



The Archbishop joined Royal Family members and the Prime Minister at a solemn commemoration in Belgium tonight remembering Britain’s entry into WWI.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, joined members of the Royal Family and Britain's Prime Minister at an event in Belgium this evening to remember the entry of British soldiers into World War One in August 1914.

The service, which recalled the sacrifices of British soldiers while giving thanks for the strong friendship between former foes, was held at St Symphorien Military Cemetery, Mons. It was attended by the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge; Prince Harry; and the Prime Minister, David Cameron. Also in attendance were the King and Queen of the Belgians; the President of Germany; the President of Ireland; and representatives of other countries who fought in the First World War. Five hundred people attended the event, many with personal family links to soldiers buried in the cemetery .

During the ceremony the Archbishop prayed for reconciliation, asking that our “God of peace and justice” will strengthen people to “seek peace”.

In a blessing the Archbishop said:

“God of peace and justice,

Who in compassion for a world

Broken by our sins of pride, desire,

selfishness and ambition,

brought reconciliation to all who seek you,

Strengthen us to seek peace and pursue it,

To forgive as we are forgiven;

And the blessing of God almighty,

the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,

be among you and remain with you always.

Amen”

The St Symphorien Military Cemetery contains the bodies of the first and last British soldiers who died on the Western front in the First World War: Private John Parr of the Middlesex Regiment, who was fatally wounded during an encounter with a German patrol on 21 August 1914, two days before the Battle of Mons; and Private George Ellison of the Royal Irish Lancers, who was killed on 11 November 1918. The cemetery is shared almost equally between the Commonwealth and German dead, thanks to a Belgian, Jean Houzeau de Lehaie, who gave the land on condition that both British and German soldiers would be buried there.

The commemorative event – part of the Government's programme to mark the Centenary of the First World War – was organised in partnership with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, and was based around music, poetry and readings which reflect the history of the site.

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