

The Great War in the Flanders Fields Country

de Westhoek
The Flanders Fields Country
14-18



2008-2009



Province of
West Flanders
Driven by people

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COLOFON

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SPECIAL THANKS TO Sir Leo van Bergen and Sir Menno Wielinga for
their useful information on: 'www.wereldoorlog1418.nl'

PHOTOGRAPHY D. de Kievith, Michael Depestele, IFFM, IWM-London,
Westtoer, the Tourist Offices from the Westhoek, Eric Debeir

GRAPHIC DESIGN IPS creation - Poperinge

PRINTED IN BELGIUM BY LS Communication - Sint-Niklaas

COVER Lyssenthoek Cemetery - Poperinge

War and Peace in the Westhoek, the Flanders Fields Country

4th August 1914 - 11th November 1918: the start and the end of the First World War - two crucial dates in the history of the Westhoek. For four long years this tiny corner of Belgium was the setting for the 'Great War'. More than half a million soldiers were killed, wounded or missing. Tens of thousands of ordinary men and women were forced to flee their homes. Towns, villages and even the very countryside itself were blasted into oblivion.

Even today, this global conflagration still determines to a large degree the appearance of the modern Westhoek. Numerous memorials, cemeteries and war sites dominate the landscape, underlining the impact that the First World War had on this region. The war almost seems to have become part of the ground over which it was fought. The constant retelling of personal reminiscences by survivors and their families and the continuing acts of remembrance show that the memory of this terrible conflict is by no means starting to fade.

On the contrary, the influence of the First World War in the Westhoek is clear for all to see. During the last 10 years a number of major initiatives have been launched to preserve the historical heritage of the 'Great War' and to make this heritage accessible to a wide public. Moreover, this spirit of remembrance has given rise to a second and equally important idea: the idea of 'no more war', the Westhoek's message of peace to the world.

To ensure that the First World War is commemorated in a manner befitting its importance, the Province of West Flanders, working with other regional and local authorities, has devised the project War and Peace in the Westhoek.

War and Peace in the Westhoek will take you to several of the most impressive cemeteries and memorials, in a region where great attention has been paid to the upgrading of war sites and their preservation within the landscape. As such, these sites will offer the visitor a broad view of the history and significance of the 'Great War' in the Westhoek.

In this brochure you can find a summary of the most important places of remembrance in the Westhoek. The sites which are included in the War and Peace in the Westhoek project are additionally marked. On the map you can follow the old front line.

(See page 93)



*The Battle of Passendale.
A British cemetery destroyed by
shellfire*

1914

The Beginning



Why war?

More than 90 years after the events, it is still difficult to give a clear and definite answer to this question.

Was it simply a terrible combination of circumstances?

How significant was France's desire for revenge following her defeat and the loss of Alsace-Lorraine during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. To what extent was the expansion of the German fleet a real thorn in the side of the British? Did the possibility of a British blockade of German ports play a crucial role? Was the spiralling arms race a major factor? And what of the complex arrangement of secret alliances and treaties? Or was the all-consuming nationalist sentiment of the age the key influence? Perhaps, in the final analysis, the people of all lands simply thought that 'it will all sort itself out in the end'..

Sarajevo

On 28 June 1914 the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary, Archduke Franz-Ferdinand, visited the province of Bosnia-Herzegovina. His arrival in Sarajevo was awaited by a young Bosnian student named Princip - who, together with a number of nationalist friends, was planning to kill him. A first attempt failed, but a strange twist of fate gave Princip a second chance. This time the bullets from his Belgian FN pistol killed both the archduke and his wife. This assassination lit a powder keg. Austria-Hungary issued an ultimatum to Serbia, since this country was believed to have supported the Bosnian action. Serbia agreed to all of Vienna's demands but one. They refused to allow an Austrian commission of enquiry on their territory. Nevertheless, Austria-Hungary used this as a pretext to declare war. This was quickly followed by other declarations, as the system of mutual alliances and counter-alliances was set in motion. Nobody seemed willing or able to stop the inexorable slide into a European War.

The so-called Central Powers were Germany, Austria-Hungary, Turkey and Bulgaria. They were opposed by the Allies, which included the British Empire, France, Russia and Belgium, joined later by Italy (1915) and the United States of America (1917).

By the end of 1918 thirty-three countries were formally at war with each other, with a combined population of 1.5 billion people. This represents 80% of the total world population at that time. Just 12 countries remained neutral, including Holland.

British soldiers in Flanders*The retreat towards the River Yser**Louvain*

The 'Schlieffen' plan

On 4 August 1914, the German army invaded Belgium. They demanded that King Albert grant them free passage through the country, so that they could attack the French from the rear and defeat them first. Afterwards, they would turn their attention on Russia. The king refused and the famous Schlieffen plan was launched to impose Germany's military will by force. It was a battle of David against Goliath.

The forts of Liege

The city of Liege fell quickly into German hands. It was followed on 15 August by the surrender of the last of the 12 forts which guarded the city's perimeter. The heavy German howitzers (the 'Big Berthas') had done their terrible destructive work. The British, who had guaranteed the neutrality of Belgium, quickly came to the aid of their smaller continental neighbour. Even so, the Germans continued to advance rapidly.

The Battle of Halen

On 12 August 1914 at Halen (in the province of Limburg) Uhlans of the German cavalry attempted to charge a strong Belgian position with naked swords. They were stopped in their tracks by the heavy fire of the defending Belgian infantry. The Germans repeated their attack no fewer than eight times, but always with the same terrible result. Afterwards, more than 400 dead horses were counted on the battlefield. It was proof, if any were needed, that dragoons, hussars, lancers, Uhlans and cuirassiers - with all their gaily coloured uniforms - now belonged to the past.

Louvain...

'die Zivilisten haben geschossen'

The German advance was now moving more slowly than they had hoped. At several places, the Germans believed that they were shot at

by 'civilians.' In Belgium, the armed Civil Guard was an official paramilitary organisation. Their often incomplete uniforms sometimes made them hard to recognise as soldiers. Is this why the Germans confused them with civilians? The Germans were becoming increasingly nervous: they had not expected such strong Belgian resistance. As a result, they sometimes shot at each other by mistake - but put the blame on the local Belgian population. In Dinant, Aarschot and Louvain large numbers of civilians were executed in retaliation. In Louvain (Leuven) 2,000 houses were also burnt to the ground, together with its fabulous university library. Its unique collection of incunabula, manuscripts and ancient books was lost for ever. The Germans were now portrayed by the Allies as barbarians. Volunteers to fight against them enlisted in their thousands, especially in Great Britain.

The fall of Antwerp

The fortress of Antwerp (Antwerpen) - which was believed to be impregnable - fell in October 1914. By now, an estimated 1.6 million Belgians had fled their homes. Almost 1 million of these refugees crossed the border into the Netherlands. They were joined by approximately 40,000 Belgian, 1,200 British and 170 German soldiers. In accordance with international law, all these soldiers were disarmed for the duration of hostilities' and were interned in special camps (Zeist, Hardewijk, etc.)

Neutral Holland

The Netherlands clung firmly to their neutrality - and with success. This had strategic advantages for both the British and the Germans. For the British, it was important that the Dutch harbours could not be used by the German navy (and their u-boats!). For the Germans, the same ports were an important source of materials and supplies for their war economy. Food was also imported into Germany via the Rhine, while Dutch neutrality also made an Allied 'attack from behind' impossible.



A Belgian refugee camp in Bergen-op-Zoom (The Netherlands)

Belgian camps in the Netherlands

By the end of 1914, about 900,000 Belgian refugees had returned to their homes. A further 100,000 remained in the Netherlands for the rest of the war. Of these, about 20,000 were unable to support themselves and so they were cared for in special camps, set up throughout the country (Uden, Gouda, etc.). The Dutch government and the Dutch people made great efforts to ensure that all the refugees were treated as humanely as possible - although things did not always run smoothly.

The Belgian Army behind the River Yzer

After the fall of Antwerp, the tired troops of the weakened Belgian Army withdrew behind the line of the River Yzer. Here they took up positions on the west bank, the last natural barrier in Belgium before the French border. King Albert asked his soldiers to make a final stand, in a desperate effort to keep this last small piece of Belgian territory from falling into German hands.

The Battle of the Yzer and the Battle of Diksmuide

In the middle of October 1914 the River Yzer and the canal to Leper formed the last Belgian line of defence against the advancing invaders. The Germans reached the Yzer on 18 October and heavy fighting immediately broke out. The villages of Keiem, Tervaele and Schoorbakke were at the centre of the storm. In a number of places, the Germans even succeeded in reaching the far bank of the river. Meanwhile, Belgian and French troops defended Diksmuide with great determination. Continuous bombardments quickly reduced the town to rubble. It was finally captured by the Germans on 10 November 1914. But the Allied had achieved their goal. The German advance had been halted and the Schlieffen Plan had failed.

(Also see Nieuwpoort on page 20)



Flooding the front

The power of water

In October 1914, the possible flooding of the Yzer plain was discussed in Veurne town hall with Karel Cogge. Cogge was the superintendent of the Northern Waterways and knew the workings of the water system in this part of Belgium like the back of his hand. Even so, the first effort at flooding was only partially successful. However, when Hendrik Gheeraert, a ship's master from Nieuwpoort, succeeded in opening the lock, a huge mass of water flowed inland toward the low-lying plain. This old defensive tactic was highly effective and paralysed any further German movement in the Belgian sector of the front. On 30 October their attack ground to a halt. The German High Command had no idea what the Belgians were planning. Their army maps showed a German 'zero-metre waterline' which was 2.40 metres higher than the actual waterline. As a result of the flooding, this sector remained relatively quiet throughout the war. However, the Germans managed to hold on to a few isolated 'islands' on the west bank of the river until 1918. Here, in the open plain, the situation was always dangerous.

Trench warfare

The front stabilised on the Yzer and later on the River Marne in France. Both sides started to dig in - four years of terrible trench warfare had begun. Barbed wire, artillery, machine guns, vermin, disease, cold and wet - not to mention poison gas, aeroplanes, flame-throwers and tanks - all conspired to make the front a living hell. By the end of 1914, the Western Front ran in an unbroken line of trenches from the North Sea coast at Nieuwpoort to the Franco-Swiss frontier.

The Belgian-Dutch border is electrified

During the summer of 1915, the Germans built a high fence along the Belgian-Dutch border. This fence was permanently electrified with a current of 2,000 volts. The Germans were particularly anxious to prevent deserters and to keep out refugees and spies.

The fence ran in a more or less straight line from the North Sea to the River Meuse - a distance of some 180 kilometres. There was a patrol path along the wire, with look-out towers every 100 metres, complete with searchlights, alarms, mines, etc. Cross-border traffic was restricted to the public roads. Many smugglers fell victim to this 'wire of death'

Four years of war

Prisoners of war carrying a wounded



On the Western Front

+ 1914 +

The war was not over 'before the leaves have fallen' or 'by Christmas,' as many had hoped - and expected.

+ 1915 +

The British and the French attempt to break through the German line. The Germans use flame-throwers for the first time on the French front. Near Ieper, asphyxiating gas is also used for the first time.

+ 1916 +

The Germans try to 'bleed the French dry' at Verdun. The battle lasts for 10 months and brings France to the verge of collapse. Both sides lose tens of thousands of soldiers.

To reduce the pressure on Verdun, a joint Anglo-French attack is launched on the Somme. Tanks are employed for the first time but the offensive is a fiasco. On the first day of the battle alone, the British lose 60,000 men, killed, wounded or missing. By the end of 1916, casualties on both sides are horrendous.

+ 1917 +

To cut the Allied lines of supply, Germany declares unrestricted submarine warfare. Even neutral shipping is torpedoed without warning. This eventually leads to the United States of America declaring war on Germany in April 1917. However, the first American troops only come into action in 1918.

The French Army suffers cruel and pointless losses during an offensive along the Chemin des Dames, also known as the Nivelle Offensive. The French troops decide to mutiny - or, rather, to go on strike. They are willing to defend their country, but not to take part in futile attacks. In order to break the mutiny, the French High Command sentences 554 soldiers to death. 49 are actually shot. However, a number of the mutineers' demands are granted, including better food and leave.

At the beginning of June, the British force a breakthrough at Messines (Mesen), following the explosion of 19 mines under the German positions. The offensive is continued in August with the opening of the

Belgian soldier



Over the top!



Searching for a name



Third Battle of Ieper and the capture of the village of Passchendaele (Passendale). Losses on both sides are enormous, for a territorial gain of just 8 kilometres.

At Cambrai in France, 475 tanks attack the Germans on a 10 kilometre front with great - albeit temporary - success.

War weariness begins to affect both the soldiers and the civilian populations of the warring nations. There are shortages of raw materials, fuel and food. Russia withdraws from the war after the October Revolution. This allows Germany to transfer almost 1 million troops from the Eastern to the Western Front.

+ 1918 +

Germany starts a great Spring Offensive in the hope of winning the war before the Americans can arrive.

Ieper is evacuated by the British and the Germans capture Mount Kemmel. In July the German advance is brought to a halt and the tide turns against them.

Various Allied attacks are launched at Amiens, in the Argonne and along the Meuse, with the support of the Americans.

In September the final Allied breakthrough takes place in Flanders and on the French front.

In Germany riots break out as a result of food shortages.

The German people have had enough of the war. Mutinous sailors take over the naval base at Kiel. Civil disturbance spreads throughout the country.

Emperor William II flees to the Netherlands and seeks asylum in Amerongen. An armistice is agreed in a railway carriage near the French town of Compiègne: the guns will finally cease at 11 o'clock on 11 November.

+ 1919 +

In 1919 the Treaty of Versailles is signed. The map of Europe is redrawn: the balance of power is now very different than in 1914. Germany is forced to give up territory and to pay massive amounts of reparations to the Allies.

A certain A.H. will later conclude that Germany was never defeated in the field and that Versailles is an injustice which must be avenged. The seeds of the Second World War are already sown.

A total of more than 60 million soldiers were mobilised during the war. In all, the conflict costs the lives of 10 million people, without taking into account the many millions who are wounded or mutilated.

