

# Ypres



## Key Stage 4 Study Pack



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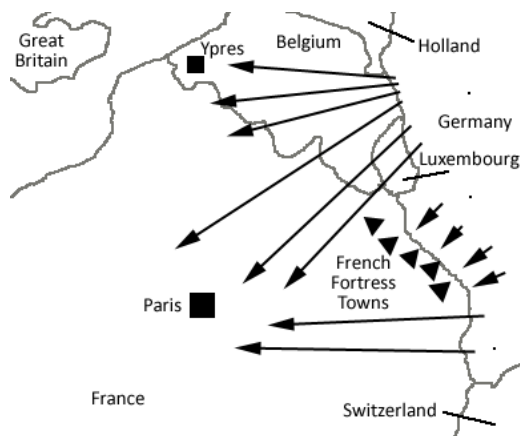
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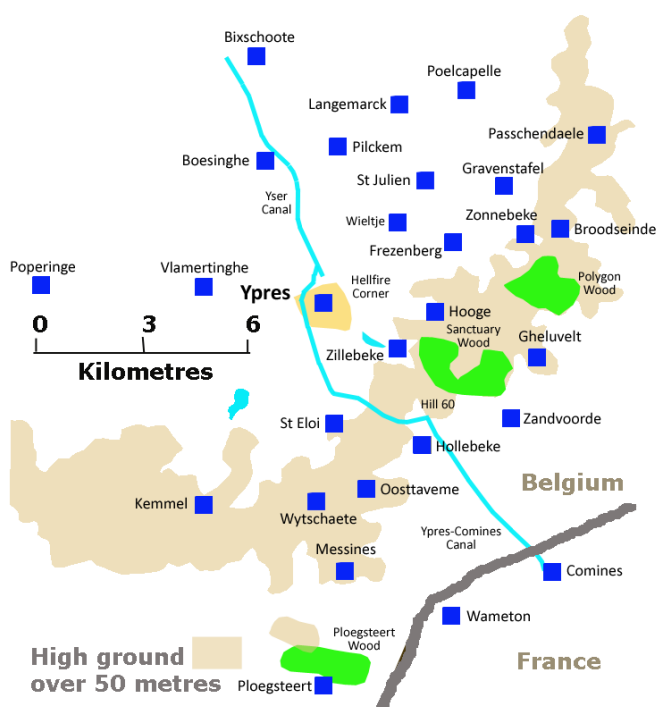


## The Ypres Salient

**Definition: An outward bulge in a line of military attack or defence**



In 1914, as part of the Schlieffen Plan, the German army tried to sweep through Belgium, occupy the channel ports and encircle Paris. They were stopped by the British and French at Mons and the Marne and had to settle for a line of defences from Antwerp in the north to Belfort in the south. However, at Ypres, the Germans did occupy most of the high ground and could overlook allied positions.



The town of Ypres lay just in front of the German line and was the key to the vital channel ports.

Had the town fallen to the Germans, they would have been able to sweep through to the coast, preventing troops arriving from Britain and possibly controlling all shipping in the English Channel.

Therefore, their constant aim in Belgium was to take Ypres from the British at all costs.

***"Ypres...A more sacred place for the British race does not exist in the world"***  
**– Winston Churchill 1919**



**1. What advantage would the Germans have got if they had taken Ypres?**

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**2. The Germans held the high ground around Ypres. Explain in what ways they could use this advantage.**

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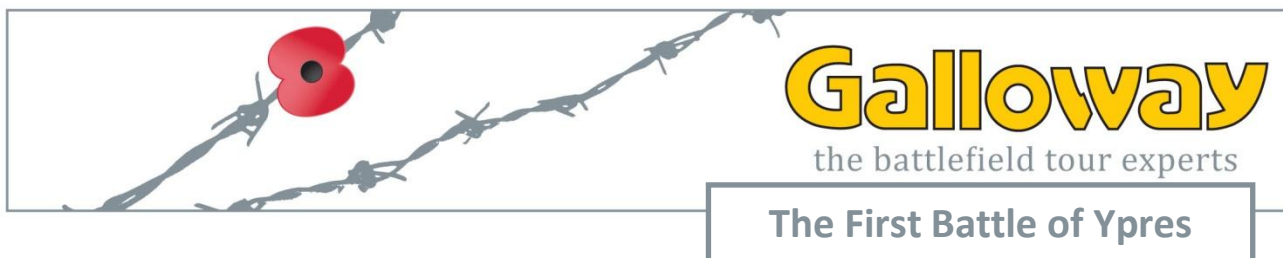
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**3. What do think Churchill meant in his quote? What role had he played in World War One?**

