgrims on foot and plant trees for shade and fruit trees, so that the soil should not altogether be waste. Then I would like to send every man, woman and child in Western Europe on a pilgrimage along that Via Sacra so that they might think and learn what war means from the silent witnesses on either side.

The Board of Trustees;

Mr Rory Forsyth – CEO & Trustee

Mrs Amanda Carpenter – Development Director & Trustee

Sir Anthony Seldon - Trustee

Mr Tom Heap - Trustee

Mr Charles Pike - Trustee

Miss Laura Lestoquoy - Trustee

Miss Kitty Buchanan-Gregory - Trustee

Mr Andrew Gillespie - Trustee

Mrs Lal Mills - Trustee

Mrs Kim Hay – head of communications

PRESS CONTACTS

For more information please contact Kim Hayes, Head of Communications on info@thewesternfrontway.com

Material available:

- Hi Res Images for publication can be sent via We Transfer – see website for existing visuals
- Map of the route (high level)
- Copy of the logo (with 4 nation commemorative flower)
- Further quotes on request
- The Website is available in 4 languages: English, French, German & Dutch



Ends