In comparison with the Second World War, the civilian population escapes relatively lightly. Civilian casualties amount to just 5% of the total, in comparison with 48% in World War Two. The flower of European youth is decimated. For example, of the 700,000 British casualties, more than 71% are between 16 and 29 years of age!

And in 1918-1919 Spanish flu claims more victims than the war in its entirety. This devastating influenza epidemic is named from the country where it first broke out. Estimates of the number of dead worldwide range from 20 to 100 million, depending on the sources used.

Four years of war



In the 'Westhoek', the Flanders Fields Country

The Germans wanted to seize the crucial Channel ports in France. This meant that they had to capture Ieper first. The high ground around the once famous cloth city and in neighbouring Heuveland was of great strategic importance. Whoever held these heights was in a strong position: the hills overlooked the enemy, gave excellent observation for artillery and were easy to defend. As a result, the fight for these ridges and hills was bloody and hard. Early in the war the Ypres Salient was formed - a huge bulge in the British lines which jutted deep into the German-held territory. "Remember Belgium!" became a rallying cry which persuaded hundreds of thousands of British volunteers to fight in Flanders - in the small piece of Belgium now known as the Westhoek. The British soldiers called the city 'Wipers' - a mispronunciation of 'Ypres' (the French name for the city, which was used on the military maps of the time). It was a name destined to become famous throughout the English-speaking world. The Belgian Army occupied the sector from the coast at Nieuwpoort, through Diksmuide and up to the canal at Ieper. The British then took over the line between Ieper and the French border. The French then held the rest of the front between Picardy and the Swiss border.

The Battles of Ieper (Ypres)

+ FIRST BATTLE +

(19 October - 22 November 1914)

After the German advance through Belgium and Northern France was halted in September 1914, the centre of the fighting shifted to the Westhoek. The Belgian Army halted the German attacks by flooding the Yzer plain (27-29 October 1914). To the south, the British and the French fought with great determination to prevent a German breakthrough at Ieper. This was the First Battle of Ieper, which raged from 22 October to 22 November 1914. When the battle was over, the Germans held the ring of high ground which overlooked the city. Both armies dug in and the famous Ypres Salient was born.

+ SECOND BATTLE +

(22 April - 25 May)

In the spring of 1915 the Germans made a new attempt to break

through at Ieper. They captured Hill 60 and on 22 April 1915, between Steenstrate and Langemark, they used chlorine gas for the first time in modern warfare. 150 tons of chlorine gas were released from 6,000 cylinders directed against the French lines. The result was death, panic ... and total surprise. The Allies were forced to withdraw for several kilometres, but there was no breakthrough. In September it was the turn of the Germans to be surprised, when the British used gas in their attack at Loos. Until the end of the war in November 1918, both sides bombarded each other with millions of gas shells. However, as a proportion of the total number of casualties, gas claimed relatively 'few' victims.

+ THIRD BATTLE +

(31 July - 10 November 1917)

The Mine Battle at Messines (Mesen)-Wijtschate

Summer 1917. The great Mine Battle of 7 June to the south of Ieper - in the sector known to the British as Messines Ridge and to the Germans as the "Wijtschate Bogen" - quite literally made the world shake. 19 mines were detonated under the German lines, causing explosions which could be heard as far away as London. In the beginning, this British offensive was a success. This was the prelude to the ill-fated Third Battle of Ieper.

The Battle of Passendale

The success at Messines was followed up in August with a new offensive: the Battle of Passendale. This battle was a complete disaster. The shells and the rain reduced the battlefield to a muddy swamp, through which neither attackers nor defenders could move. In four months the British lost 400,000 killed, wounded and missing for the gain of just 8 kilometres of territory.

The Germans had built strong concrete bunkers, defended with nests of machine guns that were almost impregnable. Passendale was a hell of mud blood and superhuman endurance. Little wonder that British called the village "Passendale" - the valley of suffering. The year 1917 also saw the first use by the Germans of mustard gas or 'eperiet'. As an 'improvement' on chlorine and phosgene, mustard gas not only attacked the victim's airways, but also caused the skin to erupt in hideously painful blisters.

+ GERMAN SPRING OFFENSIVE +

(April 1918)

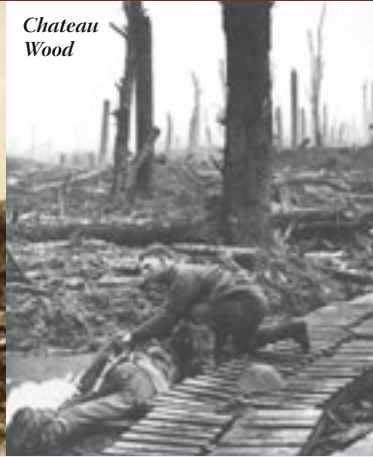
In the spring of 1918, the Germans were strengthened by the arrival of fresh divisions from the Eastern Front, where the October Revolution of 1917 had led to Russia's withdrawal from the war. The German offensive began in March, in the sector between Arras and Laon. In April new attacks were launched near Ieper, where the Allied line was almost broken. During the Battle of Merkem (near Houthulst) on 17 April 1918, the Belgian Army had to withstand a severe attack by the Germans. 'De Kippe', a locality in Merkem, and a number of bunkers were initially lost. However, following fierce hand-to-hand fighting with bayonets and knives, the Germans were forced back to their original positions by nightfall. Losses on both sides were high: the Belgians suffered 155 dead and 354 wounded, against a German total of 254 dead and 1,211 wounded. 780 Germans were also taken prisoner. It was the first major Belgian victory since Halen in 1914. During the Battle of Mount Kemmel the French in particular were very hard pressed. On 25 April this strategically important hill was lost to the Germans and Ieper was almost captured.

Mud was the worst enemy

Duckboards and German prisoners



Chateau Wood



A new weapon and the first gas masks



✦ THE FINAL OFFENSIVE ✦

(28 September - 11 November 1918)

By now, German reserves had been exhausted and the Americans were starting to arrive on the Western Front in huge numbers. In Germany itself, the home front began to disintegrate. From 28 September until the Armistice on 11 November, a series of Allied offensives pushed the Germans back to the River Scheldt.

The Battle of Houthulst Forest

Houthulst Forest was a key defensive position for the Germans throughout the war. The woods had been transformed into a veritable fortress,

THE AMERICANS

At the end of the war, American troops played an important role in the final offensive. The 91st and 37th United States Divisions were involved in the reconquest of the region between the Scheldt and the Lys rivers in October-November 1918.

Waregem

The Flanders Field American Cemetery is located near the town of Waregem, some 40 kilometres from Ypres. It is the smallest American cemetery on the European mainland and is also the only American cemetery from the First World War in Belgium. The central chapel contains the remains of 43 American soldiers in an unnamed collective grave. The cemetery itself has a total of 368 individual graves, of which 21 are 'unknowns'. On 30 May 1927, just 9 days after his famous transatlantic flight, Charles Lindbergh flew over the cemetery in his plane, the Spirit of Saint Louis, and dropped poppies in honour of his fallen countrymen.

Kemmel

Along the road from Ieper to Kemmel (near Vierstraat), there is an American memorial in the form of a stone altar, which commemorates the 27th and 30th American divisions, who fought in this sector during August and September 1918. There is a similar American monument in Oudenaarde.



with its own narrow-gauge railway system, linked to the main railway network behind the lines. On Saturday, 28 September 1918 the Belgian Army attacked this formidable obstacle. Almost every Belgian unit was involved in the attack, which was supported by the British Second Army and a number of French divisions. The forest had been reduced to little more than a mass of shell-torn tree trunks, but by the end of the first day the Belgians had succeeded in capturing the German lines on a front which was 18 kilometres wide and 6 kilometres deep.

✦ THE ARMISTICE OF 11 NOVEMBER 1918 ✦

At the beginning of November an armistice was signed in a railway carriage near the French town of Compiègne. The First World War finally came to an end at 11 o'clock on the morning of 11 November 1918.

✦ THE RECONSTRUCTION ✦

(1919 - 1967)

After the war, the vast majority of the refugees returned home. A smaller number - particular Flemish farmers who had fled to France - remained in their adopted countries to build new lives there. In the area around the old front line, Ieper, Diksmuide and numerous villages had been completely destroyed. These 'Verwoeste Gewesten' (Devastated Lands) were given a special status by the post-war government. The first emergency homes were gradually replaced by wooden barracks. Ruins were cleared away and the battlefields were 'cleaned up'. Trenches, shell-holes and craters were filled in. Ammunition was collected and made safe. The old houses and monuments were gradually rebuilt, one by one. The Nieuwerck - an annex to the Cloth Hall in Ieper, now used as part of the town hall - was only completed in 1967. This marked the final end of the so-called Period of Reconstruction.

In 2007 a farmer was killed by the explosion of a 90 year-old shell. The war may have only lasted a single generation, but it will still be many generations before its fatal legacy is finally erased.

The front in the 'Westhoek', the Flanders Fields Country

**"Thousands and thousands
of soldiers..."**

During the four years of war in the Westhoek, more than half a million soldiers were killed or went missing. Above all, it was the British, the Germans, the French and the Belgians who found their final resting place here. More than half this total came from Great Britain and the lands of the Commonwealth. Today their names can be found on the thousands of headstones which dot the countryside and on the panels of the Memorials to the Missing. Britons, Canadians, Australians and New Zealanders lie buried in the more than 170 cemeteries which still surround the city of Ieper. Soldiers from the many colonies of the period also fought and died here: Senegalese, Moroccans, Algerians, Tunisians, Indians, Sikhs,... and even Chinese.

(See Cemeteries from page 66 onwards).

Friend and foe





Name stone

Lock complex and
Albert I Monument

Nieuwpoort

✦ LOCK COMPLEX 'DE GANZENPOOT' (GOOSE'S FOOT) AND THE ALBERT I MONUMENT NIEUWPOORT ✦

From the Langebrug (Long Bridge) in Nieuwpoort, there is an excellent view of the famous 'Goosefoot', a complex of locks where the river Yzer, two shipping canals and three drainage canals all flow together. It was from here that the Yzer plain and front region was flooded at the end of 1914.

The sea locks allowed the low-lying coastal plain to shed its excess water, whilst at the same time regulating water levels in the canals for navigation purposes. At high tide the gates of the sea lock remained closed, but at ebb tide they were opened, to allow any surplus water to flow out to sea.

The actual locks were used to move boats upstream and downstream. The superintendent of the Northern Waterways, Karel Cogge from Veurne, knew how this network of canals, streams and overflows was linked to the River Yzer via the locks at Nieuwpoort. Ship's master Hendrik Geeraert knew how to open the flood gates. The water level rose, the River Yzer overflowed its banks and its surrounding plain was flooded. As a result, the Germans were forced to retire and this sector of the front remained stable until the Final Offensive in 1918. Next to the Goosefoot stands the King Albert I Monument, which was dedicated in 1938 at the initiative of the Belgian National Association of War Veterans. It was designed by Julien de Ridder and the sculptor was Karel Aubroek.

The platform on top of the memorial offers an excellent view of the Yzer plain and the port of Nieuwpoort, with its fishing harbour and yachting marina. Orientation tables indicate the most important places of interest. On the first Sunday in August an annual national act of homage in honour of 'King Albert I and the Heroes of the Yzer' is held here. Nearby stand a British and a French memorial, as well as the so-called Yzer Monument.

Info: T 058/23 55 87

Open from 15 October to 28 February from 08.45 to 12.00 and from 13.15 to 17.00. From 1 March to 14 October from 08.45 to 12.00 and from 13.15 to 18.00. Closed on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays. Entrance fee: € 1

✦ FRONTZATE ✦

It was here that the old railway line from Diksmuide to Nieuwpoort once ran, also known as 'Line 74'. In 1983 this isolated (and now disused) stretch of track was turned into a walking and cycling path. During the war the 'Frontzate' was an important line of defence and Line 74 had a key strategic function. During the flooding of the Yzer plain, the raised railway embankment acted as a water buffer. A number of brick bunkers were built into the embankment, to offer protection to the troops. 70 or so bunkers between Pervijze and Nieuwpoort can still be seen: silent witnesses to this page in Belgian history.



Goose's foot, then...

A group photograph with Belgian soldiers



Diksmuide, Market



+ RAMSKAPELLE +

The First World War was disastrous for the architectural heritage of the front region. By the end of 1918, this polder village had been reduced to a heap of ruins. It was rebuilt during the 1920s.

Just over the now-disused railway there is a commemorative plaque to the 14th Regiment of Line on the wall of the first house. This regiment lost more than 100 men during the recapture of the village in October 1914. The old station was used as an observation post. It was finally abandoned in 1918, but was left in its wartime state. The only thing that has been changed is the replacement of the original sandbags with modern concrete copies.



THE ANGELS OF PERVIJZE

At the end of November 1914, two British nurses arrived on the Belgian front. In particular, Elisabeth Knocker was struck by the number of wounded who died unnecessarily, simply because of the distance they had to be transported before treatment. For this reason, she wanted to set up an aid post near the front line. In Pervijze (near Diksmuide) she worked with Mairi Chisholm in a cellar less than

50 metres from the trenches. Elisabeth was even able to make an unusual agreement with the Germans - they allowed her to collect wounded soldiers who had been left behind in no man's land. Her dog took a request to the German commander in the opposing trenches. If he agreed - which usually happened - she was able to move between the lines in safety. The Germans would not shoot, provided she was wearing her nurse's cap - and not a helmet. Both nurses were decorated by King Albert in January 1915.

Diksmuide

+ YZER TOWER, GATE OF PEACE AND YZER CRYPT +

Since 1924, an annual pilgrimage of remembrance to this shrine at Kaaskerke (near Diksmuide) has been organised. These three monuments commemorate the heroic struggle of the Flemish people to achieve their national identity, but also reflect the desire of all nations for peace. The first Yzer Tower was built in the 1930's, as a memorial to the Flemish soldiers who had died at the front, which ran along the line of the River Yzer between 1914 and 1918. During the 2nd World War, the site was the scenery of German-Flemish ceremonies. This original tower was destroyed by an explosion in 1946 and it was not until 1965 that a new structure arose, phoenix-like, from its ashes. In recent years, the 22 floors of the new tower have been devoted to a museum on the themes of 'War, Peace and the Emancipation of Flanders'. The real atmosphere of the Great War still lingers within the memorial compound. An underground passageway and a reconstructed dug-out give some small idea of what conditions must have been like. In addition, each year a number of the thematic exhibitions are organised. The view from the top of the 84 metre tower offers a magnificent panorama over the old front-line and over the Westhoek as a whole.