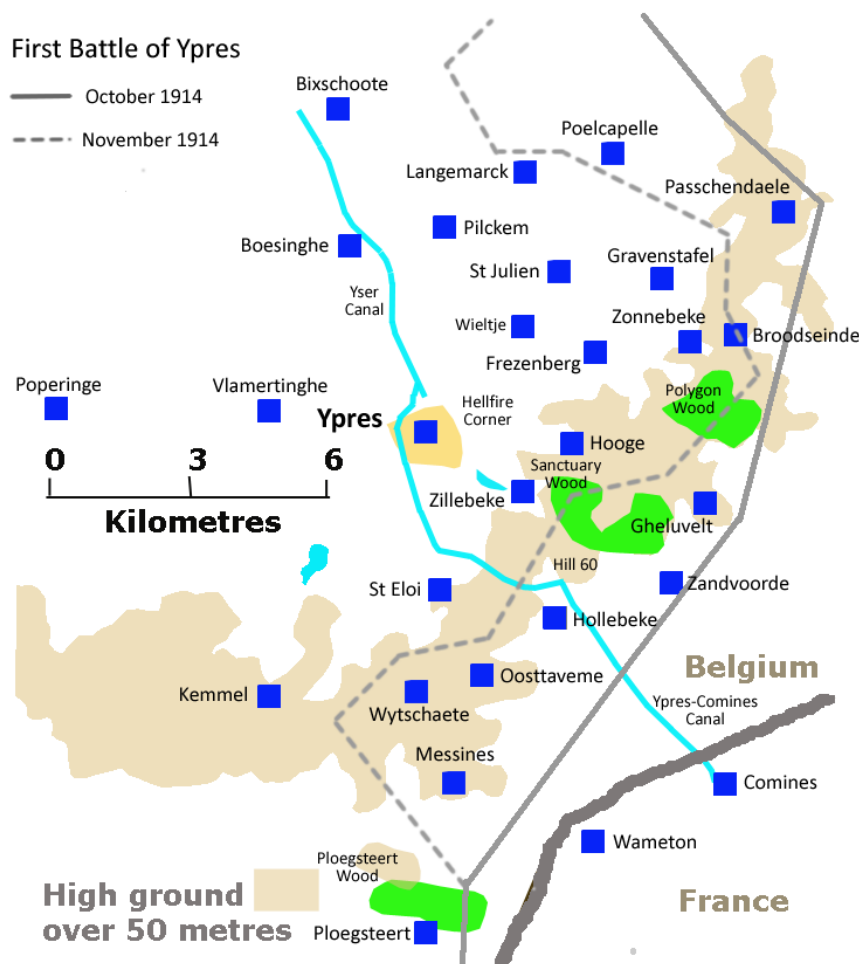
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This began in October 1914 when the Germans began shelling the town which was defended by British and French troops. A ferocious attack followed with the line wavering between Messines – Wijtschaete Ridge and the town. In November the famous Cloth Hall was destroyed by shelling.

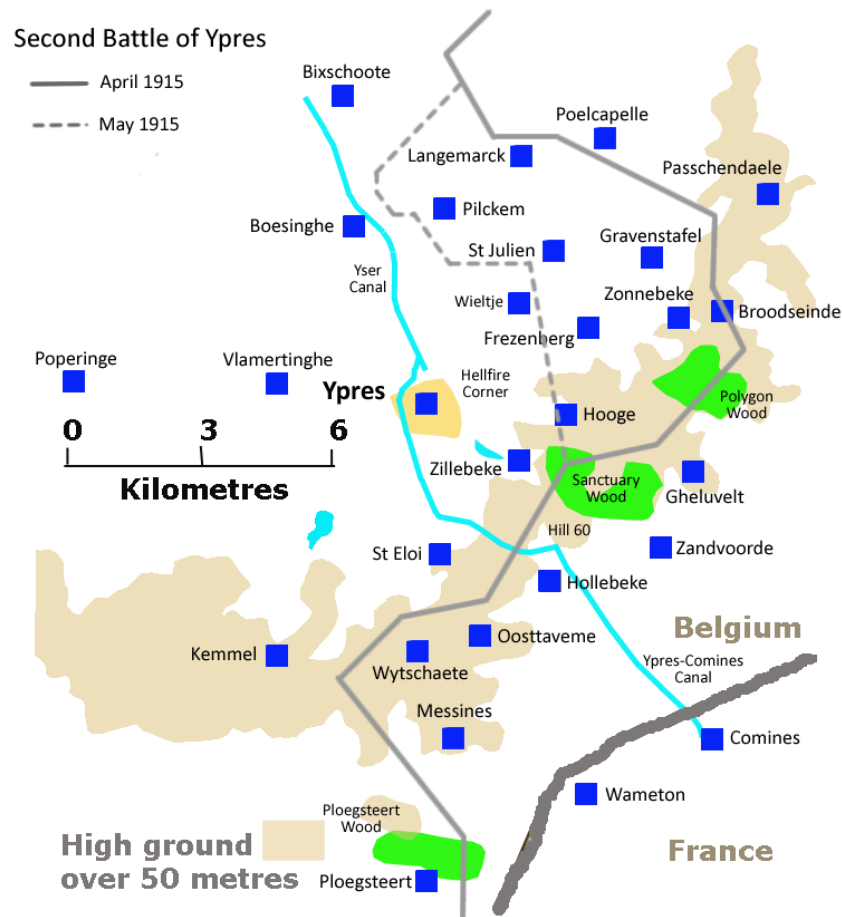
By early 1915, the front line had been stabilised from Langemarck to Ploegsteert.





This began in April 1915 with a German bombardment that lasted for nearly a month, completely destroying what was left of the town. Later that month the Germans used poison gas for the first time at St. Julian and flamethrowers in Hooze. The Germans gained some ground but failed to capture the town itself.

