

Hechtel, Belgium

Police Memorial

On Friday 12th September 2025 I had the opportunity to visit Belgium on a Battlefield Tour, arranged by the Welsh Guards Association.

It was a trip I have wanted to do for some time, and I was accompanied by my wife, Julie and my two good friends, Hayley and Bryan, all of whom are retired Police Officers and Bryan was a Welsh Guard who served during the Falklands Conflict.

Part of the tour was to visit Hechtel in Belgium, which was the location of the Battle of Hechtel in September 1944. This quiet Belgium village became the scene of a fierce and pivotal battle during the Allied advance through Western Europe.

From 06th to 12th September 1944, Welsh Guards of the Guards Armoured Division, engaged in intense urban combat to liberate the village. The fighting was brutal, house to house, street by street and resulted in heavy losses and casualties on both sides.

The eventual Allied victory at Hechtel opened the way for further advances into northeast Belgium and the Netherlands. Today, Hechtel remembers the sacrifice of those who fought with memorials and ceremonies honouring the battle's legacy of courage, resilience and liberation.

One thing that struck a chord with me, were the losses suffered by the civilian population of the village, many of whom were executed by the Germans, two of whom were Belgian Police Officers.

Adjutant M.M.J. Vos and Wachtmeester J.M.L.M. Pollaris gave their lives on 09th September 1944.



Background research by my good friend Bryan, discovered that a memorial plaque is located at the Police station building in Hechtel. So, we decided to have a small informal service at the plaque on Sunday 14th September.



We were joined by several other retired police Officers, and as the Treasurer of EuroCop, I had the honour of laying a poppy wreath at the site of the plaque.



The message on the card simply read, ' *To all Belgian Police Officers who have made the ultimate sacrifice. We salute you. RIP.* '

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old: Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun and in the morning. We shall remember them.

Further on in the tour, we visited several Commonwealth war Graves Cemeteries, and apart from the thousands of soldiers buried there, it was overwhelming to see that so many of the men were from so many different countries, UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand and particularly Canada.



Hundreds if not thousands of graves commemorating the sacrifice of Canadian soldiers.



Whilst standing there, it occurred to me that the National Police Federation / Federation de la Police Nationals Canada, have applied to become associate members of EuroCop.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police whose officers are serving officers and reservists of this Police Service and are members of this Police Representative Organisation, have their officers embedded in Europol, InterPol, and the International Anti Corruption Coordination Centre.

I say this.

What I was witness to, was so many Canadians fought and sacrificed themselves for the sake of Europe and the freedoms we currently enjoy, and their Police Officers continue to work alongside European Police Officers. I look forward to this respected organisation in becoming part of the EuroCop family and making a contribution to the continued success of our organisation the European Confederation of Police.

Mark Marshallsay

Treasurer

EuroCop