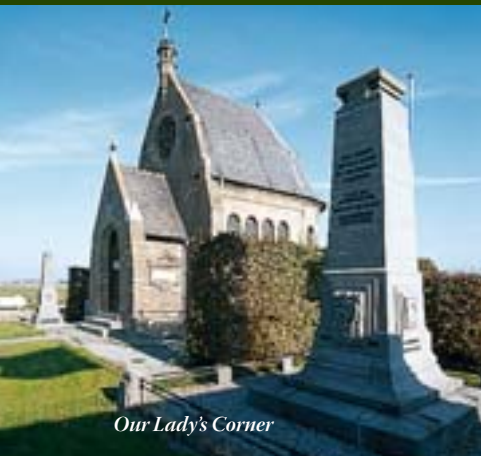
Yzerdijk 49 - Info: T 051/50 02 86 - www.ijzertoren.org

Open from 1 April to 30 September from 9.00 to 18.00. From 1 October to 31 March from 9.00 to 17.00. Weekend and festive days from 10.00.

Closed on 24, 25, 26 & 31 December and 1 & 2 January, and for the three weeks following the Belgian Christmas holidays. Entrance fee: € 6



Yzer Tower and Gate of Peace



Our Lady's Corner



Vladslo

+ O.-L.-VROUWEHOEKJE (OUR LADY'S CORNER) STUIVEKENSKERKE +

"Our Lady's" Corner (O.-L.-Vrouwehoekje) in Stuivekenskerke is located between Nieuwpoort and Diksmuide. The church tower was an important Belgian outpost during the war, and its preserved ruins contain an orientation table which highlights key places of interest on the Yzer front. The adjacent chapel of remembrance is ringed by memorial stones to units of the Belgian army which served near here. There is also an original demarcation stone, with the inscription: "Here the invader was brought to halt..." The nearby railway embankment still contains dugouts and other interesting relics from the war years. This embankment marked the Belgian front line for much of the period 1914-1918.

Always open, entry free.

+ THE 'TRENCH OF DEATH' +

Two kilometres further along the River Yzer stands one of the most evocative reminders of the war in the Westhoek: the so-called 'Trench of Death'. This kilometre-long network of revetments, saps and dugouts was one of the most dangerous Belgian positions on the Western Front, situated just 50 metres from a German bunker. As a result, the trench was subjected to almost constant fire from German snipers and machine guns. The site was recently renovated and a new visitors' centre was opened. Using maps, photographs, videos and war memorabilia, a permanent exhibition in the centre shows the relative positions of friend and foe, charts the destruction of the surrounding



Trench of Death

towns and villages and tells the story of life - and death - in the front-line

Along the de Yzer - Info: T 051/50 53 44

Open from 1 April to 15 November from 10.00 to 16.30. From 16 November to 31 March on Tuesday and Friday from 9.30 to 15.30. Entrance free.

+ THE 'GRIEVING PARENTS' + VLADSL0

This group of statues by the famous German Expressionist artist Käthe Kollwitz is one of the most moving and memorable reminders of the terrible price of war. She created the sculpture to commemorate the death of her son at the front in 1914. It now stands at the rear of the German military cemetery in Vladslo. (See Page 82)

Houtlandstraat

KÄTHE KOLLWITZ

This famous German artist and sculptress was born in July 1867 as Käthe Schmidt in the Prussian city of Königsberg (now Kaliningrad in Russia). In 1891 she married Karl Kollwitz, a local doctor. The couple - who were widely known for their deep social commitment - had two sons: Hans (born in 1892) and Peter (born in 1896). Peter was killed near Langemark on 22 October 1914. His heartbroken mother - who was a leading member of the Expressionist school of art in Germany - planned a memorial for her lost son. This took much longer than originally intended but by 1931 a plaster version of the 'Grieving Parents' was finally ready. During the following year the sculpture was carved from Belgian granite by August Rhades and Fritz Diederich. In July 1932 the finished work was erected in the Roggeveld German military cemetery at Esen, near Diksmuide. This cemetery, together with the statues, was later transferred to its present site in Vladslo. In 1933 Käthe Kollwitz was removed from the Prussian Academy of Art by the Nazis and the public display of her work was banned from 1935 onwards. She died at Moritzberg on 22 April 1945.





The road to Passchendaale...



Peace Mill Klerken



+ LITTLE BUNKER + OUDEKAPELLE

The little bunker near the settlement the Groigne is something strange. It is definitely a Belgian bunker, while inscriptions mention the unit that should have built it in 1918. However, on the southern side there is a curious detail. The entrance is a pointy horseshoe-arch with an Arabian inscription.

Translated it means as follows: 'There is no greater God than Allah. If you believe in Allah, you will triumph just like the victory on Tadmoor and Namar'. This text points to the temporary presence of Arabian soldiers in the French army.

Grote Beverdijkstraat - 8600 Oudekapelle (Diksmuide).

+ BELGIAN MILITARY CEMETERY AT KEIEM +

See page 67

+ GERMAN MILITARY CEMETERY AT VLADSLÓ +

See page 82



Esen near Diksmuide

Houthulst

+ THE PEACE MILL - KLERKEN +

The Germans evacuated the village of Klerken in November 1914. Despite the severity of the bombardments, the windmill remained relatively intact. This mill stands on a 43 metre-high hill and was used by the Germans as an observation post. On 28 September 1918 the Belgians launched their final attack on Klerken. The Germans in the mill were surrounded but held their ground. The next morning they had all disappeared. Legend has it that they made use of an underground tunnel to escape. The attack on Klerken cost the lives of 554 Belgian soldiers. The mill was recently damaged in a storm but will be made good in 2008.

Molenweg

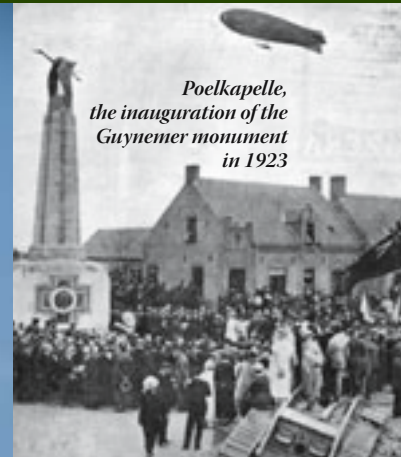
+ DRIE GRACHTEN (THREE BROOKS) MERKEM +

In 1914 and 1915 this bridge was an important outpost for first Belgian and later French troops. A memorial plaque on the wall commemorates a celebrated action by the French Zouaves. On 10 November 1914, 500 Zouaves attacked strong German positions with cold steel. The attack failed, largely because the Zouaves preceded it with bugle calls and loud shouts of 'en avant à la bayonette' (forward with the bayonet!). All surprise was lost and there were heavy casualties on both sides. Two days later, the Germans launched their own attack on the Drie Grachten. They tried to shield their advance by making captured Zouaves walk ahead of them into No Man's Land. Suddenly, one of the Zouaves cried out: 'Tirez donc nom de Dieu, ce sont les Boches' (Shoot us, for God's sake: it's the Germans!). The attack failed. In 1915 the Germans finally managed to capture this advance position and they held it until it was retaken by the French at the end of 1917.

Driegrachtensteenweg - 8650 Merkem

+ BELGIAN MILITARY CEMETERY +

See page 67

*Canadian forces Memorial**Poelkapelle, the inauguration of the Guynemer monument in 1923*

Langemark-Poelkapelle

+ THE BROODING SOLDIER + SINT-JULIAAN

The Canadian Forces Memorial at Sint-Juliaan was erected in remembrance of the 2,000 dead of the First Canadian Division, who were killed in the fighting which followed the German gas attack of 22 April 1915. The monument dates from 1921 and was designed by F.C. Clemeshaw. It is also known as 'The Brooding Soldier' - a reference to the grieving Canadian warrior, his head bowed in sorrow and his hands resting on the butt of his upturned rifle. It is generally regarded as one of the most poignant military memorials in the Salient.

*Crossroad Brugseweg-Zonnebekastraat - 8920 Poelkapelle
Info: T. 057/49.09.41*

+ GUYNEMER-MONUMENT + POELKAPELLE

Perhaps one of the most impressive French memorial in the Salient is the monument erected in memory of the French pilot Georges Guynemer in Poelkapelle. Guynemer was one of the great pioneers of aerial warfare and in 1917 the skies above Poelkapelle were the scene of some of his most memorable actions. It was here that he disappeared on 11 September 1917 during a routine mission. His body was never recovered. The Guynemer monument was inaugurated on 8 July 1923 and is crowned by a graceful stork - a reference to the great ace's squadron: l'Escadrille des Cicognes.

+ MONUMENT CHARLES DRESSE + POELKAPELLE

This slightly neglected monument with an obelisk and a Breton cross was erected in 1922. The text is in both Dutch and French (which was unusual for that time). It is dedicated to Charles Dresse, who was

born in Liège on 23 January 1897 and died in this vicinity on 28 September 1918. He is now buried in the Belgian military cemetery at Westvleteren.

Poperingestraat

+ GERMAN MILITARY CEMETERY +

See page 81

GEORGES GUYNEMER

Georges Guynemer was a famous French pilot who won many aerial duels. Born in Paris on 24 December 1894, his small size initially made it difficult for him to enlist in the services. He was finally accepted into the infant air force as non-commissioned officer but was soon promoted to the rank of captain. He shot down his first enemy plane in July 1915 and went on to claim no fewer than 53 victims, earning him the name of the 'Legendary Guynemer'. On 11 September 1917 he set off in his favourite Spad biplane for a reconnaissance mission over the Ieper Salient. He never returned. When the British later captured the village of Poelkapelle, they heard tales of a Spad which had been shot down nearby. Sadly, subsequent bombardments had obliterated all trace of the plane and Guynemer's body was never recovered. There is still a monument to this greatest of all French aces in Poelkapelle, crowned by a flying stork - the symbol of his squadron: l'Escadrille des Cicognes.





Dug-out



Memorial Museum Passchendaele 1917

Zonnebeke

+ MEMORIAL MUSEUM PASSCHENDAELE 1917 +

In 1917 more than 400,000 soldiers were lost in the course of just one hundred days, and all for a paltry territorial gain of a few kilometres of shell-torn mud. The final objective for this unprecedented slaughter was the village of Passendale - then known as Passchendaele.

The memory of this tragedy has been preserved for posterity in the Memorial Museum in Zonnebeke. Using authentic photographic material, a wide collection of historical objects and several realistic dioramas, the museum tells the story of the battle as it was experienced by the troops. Pride of place goes to a reconstruction of a 6 metre-deep British dug-out, complete with communications and first-aid posts, headquarters and sleeping facilities.

The museum is housed in the historic park of Zonnebeke Château and is en route to Tyne Cot Cemetery, to which it is linked by a special walking and cycling path.

Château park

Info: T 051/77 04 41 - www.zonnebeke.be - www.passchendaele.be

Open from 1 February to 30 November, from 10.00 to 18.00.

Entrance fee: € 5

+ COMMAND BUNKER + ZANDVOORDE

Just outside the village of Zandvoorde there is a German command bunker, dating from 1916. With 6 rooms and 2 entrances, this is one of the most impressive examples of German military architecture still surviving in the Salient. The bunker served as a link between the front-line in Hollebeke and headquarters units in Komen.

Komenstraat

Info: T 051/77 04 41 - www.zonnebeke.be - www.passchendaele.be

Permanent free access, from sunrise to sunset.

+ CRYPT +

In the civil cemetery in Zonnebeke there is a crypt with fourteen separate coffins, which contain the remains of Zonnebeke's war dead. This sad and slightly lugubrious collection of bones is unique in Belgium.

Civil cemetery - Info: T 051/77 04 41 - www.zonnebeke.be

Permanent free access, from sunrise to sunset.

+ CRYER FARM + GELUVELD

Also dating from 1916, a further German aid post can still be seen along the Menin-Ieper road, near the locality known as Clapham Junction. This post was captured in September 1917 by the British lieutenant Cryer, who lost his life in the process.

Menenstraat - Info: T 051/77 04 41

www.zonnebeke.be - www.passchendaele.be

Only accessible on appointment. Please contact the Tourist Office.

+ 'THE ROAD TO PASSCHENDAELE' +

This route allows walkers and cyclists to trace the advance of the Allied forces on 4 October 1917, a key day in the Battle of Passendale. The old railway bed of the now disused Ieper-Roeselare line links the Memorial Museum with Tyne Cot Cemetery, over a distance of 3 kilometres. Along the way, there are various bunkers and other relics of the war to be seen.

School groups can book a special 'Platoon Experience', which will allow them to follow in the personal footsteps of a soldier from 1917.

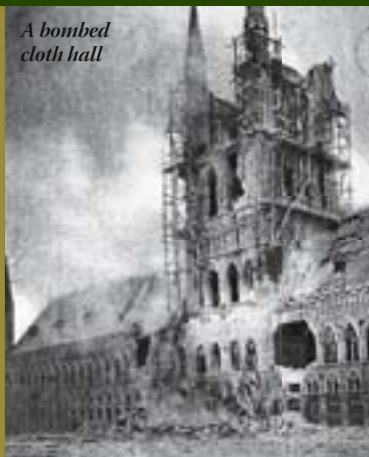
Info: T 051/77 04 41 - www.zonnebeke.be - www.passchendaele.be

'Platoon Experience' only available for pupils older than 14 years of age.

Reservations via Tourist Office.

+ TYNE COT CEMETERY +

See page 72



A bombed cloth hall



In Flanders Fields Museum

Ieper

✦ SYMBOL OF SACRIFICE ✦

In the Middle Ages Ieper became world famous because of its cloth trade. Commercial relations flourished, particularly with England, which provided much of the wool on which the town's great prosperity was based. The most obvious symbol of this prosperity was the magnificent Cloth Hall, built during the 13th century.