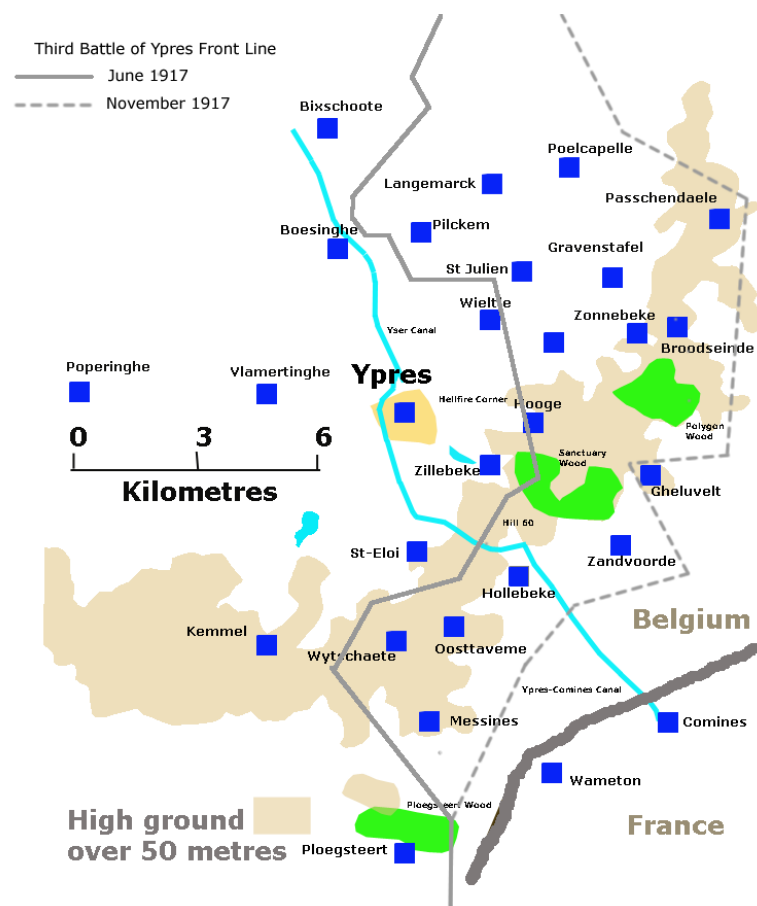
For the next two years there was heavy fighting all along the salient but with very little gain for either side. The Germans still held most of the high ground overlooking the town.





Sometimes known as the Battle of Passchendaele it lasted from July to November 1917. It is reputed to have been the bloodiest battle in history.

This British attack made steady advances from July, capturing St Julian, Sanctuary Wood and Pilckem Ridge. However by August the heaviest rain for thirty years had turned the soil into a quagmire (swamp) of mud. It was so bad that men and horses drowned in it. By the end of October, Langemarck and Poelcapelle had been taken, and finally on 6<sup>th</sup> November Passchendaele Ridge and the town were taken, giving the British for the first time, a position overlooking the German lines and relieving Ypres from enemy attack. The British had managed to capture about five miles of mud and had lost 325,000 casualties. The Germans had lost 260,000 casualties



