

Eccles Duke of Edinburgh's Somme 101: in the footsteps of the brave

Eccles RFC were the 1st rugby club in the country to commence offering the DofE to it's young people as a living tribute to Chris Tickle following his tragic passing, and the posthumous awarding of his DofE Gold.

Since its' humble beginnings, the DofE and club now have a dedicated group of volunteers offering the Award at all levels, and has seen over 160 awards over Bronze, Silver and Gold. This was reflected in the recent attendance of our last completing Gold group at the Buckingham Palace garden party on 24th May.

On Sunday 25th June 2017 our current Gold group will undertake a fitting "living tribute" to previous players from the club. The idea all stemmed from the invitation to lay a wreath at the Salford Somme 100 memorial parade. At that time the young people were presented with a willow cross (the wood associated with Salford) and a miners lamp, to lay at Theipval memorial at the Somme 101 parade.

When the call to arms came at the beginning of World War 1 many of the then Eccles RFC players enlisted. Our young people have been researching those members of the club, and now have historical backgrounds on:

T L Whitehead

Harry Pelvin

Edward (Teddy) James Martin

Norman Shaw

Harold Bowker

Ernest Bateson

Charles Percy Wild

Reginald Bolton

John Bolton

Frederick Lewis Henry Oakley

On Sunday 25th June, the day after Armed Forces Day, the group will depart from Eccles RFC and replicate the journey of the Salford Pals Regiments, arriving at the Somme on the evening of Fri 30th Jun 17.

On Sat 01st Jul 17, the group will have a very moving but amazing day:

07.20 at the Lochnagar Crate, where they will participate in the morning service

Lochnagar was the largest mine to be exploded on the 1st Jul 17, packed with 60,000lbs of explosives at the end of a 1,030ft tunnel. The explosion saw debris raise 4,000ft in the air and, at the time, was the loudest man made sound in history.

09.00 at Thiepval Memorial. Again the group will participate in the service, wearing representative club colours and laying a wreath, the poppy cross and miners lamp on behalf of the Mayor, people of Salford and Eccles RFC.

The group have put hours of time and effort into their research, making contact with several regiments, individuals and historical societies to ensure they have comprehensive information on the players. As part of their practice expedition they visited the Fusiliers Museum in Bury, where they received an insight into how it was for the players who they now know..

If you want to follow their progress, or see how any of our DofE young people, groups or leaders are doing, follow us on Twitter

@dofe_ecclesrhc

And if, in true “Tommy style” you want to wave them off, everyone is welcome on Sunday to see them begin their epic journey...

If you want any information about the DofE Award scheme at the club, please contact 1 of our adult leaders. We are always looking for volunteers or financial help, as the Award at the club is entirely self funding...