Ieper was occupied by the German army for one night at the beginning of the Great War. It was recaptured on 14 October 1914 - and remained in Allied hands until the end of hostilities. Some five million British and Commonwealth soldiers passed through Ieper on their way to the Salient. Reduced to rubble by constant bombardment, the town came to symbolise the meaningless slaughter of the Great War. After the Armistice, the British government wished to acquire the ruins of Ieper as a permanent memorial to the sacrifices of its army between 1914 and 1918. However, the returning refugees wanted to rebuild their homes and the wishes of the local population finally prevailed. Now restored to its former grandeur, Ieper still contains numerous poignant sites and monuments linked to the war.

32



Ypres after the war

✦ IN FLANDERS FIELDS MUSEUM ✦

Opened on Anzac Day in 1998, the In Flanders Fields Museum in Ieper offers a fascinating introduction to the events which took place between 1914 and 1918.

You will see original films of the devastated city and the battlefields around it; you can listen to songs of the period; you can read the poems, stories and personal testimonies of four years of war. The Christmas truces of 1914, the first gas attack, the experiences of the soldier in No-Man's-Land, the work of the military hospitals, and the post-war reconstruction are all clearly and movingly depicted. However, a visit to this unique museum is not only moving; it is informative as well. Background information about key personalities and events is offered via easy-to-use, touch-screen computers.

But if In Flanders Fields is a modern museum, it also retains respect and empathy for what happened in the past. Special emphasis is placed on the role of ordinary men and women in the so-called 'war to end all wars'. Special character cards allow visitors to follow the fates of real people - often to their tragic end. Since its opening, more than 2,1 million visitors have passed through the doors of In Flanders Fields.

*Cloth Hall, Grote Markt 34 - Info: T 057/23 92 20
www.inflandersfields.be*

Open daily from 1 April to 15 November from 10.00 to 18.00.

From 16 November to 31 March from 10.00

to 17.00. Tickets on sale until 1 hour

before closing. Closed on Mondays,

Christmas, New Year and the first

three weeks after the Belgian

Christmas period. -

Entrance fee: € 8.00



33



THE LAST POST

Every evening at 8 pm, a deeply moving ceremony takes place under the vast arch of the Menin Gate: the traffic stops and buglers from the local fire brigade play "The Last Post".

The ceremony was begun in 1928 and the buglers have performed it faithfully ever since, although they were banned from playing during the German Occupation of 1940-44.

Brookwood Barracks in England took over the ceremony during the war, but the tradition was immediately re-established on the first day after the liberation in September 1944.

Sometimes the ceremony is attended by just a few spectators; on more formal occasions, hundreds can be present. Irrespective of numbers, the Last Post remains a unique and moving experience.

*Daily at 20.00 under the Menin Gate
Info: T 057/48 66 10 - www.lastpost.be*

During the ceremony a verse from the poem 'For the Fallen' by Laurence Binyon is usually read out loud:

'They shall not grow 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 the morning

We will remember them'



+ YORKSHIRE TRENCH & DUG-OUT + BOEZINGE

The war is still ever-present in the Ieper area. Not only in the landscape, with its hundreds of cemeteries, monuments and relics, but also underground. This underground war can still be found at a depth of between 60 and 70 cm, something the local population quickly learned, when from 1997 onwards a new industrial site was developed along the Ieper - Yzer canal. Numerous vestiges of the war were soon discovered: unexploded ammunition, constructions, human remains...

Since then, the bodies of some 205 soldiers of three different nationalities have been recovered. The city acquired a small plot of land, for the creation of a memorial site by the In Flanders Fields Museum. This plot marks the location of 'Yorkshire Trench', originally dug by the British in 1915. In close consultation with the archaeological team, the trench was restored along its original route, including the entrance and exit of a deep dug-out from 1917. A series of information panels and a ground plan of the dug-out on the site give the visitor a graphic representation of trench warfare. At the IFF Museum, a film, a scale model and an interactive stand, including an exhibition of the objects found in the dug-out, give a deeper insight into this fascinating and little-known aspect of the war "in the wet, wet Flanders' plain."

*Industrial estate along the Ieper - Yzer canal - Bargiestraat
(near Boezinge lock). The site is permanently open (sunrise to sunset) and entrance is free*



*Temporary house,
site John McCrae*



*In Flanders fields the poppies grow,
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place. And in the sky,
The larks, still bravely singing, fly,
Scarce heard amidst the guns below.*

✦ CANAL BANK - SITE JOHN McCRAE ✦

One of the best known sites in the Ypres Salient is Essex Farm Cemetery and A.D.S. (Advanced Dressing Station), where John McCrae wrote his world-famous poem *In Flanders Fields* at the beginning of May 1915.

In addition to the cemetery and the adjacent concrete shelters of the old dressing station, the bank of the canal has also recently been opened to the public over a distance of 450 metres. It was here that the guns of the 1st Canadian Artillery Brigade stood in April 1915 and it was on this spot shortly afterwards that the Royal Engineers built a number of shelters and dugouts for the protection of the troops in the high canal bank. This bank had originally been dug in the 17th century by the French military architect Vauban as a 'retranchement', a large fortification alongside the canal, which for more than 50 years constituted the northern border of Louis XIV's French empire. Shortly after the 1918 armistice, the numerous bunkers in the bank also served as temporary accommodation for many of the refugees returning home.

High on the canal bank stands a monument to the 49th West Riding Division, which was first deployed here in the summer of 1915 and suffered heavy losses. A series of information panels and photos guide the visitor on a historical voyage of discovery.

✦ MINE CRATERS ✦

In comparison with many other offensives, the Mine Battle of 7 June 1917 - also known as the Battle of Messines Ridge - was one of the most successful British operations on the Western Front during the war. This offensive was opened with the explosion of 19 large mines and traces of 16 craters are still visible to this day, almost all in the shape of deep ponds. Until recently, only the famous Lone Tree Crater in Wijtschate (commonly known as the Pool of Peace) was open to the public. However, in 2001 the Province of West Flanders also acquired

the 'Domain De Vierlingen' (near Hill 60), which contains the Caterpillar Crater. Due to the proximity of the nearby railway cutting, this crater is the only one in Flanders that is not filled with water.

Since mid 2003, it has also been possible to visit the mine crater at St. Eloi, which was the result of the largest deep mine (50 tons of ammonal) detonated during the war. The crater is flanked by an intact British bunker from 1917 and stands just 100 metres from another crater (on the opposite side of the road), the result of one of the six mines exploded on 27 March 1916 during the Attack on St. Eloi.

*Along the Rijsselseweg (road to Lille) in Voormezele
(opposite the Eekhofstraat).*

Access is free from 1 April to 15 November, from 09.00 to 17.00.

JOHN McCRAE

In 1915, during the Second Battle of Ieper, this military doctor worked in an aid post near the Ieper canal in Boezinge. Born in Canada in 1872, McCrae originally saw active service as a volunteer during the Boer War in South Africa (1899-1902). He resigned from the army in 1901, but re-enlisted again on the outbreak of war in August 1914. On 22 April 1915 he was amongst the first to treat the casualties of the terrible chlorine gas attack. Deeply affected by what he had seen, at the beginning of May 1915 he wrote his famous poem, 'In Flanders Fields'. McCrae died of a cerebral haemorrhage (brought on by pneumonia) at Wimereux (France) on 28 January 1918. The poppy, which his poem had made so famous, eventually became the symbol for the sacrifice of war: perhaps because it thrives in devastation and grows where everything else is dead. "Red is the leaf and the blood, black is the heart of sorrow..."





Ypres, the Menin Gate in 1928



Hill 60

+ THE MENIN GATE +

The Menin Gate is the most famous Commonwealth war memorial in Flanders. It was designed in classical style by Sir Reginald Blomfield and stands on the site of one of the old town gates. Tens of thousands of soldiers passed through this gate on the way to the front, many of them never to return. Opened in 1927, the memorial bears the names of 54,896 soldiers who were reported missing in the Ypres Salient between the outbreak of war and 15 August 1917.

Because the gate was too small to hold the names of all the missing, those who were lost after this date (a further 34,000) are commemorated on the panels of the Tyne Cot Memorial in Passendale. .

*The Last Post Ceremony takes place each day under the Menin Gate at 20.00.
Info: T 057/48 66 10 - www.lastpost.be*

+ ST. GEORGE'S MEMORIAL CHURCH +

St. George's Memorial Church was built in 1929 in honour of the soldiers and units of the British army who served in the Ypres Salient during the war. Designed by Reginald Blomfield in the style of an English parish church, it contains many poignant memorials to both individuals and regiments. The small school next to the church was known as the Eton College School. For many years, it provided education for the children of the many British employees of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

This British community was forced to flee Ieper during the Second World War. Few returned after 1945 and the school was eventually closed. It now serves as the church hall.

Elvederingsstraat 1 - Open daily.

+ 'IN FLANDERS' FIELDS' DOCUMENTATION CENTRE +

This centre is a repository for more than 6,000 books, 1,000 topographic maps, an extensive photographic library and hundreds of newspapers and magazines about the First World War.

*Janseniustraat 9 - Info: T 057/23 94 50 - stedelijke.musea@ieper.be
Open every Wednesday from 08.00 to 12.00 and 13.00 to 17.00.*

+ HILL 60 - ZILLEBEKE +

This hill was created by the earth excavated from the adjacent railway cutting. In 1914 it was captured by the Germans from the French. Later, this sector was taken over by the British, who began an underground war of mines and counter-mines. The first British 'deep' mine was exploded on 17 February 1915. Following a second detonation on 17 April 1915, the British were able to temporarily seize the hill, but it was soon lost. The underground war continued until the beginning of June 1917 (Third Battle of Ieper). Countless soldiers worked in the cold and the dark of the mine tunnels. Some of them died there and are still buried beneath the clay. In this sense, Hill 60 is their cemetery.

*Site preserved in its original wartime state, complete with craters, bunkers, memorials, etc.
Zwarteleenstraat - 8900 Zillebeke*



Hill 60

Ypres, cloth hall
and cathedral in
1918



Australians at
the front



✦ HILL 62 - SANCTUARY WOOD - ZILLEBEKE ✦

At Hill 62 in Zillebeke, there is an impressive memorial to commemorate the Canadian forces who served in the Ypres Salient. 'Maple Avenue' - the road which now leads to this memorial - once formed part of the Canadian front line. After the war, the avenue was planted with maple trees as a mark of respect for the Canadian sacrifice (the maple leaf is the national symbol of Canada). The memorial stands on top of the hill, surrounded by a pleasant park. It was the scene of fierce fighting in June 1916, but now offers peaceful views of the spires of Ieper.

✦ SAINT CHARLES DE POTYZE FRENCH MILITARY CEMETERY ✦

See page 79

✦ COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES COMMISSION ✦

See page 77

Elvederingestraat 82 - Info: T 057/22.36.36 - www.cwgc.org

✦ OTHER MUSEUMS ✦

Ramparts War Museum Ieper

Private museum. Models and tableaux depicting scenes from the war, using original material and artefacts recovered from the battlefields.

Rijselsestraat 208

Info: T 057/20 02 36 - Entrance fee: € 3 Access via Café "t Klein Rijsel".

Open from 10.30 to 20.00. Closed on Wednesdays and Thursdays.

Sanctuary Wood Museum - Zillebeke

Private museum with original wartime trenches.

Interesting collection of war photographs on original glass plates.

Canadalaan 26

Info: T 057/46 63 73 - Entrance fee: € 7.50

Hooge Crater Museum - Zillebeke

Private museum with photographs, weapons, equipment and life-size reconstructions of scenes from the war years. A stained-glass window portrays the burning of the Cloth Hall in Ieper on 22 November 1914.

Meenseweg 467

Info: T 057/46 84 46 - Entrance fee: € 3

Open from 1 February to 15 December. Closed on Mondays.

FRANCIS LEDWIDGE

Despite his strong Irish nationalist sentiments, this poet enlisted in the British Army during the Great War. Born in 1887 at Slane, deep in the old heartlands of Ireland, he was killed near the Carrefour des Roses (Rose Crossroad) on 31 July 1917 - the opening day of the Third Battle of Ieper. He is buried nearby in Artillery Wood Military Cemetery. His poems are mainly about Ireland, but he also wrote some fine pieces about his wartime experiences: *Soliloquy*, *A Soldier's Grave*, *Home*, *Ascension Thursday*: 1917. His most famous poem was his *Lament for Thomas MacDonagh*, who was shot by the British following the abortive Easter Uprising in Dublin in 1916. Ledwidge was a man dedicated to the poet's art and a memorial in his honour now stands near the spot where he was killed, alongside the cycle path on the site of the old railway line to Torhout.



*He shall not hear the bittern cry
In the wild sky, where he is lain,
Nor voices of the sweeter birds
Above the wailing of the rain.*

(From *Lament for Thomas MacDonagh*)



Heuvelland

+ VISITORS' CENTRE 'DE BERGEN'

The visitors' centre 'De Bergen' in Kemmel (next to the Tourist Information Office) is the ideal starting point for your journey of discovery through the history of the First World War in Heuvelland.

In the visitors' centre, it is also possible to view the documentary 'Zero Hour' - the story of the mine battles of 1917. This documentary is a combination of aerial photography, 3D-animation, live recordings, archive material and re-enacting. For more information about the mine battles, please consult the website www.zerohour.be

Reningelststraat 11

Info: T. 057/45 04 55 - www.heuvelland.be

Access free on working days from 09.00 to 12.00 and 13.15 to 17.00.

On Saturdays and Sundays from 10.00 to 12.00. From 1 April to 31 October, also open on Saturdays and Sundays from 14.00 to 17.00.

+ POOL OF PEACE + WIJTSCHATE

The Pool of Peace (or Lone Tree Crater) in Wijtschate is a now peaceful reminder of the great Mine Battle of 1917.

On 7 June 1917, the British attempted to capture Messines Ridge, a strategically important area of high ground around the villages of Wijtschate and Mesen (Messines). The opening of the offensive was marked by the detonation of 19 deep mines under the German lines between Ploegsteert and Hill 60. The explosions formed enormous craters in the landscape. The largest and most impressive crater is the Pool of Peace. It is 12 metres deep and has a diameter of 129 metres. The site is administered by the provincial government of West Flanders.

Kruisstraat

Info: T. 057/45 04 55 - www.heuvelland.be

Permanent free access, from sunrise to sunset.