***"It was no longer life at all. It was mere unspeakable suffering."***  
General Ludendorff

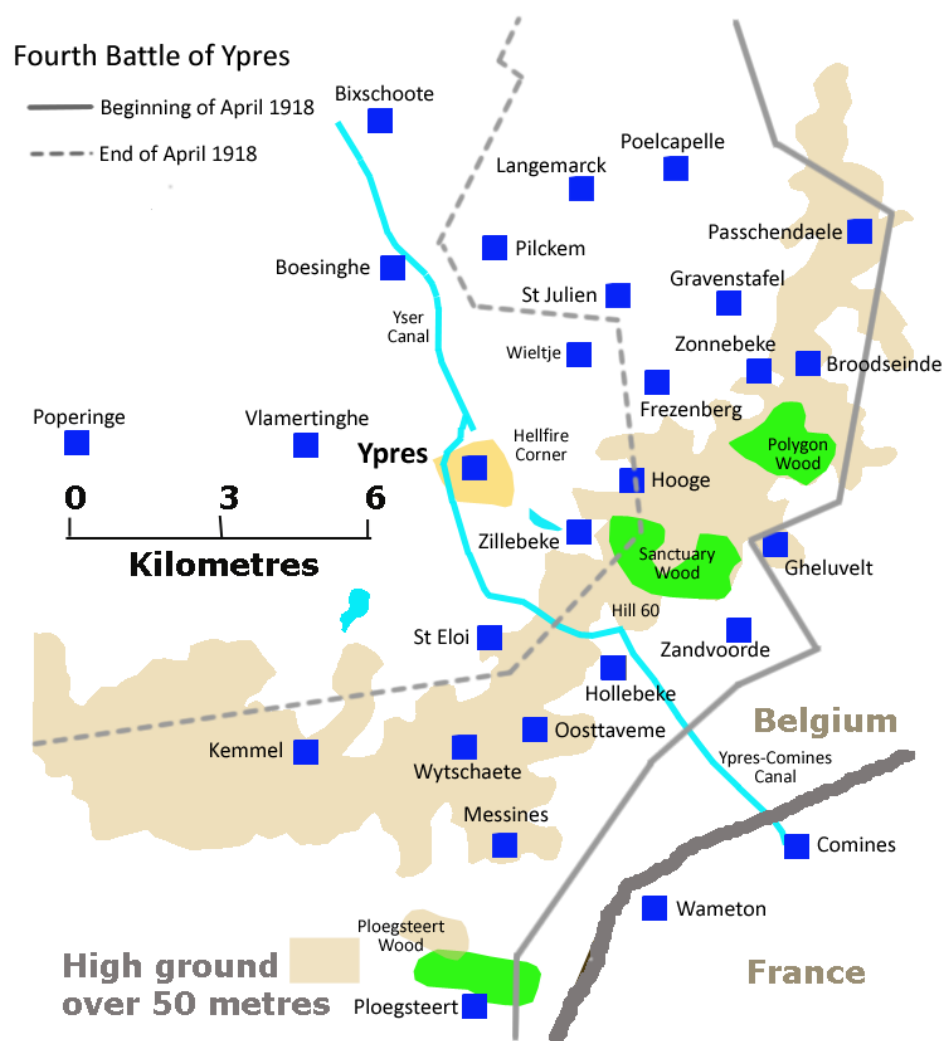






When the Germans attacked in 1918 this land and more was lost again until October when the British began moving forward. By the beginning of November the whole salient was in British hands.

Two weeks later the armistice was signed, ending the war.





1. Look at the maps of each of the battles. Approximately how far did the front lines move in each one? What was the average distance?

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2. What new technologies were used in the Second Battle of Ypres?

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3. A wounded man needed seventeen stretcher bearers at the Third Battle of Ypres. Why do you think this was?

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4. What were the total casualties in the Third battle of Ypres?

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5. Explain what General Ludendorff meant in his quote. Who was Ludendorff?

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6. What is an Armistice, and when and where was it signed?

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Ypres was completely rebuilt after 1918, so nothing there predates this. One of the most interesting buildings is the Cloth Hall which houses the In Flanders Fields Museum.

This is not though a traditional museum. It is not about commanders and strategists but about ordinary people and their experiences and stories. The museum uses the latest technology, computers, video projections and interactive models, to bring history to life.

Nearby is the St. George's Memorial Church, which is a living memorial to those who fought here in the First World War.

Everything, even the furniture, was offered by Commonwealth societies, Regiments or families to commemorate a unit or individual.



A short walk from the Cloth Hall brings you to the most impressive monument in Ypres – the Menin Gate. This was built on the site of one of the old medieval town gates on the road to Menin. The gate was completed in 1927, and is a memorial to those soldiers who died on the Ypres Salient between 1914 and 1918, and whose bodies were never found. It contains the names of nearly 55,000 soldiers. Their names are recorded on huge panels over the place where every soldier leaving Ypres would have had to pass on his way to the Front Line.

### Ypres or leper?

**To the British soldiers of the Great War, it was simply known as 'Wipers'.**

1. If you were writing a review of Ypres for TripAdvisor what would you say?

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2. Explain the significance of the Menin Gate in terms of what it is and where it is.

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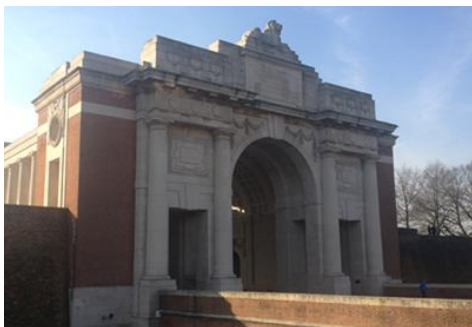
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Ever since 11 November 1929, traffic passing through the Menin Gate has been stopped, and the Last Post sounded at 2000 hours precisely. This takes place every evening throughout the year and is a very moving experience to witness. Between May 1940 and September 1944, the ceremony had to be abandoned because of the German occupation during World War II.

## On Passing the new Menin Gate by Siegfried Sassoon

Who will remember, passing through this Gate,  
The unheroic Dead who fed the guns?  
Who shall absolve the foulness of their fate,—  
Those doomed, conscripted, unvictorious ones?  
Crudely renewed, the Salient holds its own.  
Paid are its dim defenders by this pomp;  
Paid, with a pile of peace-complacent stone,  
The armies who endured that sullen swamp.  
Here was the world's worst wound. And here with pride  
'Their name liveth for ever,' the Gateway claims.  
Was ever an immolation so belied  
As these intolerably nameless names?  
Well might the Dead who struggled in the slime  
Rise and deride this sepulchre of crime.



*Begun Brussels, 25 July 1927; finished Campden Hill Square, January 1928*

If any question why we died  
Tell them, because our fathers lied.  
- Rudyard Kipling

**1. Why was the last post ceremony stopped for four years?**

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**2. What was the war-poet Sassoon's opinion of the Menin Gate? Support your answer with quotes, words or phrases from the poem.**

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**3. What was your opinion of the Menin Gate?**

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**4. Try to find someone with your surname at the Menin Gate. Note their regiment, initials and rank. Could they be a relative of yours?**

