

## **PROPOSED TRIP TO BAILLEUL OCTOBER 2023**

Hawick Ex-Service Association is planning a trip to Bailleul in October 2023 to celebrate and commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Town Twinning. During the last visit in 2018 to commemorate the end of World War I, the President promised that there would be other visits in view of the outstanding way the Club had been received both by the Council and by the public of Bailleul. 50 years is quite an achievement in any relationship. Hawick has, unlike some other towns, no other Twin and considering the distance, it makes the occasion even more worthy of marking in a significant way.

The Association can perhaps claim to have its own special relationship with Bailleul, Not only is it situated in Flanders, where many men from Hawick and district '*lie where poppies grow*', four of those are actually buried in Bailleul itself and almost every year since the Twinning took place, suitable tributes have been placed on their resting places. In addition, those who have read the book, will know that Bailleul was a British Garrison Town, run by the British Army during World War 1. Many of those were Scots.

The Association is keen to see the link continue and wants to be in the vanguard to ensure that this happens and can act as a catalyst for other local organisation to follow suit due to the fact that other plans for reciprocal visits had to be cancelled because of the pandemic, as were proposed video links between schools and colleges and school pupil / student exchanges. We know the Mayor of Bailleul shares that view and is equally keen to establish as many links as possible, between the two Towns.

The plan is for a party of 40 persons comprising Association members, and members of the public to travel from Hawick on the 6<sup>th</sup> of October and stay overnight in the Dover area travelling by ferry on the Saturday and staying in Bailleul for another six nights travelling back on the Friday, allowing for Bed and Breakfast costs of £350.00 per person sharing and almost £500 for single occupancy. The estimated cost of the bus for the whole excursion is likely to be in the region of £8000 which includes ferry crossings and bus driver expenses which is an estimate as we don't have an up-to-date ferry price currently. This does not include visits to any sites of interest. To keep the price affordable to those going and, having regard to the nature of the trip and its value to the town, the Association is looking to public bodies for assistance to help achieve this aim. The hope would be to obtain a grant to meet the cost of the bus, at least, as was the case with the very successful trip in 2018.

It has to be stressed that the excursion is not a battlefield trip, although again like the 2018, visits would be made to places of significant interest related to the two major conflicts. That said, due to the kindness of local people in Bailleul, one or two families were able to have personal pilgrimages fulfilled, but that cannot be guaranteed this time. The Association Committee feels that because of its very nature, the trip is worthy of meaningful support from public funds and will hopefully inspire other organisations to celebrate this landmark occasion which, if the aims of Town Twinning are to be fulfilled will realise benefits in both towns across many sections of the local community, particularly when the trend nowadays appears to be towards centralisation in areas which at one time were undoubtedly matters for local decision.