+ BAYERNWALD (BAYERN WOOD) + WIJTSCHATE

This unique German site is located between the villages of Wijtschate and Voormezele. The site consists of two mine galleries, a mine shaft, a trench system and five bunkers. It is accessed via a footpath which passes through the restored network of trenches. A series of information panels give details of the events which took place here and explain what life at the front was really like.

The site was restored in collaboration with the Association for Battlefield Archaeology (www.battlefield-archaeology.be).

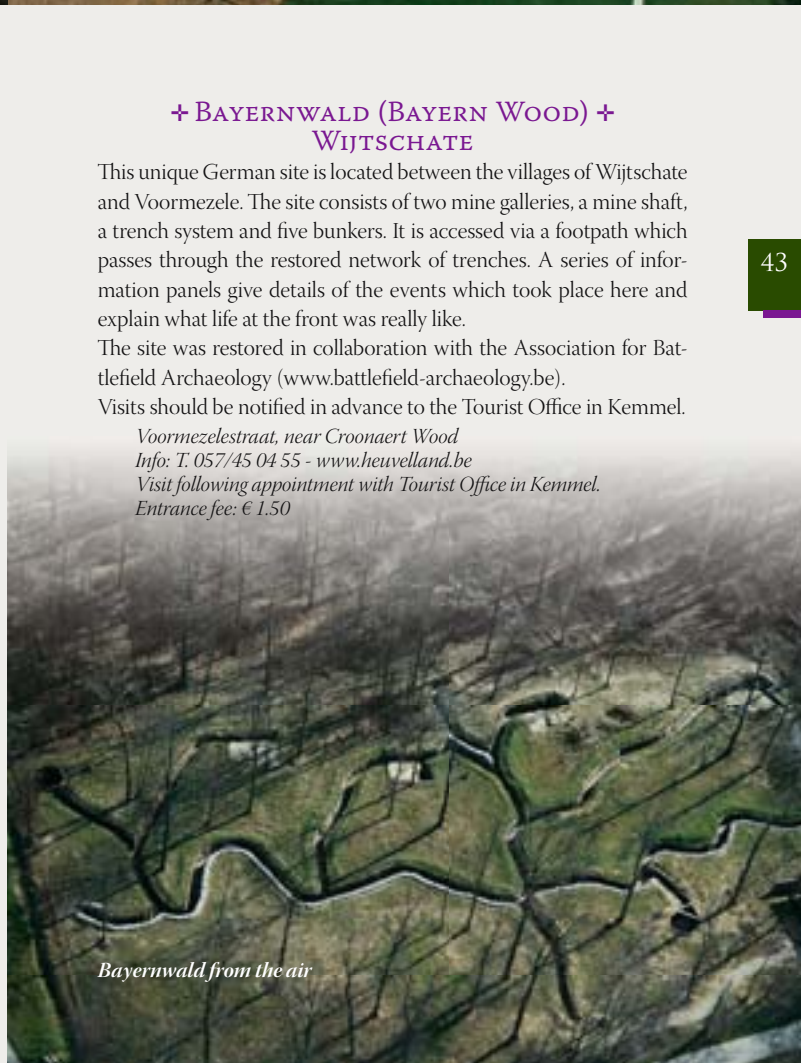
Visits should be notified in advance to the Tourist Office in Kemmel.

Voormezelestraat, near Croonaert Wood

Info: T. 057/45 04 55 - www.heuvelland.be

Visit following appointment with Tourist Office in Kemmel.

Entrance fee: € 1.50



Bayernwald from the air

Bunkers Lettenberg



French Monument



Irish Peace Park



✦ THE LETTENBERG KEMMEL ✦

The 'Lettenberg' hill (79 m) is a spur of the much larger Kemmel Hill, which dominates its position. Towards the end of 1916, the British engineers and tunnellers started to excavate an underground headquarters complex at Kemmel Hill, which was the most important British observation post in the sector. Between 4 April and the end of May 1917, the 175th Tunnelling Company worked on the construction of a new brigade headquarters under the Lettenberg. The concrete bunkers which gave access to this headquarters have now been restored. There are four shelters, built in reinforced concrete, which was poured in moulds of corrugated sheeting. Each shelter has an entrance and a window on the western side. Access to the site - which was also restored with the help of the Association for Battlefield Archaeology - is via a footpath with explanatory information panels.

Lokerstraat - Info: T 057/45 04 55 - www.heuvelland.be
Permanent free access, from sunrise to sunset.

✦ FRENCH MONUMENT KEMMEL ✦

On the summit of Kemmel Hill there is an impressive French memorial which commemorates the heavy fighting which took place here in April 1918. The memorial is known popularly as 'The Angel'

ACHIEL VAN WALLEGHEM

Achiel van Wallegghem was curate in the village of Dikkebus during the war and kept a diary of events in his parish. He noted what people experienced and felt. The manuscript, which testifies to his great humanity, was edited and re-written by Achiel himself after the war. In the morning, an English soldier was shot against the wall of the convent because he refused to go to the trenches. His own pals were forced to do it. Many soldiers have told me how terrible it is to have to shoot a mate. Some of them cry from guilt and remorse... In these words, the curate described the execution of Private William Smith in a field behind the convent in Reinghelst on 14 November 1917. 'Shot at dawn'

✦ FRENCH MILITARY CEMETERY AND OSSUARY ✦

See page 79

Messines (Mesen)

✦ THE IRISH PEACE PARK AND PEACE TOWER ✦

In the Irish Peace Park in Mesen (Messines), a round tower serves as a memorial in honour of Irishmen of all denominations who died during the First World War. The tower transcends religious and political differences, aspiring to be a symbol of reconciliation, not only for the past, but also for the present and the future. During the Battle of Messines, which started on 7 June 1917, the Catholic and Protestant Irish divisions (the 16th Irish and the 36th Ulster) fought side by side to gain the ridge on which the villages of Wijtschate and Mesen stand.

Armentierssteenweg

Free access from Monday to Friday from 09.00 to 17.00. Guided visits are possible, also on Saturday. Please contact the Tourist Office.

✦ THE NEW ZEALAND MONUMENT ✦

The New Zealand Division was also heavily engaged in the Battle of Messines in 1917. Each year, on 25 April, the New Zealand and Australian dead are commemorated on ANZAC Day (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps). Mesen (Messines) is twinned with the town of Featherston in New Zealand: quite literally on the other side of the world.

Nieuw-Zeelandstraat

Free access from Monday to Friday from 09.00 to 17.00. Guided visits are possible, also on Saturday. Please contact the Tourist Office.

Historical Museum

✦ MESSINES RIDGE MEMORIAL TO THE MISSING ✦

This memorial is located at the entrance to Messines Ridge British Cemetery and bears the names of 839 New Zealand soldiers who died during the Battle of Messines and have no known grave. There are similar memorials to New Zealand's war dead in Tyne Cot Cemetery and Buttes New British Cemetery.

Nieuwkerkestraat

✦ THE INTERNATIONAL PEACE SCHOOL ✦

The Peace School is an initiative launched by the Catholic and Protestant communities of Northern Ireland. In addition to being an educational project, the school is also intended as a place of contemplation, where it is possible to reflect on the madness of war. The fully renovated complex contains everything necessary for lectures and group debates on the subject of peace. In 2006 the Messines Peace Village opened its doors, offering no fewer than 128 sleeping places in 32 separate accommodation units.

*Nieuwkerkestraat 9A
T 057/22 60 40 - F 057/22 60 45
www.peacevillage.be*

✦ HISTORICAL MUSEUM ✦

This small museum not only highlights the 'whys and wherefores' of the Battle of Messines Ridge (using an interesting collection of photographs and battlefield memorabilia) but also houses the unique 'Treasure of Messines' - testimony to the town's rich medieval past.

*Town Hall - Markt 1.
Info: T 057/44 50 41 - www.mesen.be - www.museummesen.be
Open from Monday to Friday, from 09.00 to 12.00 and 13.00 to 17.00.
Closed on Saturdays (except for groups by appointment).
From Easter to 11 November, also open on Sundays from 14.30 to 17.30.
Entrance fee: € 1,50*

The New Zealand Monument

✦ PEACE CARILLON ✦

The belfry of the St. Nicolas Church houses a carillon of no fewer than 61 bells, donated as symbols of peace by individuals and organisations from more than 15 different countries.

Sint-Niklaaschurch

Free access from Monday to Friday from 09.00 to 17.00. Guided visits are possible, also on Saturday. Please contact the Tourist Office.

✦ MONUMENT TO SAMUEL FRICKLETON ✦

Erected to the memory of this New Zealand winner of the Victoria Cross (V.C.).

Featherstonplein - next to the church

SAMUEL FRICKLETON

Born in Scotland in 1891 but with Irish blood also in his veins, Samuel Frickleton emigrated to New Zealand with his mother in 1913, following the death of his father. He was the tenth of eleven children and went to work in the Blackball Mine. When war broke out, he enlisted in the army and returned to Europe as a non-commissioned officer in the New Zealand Rifle Brigade. On 7 June 1917 - the opening day of the great mine offensive against the Messines Ridge - he was wounded during the early stages of the advance. Even so, he was able to knock out two German machine gun posts and subsequently defended them against repeated counter-attack, notwithstanding two further wounds.

For his great bravery, Samuel Frickleton was awarded the Victoria Cross. Instigated by Queen Victoria in 1856, the VC has only been awarded 1,355 times in its 150 year history. Sam Frickleton's medal can still be seen at the Army Memorial Museum at Waiouru in New Zealand.



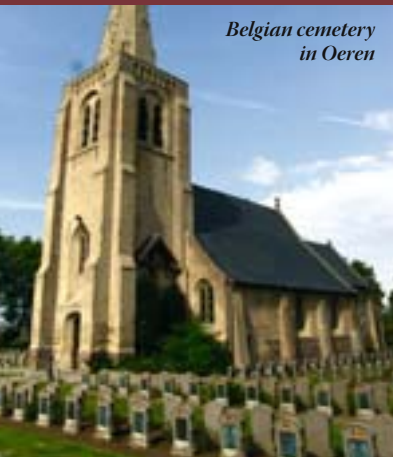
Behind the front: Unoccupied Belgium



48

49

Behind the front. British soldiers befriend the children of Poperinge



Belgian cemetery
in Oeren



Flemish 'hero cross'



Veurne, Town Hall

Alveringem

+ KAPELANIJ (THE CHAPLAIN'S HOUSE) +

From 1911 until 1939 the priest-poet Cyriel Verschaeve (1874-1949) was the chaplain here. During the First World War, the chaplain's house was a meeting place for Flemish nationalist sympathisers. Verschaeve was one of the prime movers of the so-called Front Movement, which fought for the rights of Flemish speaking soldiers against the French-speaking High Command. During the Second World War Verschaeve chose resolutely for collaboration with the Germans. In 1946 he was sentenced to death in absentia by Court Martial. He died in exile in Austria in 1949. As a result of secret action by the Flemish Militant Order (VMO), he was exhumed from his original grave at Soldbad Hall and reburied in the churchyard at Alveringem. Since 1987, the mortal remains of eight other Flemish veterans have been buried around Verschaeve's last resting place. The Chaplain's House contained a small museum, but it closed on January 1st, 2008.

Sint-Rijkersstraat 22

+ OEREN +

BELGIAN MILITARY CEMETERY

+ HOOGSTADE +

BELGIAN MILITARY CEMETERY

See page 67



Observation post
Pervijze

Veurne

+ TOWN HALL +

The headquarters of the Belgian Army was located in the town hall during the crucial Battle of the Yzer. King Albert I also had his command post in the building between 15 October 1914 and 23 January 1915. King George V of England, the French president Poincaré, the British commander-in-chief Marshall French and the French general Foch all visited him during this period. In October 1914 the possible flooding of the Yzer plain was also discussed here with Cogge. From the spring of 1915 until 1919 the headquarters of the army was located in the parsonage at Houtem.

Grote Markt

Info: T 058/33 55 31

Entrance fee: € 3

+ BUST OF KAREL COGGE + (1855 - 1922)

Karel Cogge was the superintendent of the Northern Waterways. He played an important role in the flooding of the Yzer plain at the end of October 1914. This bust was made by Jules Lagae.

Noordstraat

+ SINTE-FLORA CASTLE + DE MOEREN

The neo-classical castle of Sinte Flora was built in 1851. King Albert and the royal family stayed at the castle from June 1917 until July 1918. Whilst here, the king received the King of Italy, the Prince of Wales and the French generals Foch and Joffre.

Kasteellaan 2 - 8630 De Moeren

Only for groups on demand (T 058/31 21 00).



Headquarters in Houtem



Joe English



Belgian Cemetery in Steenkerke

+ HEADQUARTERS OF THE BELGIAN ARMY, HOUTEM - HOUTEM +

From 23 January 1915 until October 1918, the Belgian Army had its headquarters in the vicarage next to the church in Houtem. It was from this building that Lieutenant-General Wielemans conducted operations. It was here that King Albert visited him three or four times a week, meeting other Allied commanders and decorating soldiers for gallantry. General Wielemans died on 5 January 1917 and was buried in Houtem cemetery. His grave, with its column of pink granite, can still be seen today.

Kerkhoek

+ JOE ENGLISH + VINKEM

Joe English was born in Bruges in 1882. He is above all known for his design of the so-called 'heroes' tombstones. This Celtic-style cross, with a seagull or stormy petrel as emblem and the letters AVV-VVK (Alles Voor Vlaanderen, Vlaanderen Voor Kristus, meaning 'All for Flanders, Flanders for Christ') was erected over the graves of many Flemish soldiers. English died on 31 August 1918 in the 'L'Océan 2' military hospital as a result of a badly treated appendicitis. A simple stone in Vinkem is the only indication of where this hospital once stood. In the summer of 1917 the original hospital at the Hotel l'Océan in De Panne was forced by continuous shellfire to move to a tented village in Vinkem.

Joe Englishstraat

+ CACHOT (PRISON CELL) - WULVERINGEM +

Near the old village school it is still possible to see a well-preserved 'cachot' or prison cell. This simple vaulted room is just 1.80 m high and 2.10 m wide. It was surrounded with barbed wire and was used to keep recalcitrant soldiers under lock and key. Here they had to survive the day on just a chunk of bread and a bowl of water.