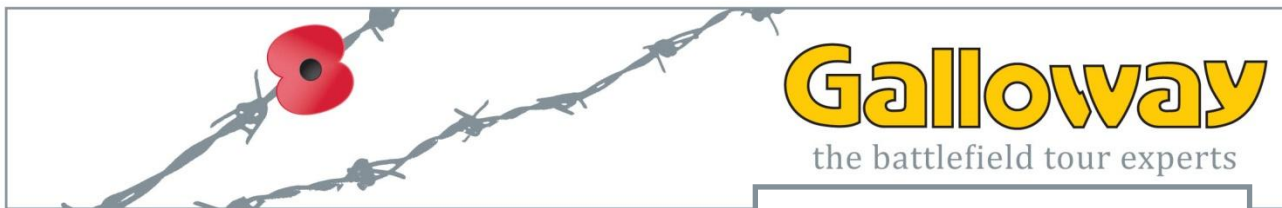
**Regiment** -----

**Initials** -----

**Rank** -----

**Relative or not** -----

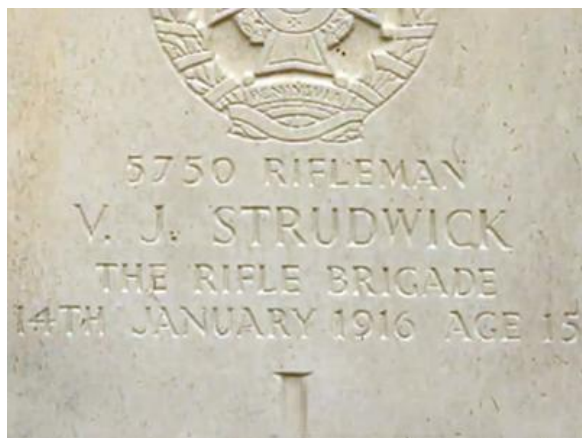




# Galloway

the battlefield tour experts

## Essex Farm Cemetery



Behind the cemetery is a memorial obelisk to the British 49<sup>th</sup> Division who fought in the area and the original concrete dugouts still line the canal bank itself. It was here that doctors worked hard to save the lives of wounded soldiers. In one of these, the Canadian doctor Lt. Col. J.M. McCrae wrote the famous poem, *In Flanders Fields*. Those who died at the Dressing Station are buried in the cemetery. McCrae himself survived the war, only to die of pneumonia in 1918.



On the road to Boezinge, on the bank of the canal, is Essex Farm Cemetery. Two notable graves here are those of Private V.J. Strudwick of the Rifle Brigade, and Private T. Barrett V.C. of The South Staffordshire Regiment, who gained his V.C. on the Ypres Salient. The Victoria Cross is the highest award for bravery available to the British Army. Valentine Joe Strudwick was killed on 14<sup>th</sup> January 1916; he was only 15 years old! He had lied about his age and was one of the youngest British soldiers to die on the Western Front.

## In Flanders Fields

In Flanders fields the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row,  
That mark our place; and in the sky  
The larks, still bravely singing, fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,  
Loved and were loved, and now we lie,  
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:  
To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch; be yours to hold it high.  
If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders fields.

*John McCrae*

Ypres



1. Find the graves of Privates Strudwick and Barrett. What is written on their headstones?

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2. Explain how Private Strudwick got away with lying about his age to the Army. What does this tell you about recruitment in World War One?

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3. What message was John McCrae trying to convey in the poem “In Flanders Fields”? Support your answer with quotes, phrases or words from the poem as well as your impression of the site.

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Once known as the “hottest place on Earth”, this intersection on the way out from Ypres was under constant observation by the Germans on the higher ground. Anything that could be seen moving there was shelled. Huge canvas screens were erected beside the road in an attempt to conceal movement. Nearby is a demarcation stone, one of 12 surviving in the salient, marking the closest point the Germans ever got to Ypres.



Near to Croonart Wood is Bayernwald.

It is a restored German trench system with 300 metres of rebuilt trenches, four concrete bunkers and a 30 metre mineshaft!

1. How did Hellfire Corner get its name?

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2. What was the importance of Hellfire Corner to the front line and defence of Ypres?

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3. What protection was there at Hellfire Corner for the Allied forces?

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4. Compare the Bayernwald trench system with that of Sanctuary Wood

Similar

Different

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Tyne Cot is the largest British War Cemetery in the world. It was designed by Sir Herbert Baker, and aerial views of the cemetery show a resemblance to a great church or cathedral, with the Stone of Remembrance representing the altar. Because the fighting was so harrowing there, it was not thought appropriate to include a lion symbol like at the Menin Gate. Instead two mourning angels kneel on top of the dome-covered pavilions at the ends of the memorial wall. The pavilions were built over two German blockhouses. Two more German blockhouses can be seen, close to the entrance gate surrounded by poplar trees.



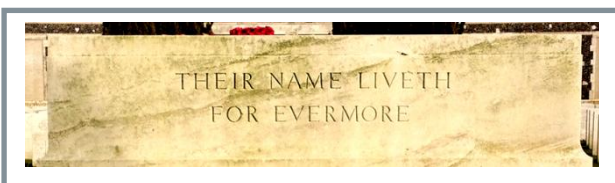
Pillboxes played a major part in the Ypres Salient, using tons of concrete to build bunkers and machine gun positions. Because the water table was so close to the surface in the area it was better to build above the ground than to dig into it.

The Northumberland Fusiliers thought that the German pillboxes looked like cottages back home in Tyneside and so called them Tyne Cottages – hence the name Tyne Cot.



Standing on the steps of the cross and overlooking the graves is a sobering experience. The first 350 graves were made during the war and stand behind the cross. Among them are four German burials in two graves that were moved here from outside the original wall as a symbol of unity in death.

In all, there are 11,871 graves registered at Tyne Cot. On the wall at the back of the cemetery are the names of almost 35,000 soldiers who have no known grave and who died from August 1917 to the end of the war.



**1. Where did Tyne Cot get its name from?**

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**2. Find the graves of the German soldiers. What is written on the headstones?**

.....

**3. Why were the German soldiers buried in an Allied cemetery?**

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**4. Walk along one row of headstones. How many are unidentified?**

.....

**5. Walk along two rows of headstones. What is the average age of soldiers buried there?**

.....

**6. How many soldiers are buried at Tyne Cot?**

.....

**7. Stand at the Cross of Remembrance looking back to the entrance. Explain how you think it would have been deadly and very unpleasant to fight your way up the ridge.**

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Passchendaele is often said to have been the bloodiest battle in history.

The ridge completely overlooked the British lines and was not finally taken until October 1918. There are numerous memorials in the village itself.

During August heavy and constant rain turned the ground into a quagmire (swamp) of mud that was so bad that men and horses could drown in it, completely disappearing below the surface. Many bodies were never recovered for burial.

***"...I died in Hell  
(they called it Passchendaele) "***

***Siegfried Sassoon***

The Memorial Museum Passchendaele 1917 is in the grounds of Zonnebeke Chateau and has a fascinating collection of authentic photos, life like dioramas and other artefacts.

There is also a reconstruction of a 6 metre deep British dugout – complete with communications and first aid posts, headquarters and sleeping accommodation.

**Casualties July – November 1917**

**Allied – 325000**

**German - 260000**

**Life expectancy of soldiers at  
Passchendaele – 3 weeks!**

**1. How much land was captured by the British during the Third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele)?**

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**2. What point was Siegfried Sassoon making in his quote?**

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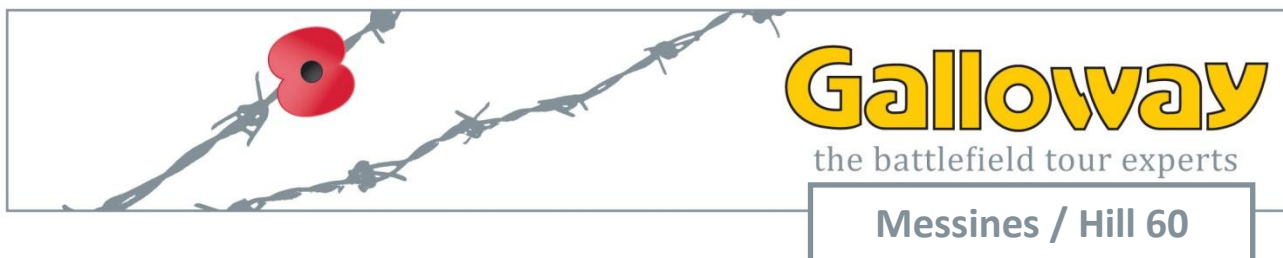
**3. Using your knowledge of the Western Front explain how bad the experience at Passchendaele may have been for soldiers.**

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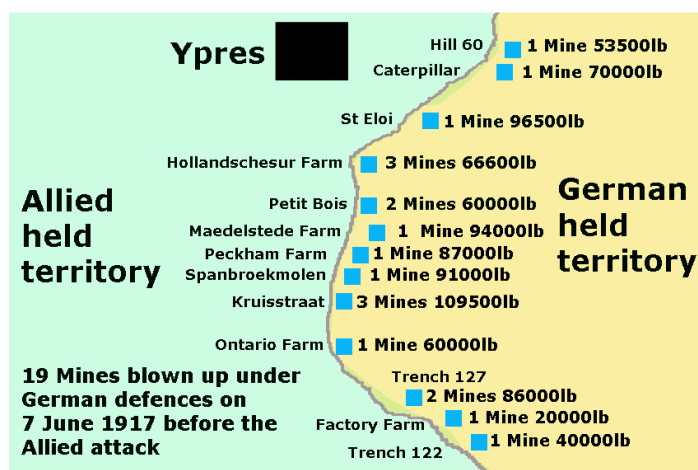
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Messines Ridge contains the remains of concrete shelters and blockhouses as well as huge craters. There is a very good museum in the Town Hall also. Adolf Hitler fought in the area and is reputed to have been treated in the Messines Church crypt which served as a German Field Hospital. He also drew several water colour paintings of the area.

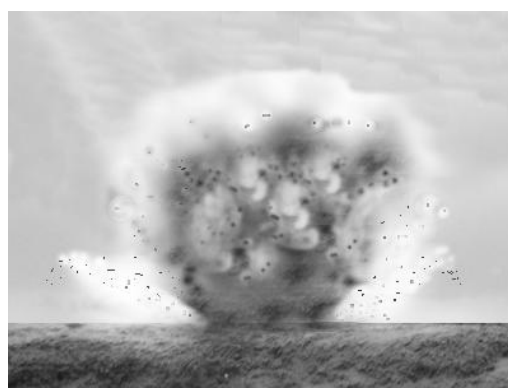
Close by is Ploegsteert Wood, known as Plugstreet to soldiers at the time. The Memorial to the Missing bears the names of 11,447 officers and men from nearby battles. Nearby is the Island of Ireland Peace Park – a memorial to honour the joint dead from the north and south of Ireland. Up to 250,000 Irish soldiers served in the First World War with many fighting together in the Messines offensive of 1917. In all about 50,000 Irish soldiers died during the war.