Wulveringemstraat 14

+ BELGIAN MILITARY CEMETERY VAN STEENKERKE +

See page 68

+ FRENCH MILITARY CEMETERY IN VEURNE +

See page 79

Searching for the fallen

It is possible to search for soldiers killed in action by nationality. For Great Britain and the Commonwealth, please go to www.cwgc.org. Enquiries relating to German dead can be answered at www.volksbund.de. A database, including a search engine, for Belgian casualties is available at www.inflandersfields.be. Information on French soldiers who died in the Westhoek can also be found on this same site.



Poperinge in 1917



54

55

Talbot House



Poperinge

Poperinge is a charming small town, surrounded by 200 hectares of hop fields. Known universally during the war years as 'Pop's' it was the place behind the front where soldiers came to rest from the trenches. In *Undertones of War* Edmund Blunden wrote: "*Poperinge was a fantastic city at that time, one of the seven wonders of the world - although the other six were temporarily out of competition!*" The town was a haven of shops, restaurants, hotels, hostels, coffee houses, cinemas, theatres and dancing halls - all of which were frequently visited by the troops.

The Upper Room*Talbot house and garden*

✦ TALBOT HOUSE & CONCERT HALL ✦

Talbot House in Poperinge is one of the most evocative sites from the Great War era. It was here that two army chaplains, Philip 'Tubby' Clayton and Neville Talbot, opened a club for soldiers. Named in honour of Gilbert Talbot, who was killed at Hooge in 1915, it became known as Toc H after the army signal code used in the war. More than half a million soldiers visited the club, which was housed in the mansion of a local hop trader, who had fled the country. It was a place where everyone was welcome; where military rank did not count; and where the troops could play the piano or borrow books (simply by leaving their cap as a deposit!). In short, it was a place where soldiers could become human again. The authentic interior has been largely preserved and the unique spirit of the place can perhaps best be experienced in the chapel - simply called the 'upper room' - which has remained untouched since 1918.

The adjoining hop store (better known during the war as the Concert Hall) and the former bathhouse (referred to as the 'Slessorium', after its creator, Major Peter Slessor) were both restored in 2004. A life-sized 'album' about 'Life Behind the Front' and a filmed re-enactment of a 'Concert Party' are now on permanent display. This allows visitors to experience the true atmosphere of Talbot House during the war years and shows how soldiers spent their time away from the trenches. And if you are looking for a really special place to stay the night, why not try Talbot House? You shouldn't expect four-star luxury but the authenticity of this unique setting will more than make up for any lack of worldly comfort.

Gasthuisstraat - Info: T 057/33 32 28
www.talbothouse.be

Open from Tuesday to Sunday, from 09.30 to 17.30. Last admittance at 16.30. From 15 November to 15 February: open from Tuesday to Sunday, from 13.00 to 17.00.

Closed from 24 December until the second Tuesday after 1 January.
Entrance fee: € 5.50 or € 8 (including the Upper Room).

PHILIP THOMAS BYARD CLAYTON

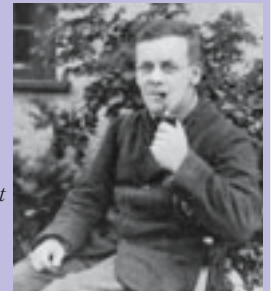
Better known as 'Tubby' (because of his size and shape), the Reverend Philip Clayton will forever be associated with Talbot House in Poperinge. He was born in Queensland (Australia) in 1885 but returned to England with his parents just two years later. After studying theology at Oxford, he went to France in 1915 as an army chaplain. In December of the same year, he opened Talbot House, together with his friend Neville Talbot.

The House - named in honour of Neville's brother Gilbert, who had been killed earlier in the war at Hooge - was a kind of rest home-cum-club for soldiers of all ranks. It was located in the 18th century mansion of Maurice Coevoet, a rich banker and hop merchant.

The attic was converted into a chapel, using any odd bits of furniture that could be found in war-torn Poperinge. This 'Upper Room' (as it was later known) has scarcely changed since 1915. Aided by the soldier-writer Arthur Pettifer, who was a master 'scrounger', Tubby made sure that the troops lacked for nothing. He was even able to start a library. His sense of humour made him extremely popular and Talbot House - Toc H in the military jargon of the day - was soon known and loved throughout the British Army.

After the war, Tubby Clayton returned to London, where he opened a second Talbot House in 1920. In 1922 he became vicar of All-Hallows-by-the-Tower Church, where he remained until 1962. For the last ten years of his life he devoted himself to the work of the Toc H movement - a worldwide charitable organisation which had grown from the original Talbot House idea. He died in 1972 at the age of 87.

In a rare tribute, BBC radio and television held a minute's silence in honour of his memory.





Talbot House, Concert Hall



Death cell



Reningelst during the war

+ CONDEMNED - OR DEATH - CELLS +

The authentic execution pole, located in the inner courtyard of the town hall, is a painful reminder of the fate which awaited many so-called 'deserters' during the Great War. Most of these frightened men were suffering from 'shell shock' - a psychological condition which was largely unrecognised at the time. Soldiers, who were sometimes bombarded for days on end, became near senseless and simply did not know what they were doing, abandoning their trenches without apparent reason. Instead of receiving compassion and understanding, a terrifying example was made of them. Often, they were executed by men from their own regiment. The British army shot or hanged 349 of its own troops between 1914 and 1918. Most were convicted after 'trials' lasting less than 20 minutes. In Great Britain a movement has now succeeded in obtaining pardons and rehabilitation for almost all of these soldiers. The condemned men spent their last night in the death cell before being shot at dawn (www.shotatdawn.org.uk). Seventeen of those executed in Poperinge were buried at Poperinghe New Military Cemetery, just a stone's throw from the city centre.

*Stadhuis - Guido Gezellestraat - Info: T 057/34 66 76
www.toerismepoperinge.be - Daily free access from 09.00 to 17.00.*

+ LIJSSENTHOEK MILITARY CEMETERY +

See page 74

Vleteren

+ BELGIAN MILITARY CEMETERY + WESTVLETEREN

See page 68

During the war, the station in Poperinge a focal point for the transportation of troops to and from the front



Behind the front: the occupied country



German cavalry in Menin
(Photo: Eric Debeir - Menin)

Ostend (Oostende)

The lively port and seaside resort of Ostend remained in German hands throughout the Great War. The Vindictive Monument commemorates a daring British naval attack which blocked the port in 1918.

+ DOMEIN RAVERSIJDE +

The Atlantic Wall Museum at Raversijde (just outside Ostend) boasts an impressive collection of German bunkers and coastal defences from the First and the Second World War.

Nieuwpoortsesteenweg 636 - Info: T 059/70 22 85

Open from 1 April to 11 November, from 14.00 to 17.00.

From 1 July to 31 August, from 10.30 to 18.30. Entrance fee: € 9

Koekelare

+ THE KÄTHE KOLLWITZ TOWER +

In the drying kiln of a renovated brewery in the village of Koekelare, graphic works of art by Käthe Kollwitz are on permanent display in the Käthe Kollwitz Tower. This exceptional woman (a native of Berlin) is considered to be one of Germany's most important Expressionist artists. Her best-known work of sculpture - the 'Grieving Parents' is to be found in the German cemetery at Vladslø, where her son Peter is buried.

Old brewery site - Sint-Maartensplein 15b

Info: T 051/58 92 01 - www.koekelare.be

Open from Tuesday to Friday, from 09.30 to 12.00 and from 14.00 to 17.00. From 15 June to 31 August, also Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays from 14.00 to 17.00. Entrance fee € 2,50 (included the entrance to the museum next door)



British prisoners of war
on the Menin Market square

Long Max



Wervik



+ 'LANGE MAX' (LONG MAX) +

This huge 38 cm cannon was mounted near the 'Leugenboom' (Liar's Tree) in the village of Koekelare. It weighed 75,500 kilograms, had a 17 metre-long barrel and could fire a shell over a distance of 40 kilometres. The cannon was part of the Pommern Battery, which belonged to the German Marine Corps - Flanders. Amongst its many targets was the harbour at Dunkirk.

After the Armistice in 1918, 'Lange Max' was something of an attraction in the Koekelare region, until the Germans dismantled it in 1940 during the Second World War. The Lange Max committee intends to restore the firing site in the Clevestraat. At the moment, it is possible to view the original gun platform and to visit a small museum.

Clevestraat 4

Open from Easter to 30 September on Sundays, from 14.00 to 18.00.

Info: T 0497/33 58 35. Entrance fee: € 3

Staden

During the early months of the war the small town of Staden and its neighbouring village of Westrozebeke were almost completely destroyed, although nearby Oostnieuwkerke was partially spared. In 1917 the castle in Staden was demolished by a British bombardment. It was never rebuilt.

+ MONUMENT LT. JUUL DE WINDE + (1893-1918) WESTROZEBEKE

Born in Merkem in 1893, he was drafted into the Belgian Army in 1913. He was promoted to the rank of lieutenant in 1917 - which was something of an exception for a soldier with clear Flemish nationalist sympathies. He was killed during the attack on Westrozebeke on 28 September 1918. In 1937 his remains were transferred to the crypt of the Yzer Tower in Diksmuide. The monument in the Poelkappellestraat in Westrozebeke was unveiled in 1938. It was designed by Karel Aubroeck, the designer of

the King Albert Monument in Nieuwpoort. This is perhaps most clearly seen in the use of yellow Nieuwpoort brick.

Crossroad Poelkappellestraat Hyndrycxbosstraat in Westrozebeke - 8840 Staden

Wervik

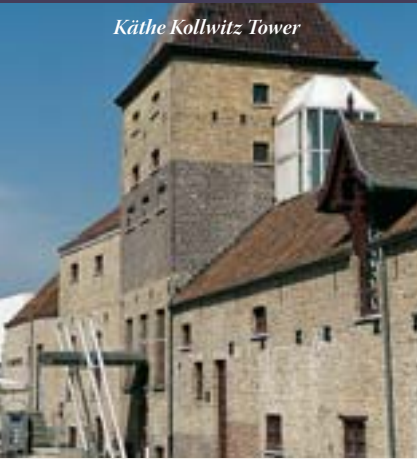
For the four years of the war, the town of Wervik almost became a German 'colony'. Curiously enough, this occupation also led to a kind of 'reunification': for the duration of hostilities, the old distinction between Wervicq Sud (on the French side of the River Leie) and Wervik (on the Belgian side of the Leie) ceased to exist. As one of the nearest towns behind the German lines, Wervik was the scene of frenetic military activity. Many German troops were quartered there. Different units arrived and departed almost every day. Prisoners of war passed through on a regular basis, as did military convoys. There were dumps of every kind, almost too numerous to mention. Inevitably, there were also cemeteries: funeral processions and mass burials were frequent occurrences. In his letters home, the German artist Max Beckmann described the almost surrealistic life of German troops stationed in Wervik in 1915. Not that things were much better for the local inhabitants, who faced all the dangers of war but who were also subject to strict German rules, with heavy fines for any infringements. The civilian population was finally evacuated in the summer of 1917, when the plans for a major Allied offensive against this sector of the front became clear.

+ MONUMENT TO WILLIAM LEGGETT +

Corporal William Leggett of the 1st Life Guards, a famous British cavalry regiment, was the first Australian killed in the fighting around Ieper in October 1914.

The monument is next to the St. Dionysius Church in the village of Geluwe.

Käthe Kollwitz Tower



German Cemetery Menen



✦ MEMORIAL PLAQUE TO JOHN EDEN ✦

During the first clashes between British and German forward units near the hamlet of Kruike in October 1914, one of the casualties was Lieutenant John Eden of the 12th Lancers. He was the brother of Anthony Eden, who later became prime minister of Great Britain. A memorial plaque to Lieutenant Eden is bricked into the wall.

Sacred Heart Church. The hamlet is also the starting point for the Kruike provincial walking route, which leads visitors across the rolling terrain over which the opening actions of the First Battle of Ieper were fought.

✦ 'THE 'FRENCH HILL' IN WERVICQ-SUD ✦ (FRANCE)

During the period of German occupation between 1914 and 1918, the towns of Wervik (in Belgium) and Wervicq-Sud (in France) were temporarily reunited, to form a single community (as had often been the case in the past). This community was largely German and largely military. Evidence of this occupation can still be found at the so-called French Hill in Wervicq-Sud. The 'Wit Kasteel' (White Chateau) in the grounds of the Dalle-Dumont park served as a field hospital for much of the war, and there are still the remains of military shelters and a memorial to the XVth Army Corps dating from 1915. There is also a German military cemetery (Deutscher Soldatenfriedhof) in Wervicq-Sud (France, just over the border), which was transferred from its original location in the

Dalle-Dumont park and was extended by the concentration of graves from elsewhere in 1974.

Menin (Menen)

During the First World War, Menin (Leie region) was occupied by the German Army from October 1914 until October 1918. The town was just a stone's throw behind the fighting zone and became a supply centre for the German front-line troops. It was equipped with field kitchens, bakeries, supply depots, ammunition depots, wagon parks and even airfields.

Menin also contained a number of field hospitals to care for the growing numbers of wounded. Wounded prisoners-of-war were also treated here. Until 1917, the soldiers who died of their wounds were buried in the civil cemetery (behind the station). However, as a result of the huge casualties during the Third Battle of Ieper a new purpose-built cemetery was begun in the fields near the boundary between Menen and the neighbouring village of Wevelgem. By the end of the war, the 'Ehrenfriedhof Meenen Wald N° 62' contained more than 6,000 German burials.

✦ GERMAN MILITARY CEMETERY AT MENEN-WEVELGEM ✦

See page 83



German soldiers in their shelter

Belgian war cemeteries



*In commemoration of adjutant A.V. Van Eecke,
Iepersteenweg 53 in Merkem (Houthulst)*

Alveringem

+ OEREN +

510 Belgian soldiers lie buried around the church in Oeren, many of whom are unknown. In 1923 the village was the setting for the fourth Yzer Pilgrimage.

Oerenstraat

+ HOOGSTADE +

The Belgian military cemetery at Hoogstade contains 825 graves, of which 35 are unknown. 20 or so British soldiers are also buried there. Since 2004 it has been possible to 'adopt' the grave of a Belgian soldier. This was an idea of Rik Scherpenberg from Tongeren, who was also founder of the War Relics Archives.

Brouwerijstraat

Diksmuide

+ KEIEM +

This cemetery is the last resting place of 628 soldiers from the 8th and 13th Line Regiments of the Belgian Army. During the Battle of the Yzer (October 1914) an attempt to capture the village of Keiem was repulsed with heavy losses. Many were killed during the confusion of the subsequent retreat to the hamlet of Tervaete, on the other side of the River Yzer.

Keiendorpstraat 143A

Houthulst

The most well-known Belgian military cemetery is located in the heart of Houthulst forest and contains the graves of 1,855 soldiers, most of whom were killed during the so-called Liberation Offensive of September-October 1918. 81 Italian soldiers are also buried here. Italian prisoners-of-war were used by the Germans for work behind the front, especially in the region Roeselare-Izegem. Most of those who died fell victim to illness or disease. Their remains were later transferred to Houthulst, where they now lay along the forest's edge in this star-shaped cemetery.

Poelkappellestraat

Belgian Cemetery in Houthulst



Nieuwpoort

+ RAMSKAPELLE +

632 graves, of which 400 are of unknown soldiers.
Ramskapellestraat

Veurne

+ STEENKERKE +

Some 500 Belgian soldiers are buried behind the St. Laurentius Church in Steenstrate. Joe English was the first one to be buried here, but his remains were later transferred to the crypt of the Yzer Tower. He died from his wounds in the military hospital at Vinkem, where a street was named after him. A small monument was erected in the same village in honour of this well-known Flemish soldier; a leading figure in the so-called Front Movement.

Behind the St. Laurentius Church

Vleteren

+ WESTVLETEREN +

1,101 soldiers found their last resting-place in the Belgian military cemetery in the village of Westvleteren.

Sint-Maartensstraat

There is also a Belgian military cemetery at Adinkerke (De Panne).



Yzer Crypt in Diksmuide

EDWARD AND FRANS VAN RAEMDONCK

More commonly referred to as the Van Raemdonck Brothers, Edward and Frans came to be seen as a Flemish symbol for sacrifice and brotherly love. Tragic as their deaths were, their



story was later romanticised in the interest of the Flemish cause - and was immortalised in a moving drawing by the artist Joe English.

The brothers were born in Temse - Edward in 1895 and Frans in 1897 - and both were sergeants in the 24th Line Regiment. Tradition claims that they died in each other's arms in no man's land, following an attack on the Stampkot position near Steenstraete in March 1917. We will never know exactly what happened on that fateful night, but it seems that Frans was wounded on his way back to the Belgian trenches. A French-speaking comrade, Aimé Fiévez, went to his aid, but both were killed by a German shell. When Edward discovered that this brother had not returned, he went back out into no man's land to look for him, but was mown down by machine gun fire, just yards from where Frans and Fiévez were lying. During subsequent bombardments, the bodies were disturbed, so that Edward and Frans were found side by side, when their remains were eventually recovered after the war. In 1932, the brothers - together with Aimé Fiévez - were interred in a single coffin in the crypt of the Yzer Tower in Diksmuide. A year later a memorial was built over the spot near Steenstraete where their bodies had been discovered.



Drawing Joe English, brothers Van Raemdonck

Commonwealth war cemeteries

'If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is forever England.'

From 'The Soldier' by Rupert Brooke

Between 1914 and 1918, the fertile fields around the city of Ieper were the setting for one of the most frightful wars the world has ever known. Soldiers from more than 30 nations fought and died here. Time has inevitably erased many traces of the Great War, but the many military cemeteries and memorials which dot the landscape still speak to our imagination and say much about the terrible nature of the "war to end all wars."

A captured German bunker lies beneath the Cross of Sacrifice



Tyne Cot Cemetery from the air



72 Passendale - Zonnebeke

+ 'TYNE COT CEMETERY AND VISITORS' CENTRE +

The name Passendale is indelibly etched on the collective consciousness of Great Britain and her Commonwealth. During the Third Battle of Ieper (1917) the British Army lost nearly 300,000 men to capture this ruined village and a few kilometres of shell-blasted mud. The British called the village 'Passion Dale' – the Valley of Suffering. The cost in human life to achieve this 'victory' is all too evident in Tyne Cot Cemetery, the largest British war cemetery on mainland Europe.

Originally, 'Tyne Cot' was a strong point in the German Flanders I Line. Australian troops set up an aid post in one of its bunkers, following its capture in October 1917. A cemetery of 340 graves quickly grew up a round this bunker - men who had died in the aid post or nearby.

Between 1919 and 1921 the specialised 'Exhumation Companies' brought in many thousands of bodies from the surrounding battlefields. Only 3,800 of the victims could be identified by name. The cemetery - which also contains a memorial to the missing - was designed by Sir Herbert Baker and was inaugurated in 1927.

11,956 soldiers of the Commonwealth are buried here, together with a number of German prisoners-of-war who died in Allied hands. The screen wall at the back of the cemetery commemorates a further 34,957 missing soldiers, who died after 15 August 1917. The more than 55,000 missing who died before this date are honoured by name on the Menin

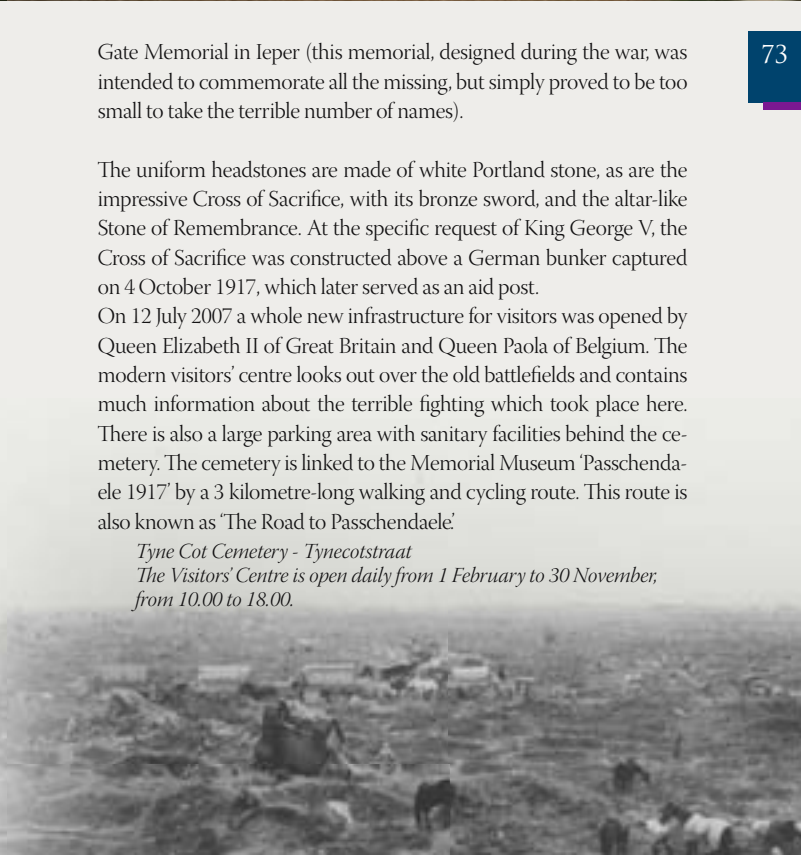
Gate Memorial in Ieper (this memorial, designed during the war, was intended to commemorate all the missing, but simply proved to be too small to take the terrible number of names).

The uniform headstones are made of white Portland stone, as are the impressive Cross of Sacrifice, with its bronze sword, and the altar-like Stone of Remembrance. At the specific request of King George V, the Cross of Sacrifice was constructed above a German bunker captured on 4 October 1917, which later served as an aid post.

On 12 July 2007 a whole new infrastructure for visitors was opened by Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain and Queen Paola of Belgium. The modern visitors' centre looks out over the old battlefields and contains much information about the terrible fighting which took place here. There is also a large parking area with sanitary facilities behind the cemetery. The cemetery is linked to the Memorial Museum 'Passchendaele 1917' by a 3 kilometre-long walking and cycling route. This route is also known as 'The Road to Passchendaele'

Tyne Cot Cemetery - Tynecotstraat

The Visitors' Centre is open daily from 1 February to 30 November, from 10.00 to 18.00.



Chinese Labour Corps

Lijssenthoek cemetery



Remembrance

Poperinge

+ LIJSSENTHOEK MILITARY CEMETERY +

The soberly beautiful Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery is the largest of the hospital cemeteries which grew up around the casualty clearing stations to the east and west of Poperinge. Soldiers devised amusing names for these CCSs, which sounded curiously Flemish, but still had a grim meaning: Mendinghem, Dozinghem and Bandaghem. Lijssenthoek was also popularly known as Remi Cemetery, from the name of the farmer who lived behind the clearing station's complex of tents. This farm can still be seen today.

Boescheepseweg

Komen-Waasten - Ploegsteert

(province Hainaut)

+ PLOEGSTEERT MEMORIAL +

Just over the provincial (and linguistic) border, not far from Messines, lies the burial ground known as Berks Cemetery Extension. The most striking feature of this cemetery is the memorial to more than 11,000 missing soldiers from Great Britain and South Africa, who died as a result of 'routine' trench warfare or in one of the minor operations designed to support major offensives elsewhere. On the first Friday of every month the Last Post is sounded here at 1900 hours.

Rue de Messines

Countless other British cemeteries of various sizes

Apart from the imposing cemeteries at Tyne Cot and Lijssenthoek, there are more than 170 smaller and more intimate Commonwealth cemeteries scattered across the landscape of the Westhoek.

The Scots have their own cemetery (No Man's Cot on Pilkem Ridge), as do the Welsh (Caesar's Nose Cemetery, also on Pilkem Ridge) and the Irish (Locre Hospice Cemetery, near Loker in Heuvelland).

Near to Locre Hospice Cemetery, in what was once the garden of a convent, stands the grave of Major William Redmond. He was an important Catholic political leader before the war and helped to force the British government to pass a bill granting Home Rule for Ireland. To ensure that the bill would be honoured after the war, he encouraged many Catholics to join the British army (where they served in the 16th Irish Division). Redmond was bitterly disappointed by the Easter Rising of 1916 and its harsh suppression. He was killed on 7 June 1917, the opening day of the Battle of Messines Ridge: a battle in which, appropriately enough, Irish Catholics and Protestants fought side by side.

In Buttes New British Cemetery in Polygon Wood, a memorial to the 5th Australian Division now stands astride what was once a pre-war rifle range of the Belgian army. At the opposite side of the cemetery, there is a memorial to missing soldiers from New Zealand, who died here in the winter of 1917-1918.

No Man's Cot - Moortelweg in Boezinge (Ieper)

Caesar's Nose - Moortelweg in Boezinge

Locre Hospice Cemetery - Gotschalckstraat in Loker (Heuvelland)

Buttes New British Cemetery - Lange Dreve in Zonnebeke

*Countless other
British cemeteries*



Commonwealth War Graves Commission

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission was founded in 1917 and is responsible for the maintenance of graves and memorials in some 150 countries, from Albania to Zimbabwe. The Commission commemorates more than 1,700,000 members of the Commonwealth forces who died in the two world wars and who now lie buried in more than 23,000 cemeteries world-wide.

The regional headquarters for Northern Europe is located in Ieper at Elvederingestraat 82. - T 057/22 36 36 (www.cwgc.org)

BLOOD RED IS THE BLOOM OF THE POPPY...

*"In Flanders fields the poppies blow,
between the crosses,
row on row that mark our place,"*

John McCrae in 1915.

The red poppy was destined to become a symbol for the inhuman suffering and loss caused by the war. Even 90 years later, traces of this war are still to be found in the landscape.

*"When all was shot and wasted,
when all life been drained from the
blasted earth,
in the spring, from out of
the nothingness of death,
poppies coloured the land
blood red."*

The Bomb Disposal Unit of the Belgian Army, based at Houthulst, still detonates old munitions from the war twice each day. Shells are regularly brought to the surface, as a result of farming or building works. Each year in the Westhoek more than 200 tons of old munitions are collected, 10% of which contain chemical weapons.



French war cemeteries

The 'angel' on Kemmel Hill



Ieper

+ SAINT-CHARLES DE POTYZE +

More than 4,000 French soldiers are buried in Saint-Charles de Potyze Cemetery near Ieper (on the road to Zonnebeke). A further 600 unknown soldiers were interred in a mass grave. A Breton Pieta by the sculptor J. Fréour is located at the front of the site, mourning over the lost dead.

Zonnebeekseweg

Heuvelland - Kemmel

+ FRENCH OSSUARY +

This mass grave at the foot of Kemmel Hill contains the remains of 5,294 French soldiers, of whom just 57 are identified. Most of these men died during the battle for Kemmel Hill in April 1918. Higher up the slopes of the same hill stands the 'Monument aux Soldats Français' also known as 'The Angel'. This 18 metre-high memorial column was erected in 1932 and looks out wistfully over the battlefield where so many died. The 'angel' is, in fact, a representation of the Roman goddess Victoria.

Kemmelbergweg

Veurne

+ FRENCH MILITARY CEMETERY AND OSSUARY +

This cemetery contains the mass grave - or ossuary - of 78 French soldiers. A further 186 French casualties are buried in individual graves, including 8 soldiers of the Muslim faith.

Oude Vestingstraat



French soldiers

German war cemeteries

In total, 134,000 German soldiers from the First World War are buried in Belgium. In 1954, hundreds of smaller German cemeteries in Flanders were concentrated into four major sites. There are still a dozen or so smaller burial grounds in the French-speaking part of Belgium. In contrast to the British cemeteries, the German cemeteries appear to be very sombre. The British deliberately tried to make their cemeteries look like traditional English gardens, full of the flowers of spring and autumn. It is almost as if the British have accepted death and the cemetery has become a small part of England or a little piece of heaven on earth. This 'acceptance' is lacking in German cemeteries, where death in all its monstrous forms still lingers between the massive oaks. The basalt crosses are scars on 'God's green acre'. In autumn, dead leaves fall from the giant trees, covering the thousands of fallen soldiers. "*Tod... mit Eichenlaub*".