Hill 60 (so called because it is 60 metres above sea level) is one of the most famous hills in military history. It is in fact a man-made mound of soil that was dug out for the nearby railway cutting. At the start of the war it was occupied by the British and French but fell to the Germans in December 1914 giving them excellent views over the surrounding land.

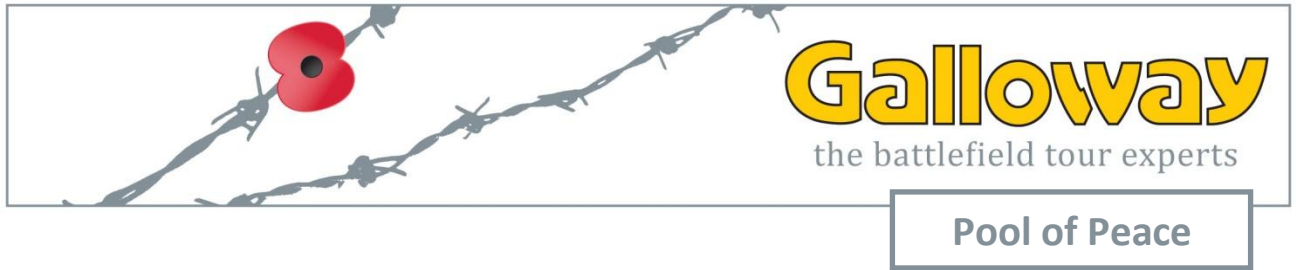


The British spent months tunnelling under the Hill and laying mines. These were blown up on 17<sup>th</sup> April 1915. Fierce fighting followed with the Germans using several gas attacks to retake it. You can still see the bunkers built by the Germans.

Tunnelling and mine laying continued and in June 1917 they were blown. The explosion was so loud it was felt in London! The Germans recaptured the Hill in April 1918 but the Allies finally took it in September 1918.

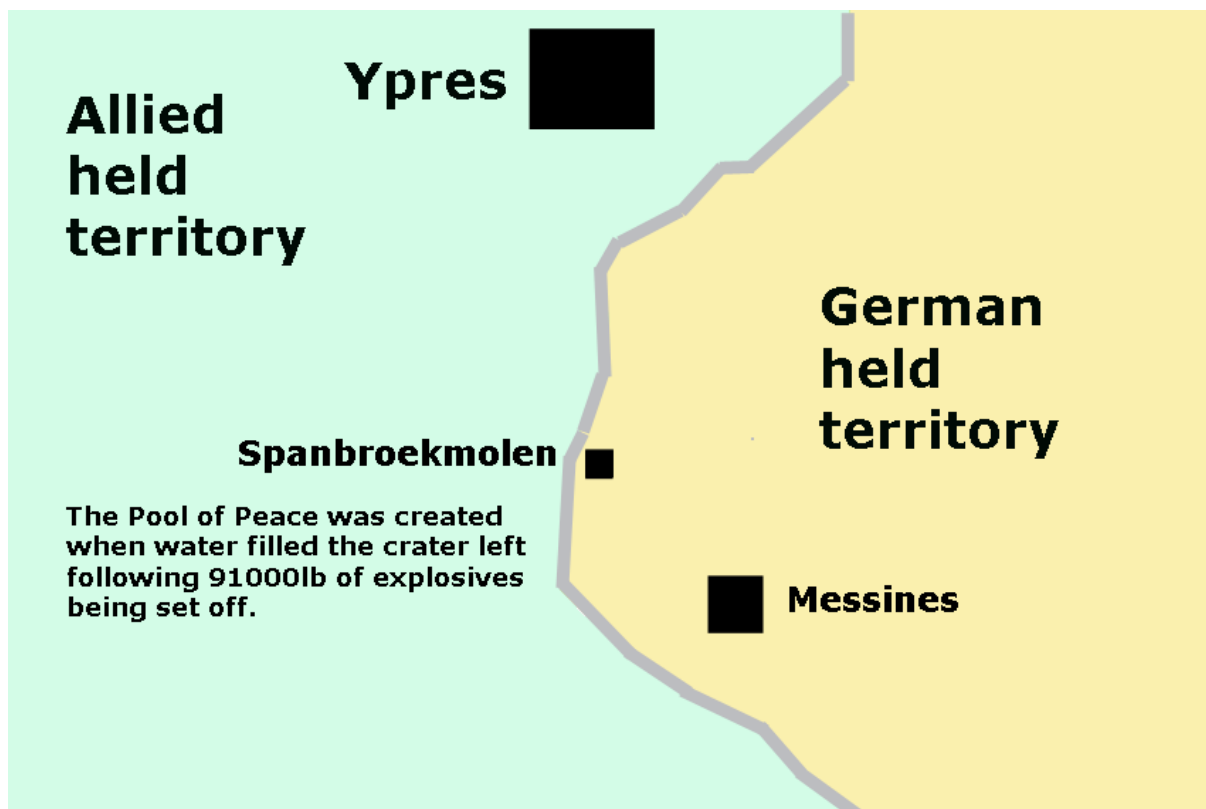






On the Messines Ridge itself, at Spanbroekmolen, is the water filled mine crater now known as the Pool of Peace. It was originally the site of the largest of the 19 giant British mines that blew the top off Messines Ridge in June 1917, allowing the British to capture it and all the German trenches along it.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1985, Princess Alexandra visited the Pool and planted two mountain ash trees. Today it is dedicated as a place of peace to all those who fought there in the Great War.