Langemark

This sombreness is very much in evidence at the German military cemetery - Deutscher Soldatenfriedhof - in Langemark. However, its powerful simplicity lends a poignant air to this haunting burial ground. Behind the monumental entrance building in pink Weserberg sandstone lie 44,304 soldiers, 24,917 of them in a mass grave. Over 3,000 cadets and student volunteers, serving in the 22nd - 27th Reserve Corps, are amongst the dead. They were killed in October 1914 during futile attempts to break through in the direction of leper. For this reason, the cemetery is also known as the Studentenfriedhof. The sculpture of four bronze soldiers by the Munich sculptor Emil Krieger seem to reflect the sorrow of these bleak statistics.

*Klerkenstraat
Info: T. 057/49.09.41*

Langemark



Vladslo, 'The Grieving Parents'



Vlad slo

Diksmuide - Vlad slo

The German military cemetery at Vlad slo is the last resting place of Peter Kollwitz, a young student volunteer who was just 17 years of age when he was killed in October 1914. Deeply affected by her son's death, Käthe Kollwitz created her world-famous sculpture 'The Grieving Parents'

The suppressed emotion of the father and the more open grief of the mother express universal sorrow. The sculpture was many years in the making and was only displayed for the first time in 1932 at the Roggeveld military cemetery near Esen. The grave marker in front of the sculpture group, bore the following inscription: 'Peter Kollwitz Musketier + 23.10.14'. This cemetery - and the statue group - were moved to their current site at the Praetbos near Vlad slo in 1957.

Käthe Kollwitz was a famous Expressionist artist from Berlin. Her work was considered to be an example of Entartete Kunst (perverted art) by the Nazis and was removed from most museums and public buildings. Her grandson Peter was killed on the Eastern Front in 1942. Surprisingly, the sculpture survived the Nazi occupation of Belgium during Second World War.

Houtlandstraat



Karl and Käthe Kollwitz at the 'Roggeveld' cemetery in Esen for the placing of the statues in 1932

Hooglede

6 km from Roeselare (in the Leie region) stands the German military cemetery at Hooglede. This is the smallest of the four German cemeteries in Flanders, with 'just' 8,247 burials.

Beverenstraat

Menen-Wevelgem

The German military cemetery at Menen-Wevelgem (also in the Leie region) is the largest German war cemetery in Western Europe, commemorating no fewer than 47,864 fallen soldiers. In the centre of the burial plots stands a chapel, decorated with sombre grey mosaics. The interior has an arched vault with a central supporting column, resting on a Greek cross decorated with carved lion's heads in stone.

Menen - Groenestraat - Wevelgem - Kruisstraat



Langemark, sculpture by Emil Krieger

Memories

*Poppies in the Westhoek,
the Flanders Fields Country*



+ POETRY +

In addition to the large cemeteries and memorials, there are numerous other, smaller (and perhaps more intimate) reminders of the Great War in the Westhoek. Several poems by Edmund Blunden are displayed on panels at various locations. There are also monuments for Indian soldiers and for poets, such as Francis Ledwidge and Hedd Wynn. There is also a poem by the Belgian poet Herman Deconinck at the Menin Gate.

+ NAME STONES + (1914-1918)

At various places, diamond-shaped commemorative plaques in white stone mark 'Belgian' locations, which were of importance during the First World War and of which nothing remains today. These 24 name stones were erected during the 1980s at the instigation of the Province of West Flanders.

+ DEMARCATION STONES +

Granite demarcation stones can also be seen at various locations throughout the Westhoek. First erected during the 1920s at the initiative of the Touring Club of Belgium, these 1 metre-high stones are usually crowned with a military-style-helmet and bear the inscription (in three languages): "*Here the invader was brought to a halt*". During the Second World War this inscription was often defaced by the Germans. Nineteen of these stones still remain in the Westhoek, sometimes to be found at the corner of a street and sometimes on the edge of a field.



Name stone

Demarcation stone



Art project at Pervijze



Hill 60 in the twenties



Palingbeek

+ LANDSCAPE ART PROJECTS +

As part of a land consolidation scheme in Fortem and Pervijze, various landscape art projects have been integrated into the natural surroundings at these locations, where the last traces of the First World War are threatening to disappear.

+ ALVERINGEM - FORTEM +

At the 'Pannendorp' site - a design by Stijn Claikens - the brightly coloured stone walls in brick represent the Belgian and German front lines in the Westhoek.

+ DIKSMUIDE - PERVIJZE +

Along the old railway line between Diksmuide and Nieuwpoort - which served as the Belgian front line for much of the war - the artist Lucas Coeman has used 104 identical concrete blocks to depict the starting date and the end date of the war.

+ PROVINCIAL PARKS +

Several parks in provincial ownership, such as the 'Palingbeek' (Eel Brook Woods) and the 'Gasthuisbossen' (Hospice Woods) near Ieper (Zillebeke) and Kemmel Hill in Heuvelland also contain traces from the Great War. Between 1914 and 1918, the land around the 'Palingbeek' formed part of the front line. The highest point in this area was known by the British as 'The Bluff', whereas the Germans called it 'Die grosse Bastion'. The 'Zwarte Molenbos' (Black Mill Woods) was renamed 'The Ravine', the 'Vierlingen' Forest became 'Battle Wood', while the long, low hill around which it stood was christened 'The Caterpillar'. The six British cemeteries in this neighbourhood testify to the severity of the fighting which took place here.

The 'Palingbeek' provincial park is close to the Hill 60 battlefield site. Hill 60 still retains its original wartime landscape, with clear traces of old trenches, mine craters, shell holes, concrete pillboxes, etc. A number of memorials recall the savage struggle for control of this strategic position. In particular, Hill 60 and its surroundings are notorious for their important role in the underground mining war - a war which claimed countless lives. This subterranean battle reached its climax on 7 June 1917 with the opening of the Messines Offensive, when 19 mines were exploded simultaneously under German trenches in the Ypres and Wijtschate salients. The mine craters at Hill 60 and on the Caterpillar still scar the landscape, even today.

Tourist routes



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Bayernwald at Wijtschate

Car

+ THE 'IN FLANDERS FIELDS' ROUTE +

(82 km)

The In Flanders Fields Route, which begins and ends in Ieper, is an ideal way to reconnoitre the Salient for the first time. You will become acquainted with the most important cemeteries and monuments in the southern part of the Westhoek.

Essex Farm in Boezinge, the German military cemetery at Langemark, the Guynemer Memorial in Poelkapelle, the Canadian Memorial in Sint-Juliaan, Tyne Cot, Hill 62, Mesen, Kemmel Hill, Poperinge: all these key war sites are included. The route also offers you a pleasing introduction to the nature and landscape of the region: Heuvelland, in particular, will charm you with its gentle contours and beautiful panoramic views.

+ THE YZER FRONT ROUTE +

(79 km)

The Yzer Front Route leads you through the polder landscape between Nieuwpoort, Koekelare, Kortemark, Houthulst and Diksmuide.

The route starts in Diksmuide, famous for the Yzer Tower, the Peace Gate and the Trench of Death. Via Stuivekenskerke and Ramskapelle, you will drive to the King Albert I Monument in Nieuwpoort. Other highlights along the route are the Belgian military cemeteries at Keiem and Houthulst, the Käthe Kollwitz Tower in Koekelare and the German military cemetery at Vladslo.

Bike

+ THE PEACE ROUTE +

(45 km)

The Peace Route is a bicycle route which offers an ideal introduction to the Ypres Salient. It starts in Ieper and first leads to the 'Palingbeek' provincial park, Hill 60 and Hill 62 - three locations of great strategic significance for the armies of both sides. The route continues through pleasant countryside and passes a number of impressive military burial sites, including Tyne Cot Cemetery in Passendale, the German Soldatenfriedhof in Langemark and Essex.

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+ THEMATIC CYCLE ROUTE: 'POP-ROUTE' + (34 km)

The POP-route is a thematic journey through the daily life of the soldiers behind the front. The town of Poperinge was a key cog in the British war machine. The local population conducted a prosperous trade with the well-paid British soldiers. For these soldiers, this was a place of carefree enjoyment away from the trenches but also a place of military justice and law. So-called 'deserters' were often executed here by firing squad at first light of dawn.

Pressure of military traffic forced the British to introduce a one-way system in the town and they also built a ring road. This 'Switch Road' still exists today. During the war (and afterwards) it was often referred to by local inhabitants as the 'Swiss Road,' since they had trouble coping with the Anglo-Saxon pronunciation!

+ THEMATIC CYCLE ROUTE 'NO MORE WAR' + (37,5 km)

Using the numbered junction points of the Westhoek cycling network, this route will lead visitors on a themed tour around the First World War battlefields of Diksmuide. The cycle-friendly roads and pathways pass various historic sites, such as Diksmuide town centre, the Yzer Tower, the Trench of Death, Onze-Lieve-Vrouwhoekje (Our Lady's Corner), the River Yzer and the military cemeteries at Keiem and Vladslø.

+ THEMATIC CYCLE ROUTE 'MINE WARFARE: MESSINES RIDGE 1917' + (28,6 km)

This thematic route allows the visitor to make acquaintance with scars on the landscape caused by this cataclysmic battle. On 7 June 1917 the Allies exploded 19 'deep' mines under the German lines. The route starts at Hill 60 and runs south towards Wijtschate and Messines, before returning to Zillebeke.

+ THEMATIC CYCLE ROUTE: 'THE YPRES SALIENT' + (35 km)

Using the numbered junction points of the Westhoek cycling network, this route will lead visitors on a themed tour around the First World War battlefields of Ieper and its famous Salient. A route map and explanation can be obtained from the Tourist Office in Ieper.

Walking

+ 'TOWN LINK' + DIKSMUIDE (3 km)

'Town Link' is a contemporary 'discovery' route, almost 3 kilometres long, running through the historic centre of Diksmuide. 16 elegant information panels highlight important aspects of the town's rich past. You can compare the appearance of the townscape before, during and after the First World War. You can learn about the reconstruction of the Market Square after 1918. You can wander through the park on the old ramparts, soak up the atmosphere of bygone days in the beguinage or the St. Nicolas Church, marvel at the modern marina, the 'Portus Dixmudá' etc. A series of direction plaques set into the ground allow you to follow the route with ease. Groups can arrange to be accompanied by an expert guide.

+ 'CRATER AND MINES' WALKING ROUTE + (7 or 9 km)

This walking route starts in Wijtschate (Heuveland) and is 7 or 9 kilometres long, depending upon the circuit followed. The route links a German mine shaft, the crater at the 'Petit Bois' and the crater at 'Peckham' (with the Pool of Peace). These sites are mainly associated with the great mine offensive against the Messines Ridge in 1917.

The brochures for these routes, can be purchased from the various tourist offices in the Westhoek. These tourist offices can also inform you about temporary exhibitions and events related to the theme of the First World War. Similar information can be obtained from the regional visitors' centre in Ieper. Most brochures are in Dutch. But maps inside the brochure can already help a lot.



✦ MESSINES RIDGE PEACE PATH ✦

(3,5 km)

The Messines Ridge Peace Path leads past the most important First World War sites in and around the town of Mesen. A brochure for this themed walk can be obtained at the local Tourist Office.

✦ THE BATTLE OF MOUNT KEMMEL 1918 ✦

(10 or 5 km)

A signposted theme walk following the 'Heuvelland' junction network, in the series 'Folklore and History Along the Way.' The route follows the footsteps of the French Army between the villages of Kemmel and Loker.

✦ FROM 'THE BLUFF TO DIE GROSSE BASTION' ✦

(10, 7,5 or 4,3 km)

This route charts the history of the 'Palingbeek' provincial park during the First World War. An unsignposted theme walk in the series 'Folklore and History Along the Way.'

✦ ALBERT BAERT AND POPERINGE IN WWI - 'WE IMAGINED THAT WE WERE IN PARIS' ✦

(6,2 km)

An unsignposted theme walk in the series 'Folklore and History Along the Way.' Extracts from the diary of Albert Baert are interspersed with songs and music of the period (using an MP3 player obtained from Talbot House in Poperinge). A treasure hunt for children is linked to this route.



INTERESTING FIRST WORLD WAR WEBSITES

- www.greatwar.be
about the war in the Westhoek
- www.inflandersfields.be
about the museum in Ieper
- www.cwgc.org
about British military cemeteries
- www.flanders1917.info
about Mesen
- www.talbothouse.be
about Talbot House in Poperinge
- www.ijzertoren.org
about the Yzer Tower in Diksmuide
- www.passchendalee.be
about the museum in Zonnebeke
- www.awm.gov.au
about Australia in the war
- www.collectionscanada.ca
about Canada in the war
- www.abmc.gov
about America in the war
- www.memoiredeshommes.sga.defense.gouv.fr
about French soldiers in the war
- www.historial.org
about France in the war and the museum in Péronne
- www.volksbund.de
about German military cemeteries

TOURISM INFO WEBSITES

- www.toerismewesthoek.be
about the Flanders Fields Country
- www.visitflanders.co.uk
about Flanders-Belgium



'War and Peace in the Westhoek' links together various museums, cemeteries, monuments and public sites which together seek to tell the story of the Great War in our region. (See map)

- 1 Ieper**
In Flanders Fields Museum
Regional Visitors' Centre
- Diksmuide**
- 2a** Yzer Tower
- 2b** Trench of Death
- 3 Nieuwpoort**
Ganzenpoot (Goose's Foot)
Albert I Monument
- 4 Kemmael**
Kemmael Hill
'De Bergen' Visitors' Centre
- 5 Merkem**
Drie Grachten (Three
Brooks)
'De Boot'
- 6 Zonnebeke**
Memorial Museum
Passendale
- 7 Poperinge**
Talbot House
- 8 Boezinge**
Canal bank
site John McCrae
- 9 Passendale**
Tyne Cot Cemetery
- 10 Zillebeke**
Hill 60
- 11 Langemark**
German military cemetery
- 12 Mesen**
Irish Peace Park
- 13 Vladslo**
German military cemetery
- 14 Houthulst**
Belgian military cemetery

The Westhoek

± Frontline (1915-1917)

- **REGIONAL VISITORS' CENTRE**
for Ieper and the Westhoek
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