#### **The Spanbroekmolen Mine**

Start Date - 1st January, 1916

Completed - 26th June, 1916

Depth of Charge – 27 metres

Crater Diameter – 75 metres

Obliteration Diameter - 130 metres



1. What rank in the German Army do you think Adolf Hitler held?

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2. Why do you think mining could be so effective?

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3. In June 1917 the mines were blown at Hill 60 and the shock felt in London.  
How far away is it? (Ask the drivers!)

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4. How do you think both sides tried to protect themselves from mining?

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5. Calculate the total weight of explosives used for the mines in June 1917.

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6. What is significant about the Island of Ireland Peace Park?

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## Langemarck German Cemetery



You will notice how different this cemetery feels compared to the others in the salient. It is dark and foreboding. It has been a place of pilgrimage for Germans for a long time.

This is the only German cemetery in the salient and contains 44,292 burials. Most of these were young lads straight out of school, around 16 or 17 years old. They were told to walk into battle singing their school songs. Many of them were killed by their own gas which had been blown back by the wind.



There is a mass grave inside the entrance with bronze tablets listing the names of 25,000 men there. The statues at the back of the cemetery represent German soldiers mourning for their fallen comrades. Flat stones mark the burials (many unknown), often buried four, six, eight or more to a grave. The Belgian authorities were less willing to give up land to the German enemy – making shared graves a necessity. The stone crosses are purely symbolic and do not mark any burials. One end of the cemetery contains the original concrete blockhouse that defended the position in 1917.



**Ich habe dich bei deinem Namen gerufen, Du bist mein.**

***I have called you by your name, you are mine.***

1. Why do think this is the only German cemetery in the area?

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2. Compare Langemarck cemetery with Tyne Cot.

Similar

Different

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3. In 1940, Adolf Hitler visited Langemarck. In 1943, an SS division was named Langemarck. Explain the importance of this place to Germany.

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4. What do you think the meaning of the quote in German is?

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5. Describe your own thoughts about Langemarck cemetery.

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In October 1914 this area of wood was under the command of General E.S. Bulfin of 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Brigade. It was at this time a relatively quiet sector and he is said to have offered sanctuary here to stragglers until they could rejoin their units. However by 1915 it was no longer safe here as it was part of the front line.



Sanctuary Wood and Hill 62 were bitterly fought over in June 1916 and it was Canadian troops who finally retook Hill 62. A Canadian memorial on top of the hill records this.

After the war the Schier family, who owned the wood, had the foresight to understand that their battered piece of ground would one day be of interest to visitors. The wood was left as it was and a small museum set up.



During World War II they hid all the artefacts in the cellar and concreted over it. Visiting Germans (possibly even Goering – a Top Nazi) asked where the exhibits had gone and were told 'The British have stolen them'. The present owner, Jacques, has maintained and enlarged the museum and kept the superb 3D picture viewers.





## Sanctuary Wood / Hill 62

**1. Describe the Canadian Memorial.**

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**2. How did Sanctuary wood get its name?**

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**3. Why do you think Goering was so interested in Sanctuary Wood?**

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**4. Write your own review of Sanctuary wood.**

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**5. What aspects of the nature of trench warfare can you see at Sanctuary Wood?**

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At the crossroads in the village stands a memorial to the French air ace Georges Guynemer. This is not far from the spot where he was shot down and killed in September 1917, but no trace of his body or plane was ever found. The stork on the memorial is said to be flying in the direction that he took on the day that he died.

Poelcapelle remained in German hands for most of the war. After the Third Battle of Ypres it came into the British line briefly and was finally retaken by Belgian forces in September 1918.



The village contains a large British cemetery built after 1919. One special memorial stone commemorates 24 UK soldiers and 3 Canadians who were buried by the enemy and whose graves could not later be found.

The cemetery also contains the grave of the youngest British soldier to die in the Great War – Private. J. Condon who was only 14 years old when he was killed in May 1915. Seven men from the 48<sup>th</sup> Labour Company were also killed while clearing the cemetery after the war. They had lit a fire to cook their meal but it triggered an explosion of a wartime shell.

**“The recruiting sergeant asked me my age and when I told him he said ‘You had better go out, come in again, and tell me different’”.**



1. Which direction was Guynemer flying when he was shot down?

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2. What role did aircraft play on the western front?

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3. Find the grave of Private Condon. What is written on his headstone?

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4. Explain how and why the countryside around Ypres is still dangerous to this day.

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On the morning of 30<sup>th</sup> July 1915 the British faced for the first time "Liquid Fire" from German flamethrowers.

Such was the success of this weapon that it became a priority for defenders to eliminate German soldiers carrying this weapon.

Hooze Crater Cemetery records 5,892 graves of soldiers and airmen from the UK, Australia, British West Indies, Canada and New Zealand – **almost half of them unknown.**

St. Julien was captured by the Germans in April 1915 after a sudden attack with poison gas. This was the first time that this weapon had been used. The gas used was chlorine which causes blindness, violent coughing and a slow agonising death.

Canadian troops mounted a stubborn resistance and the memorial at St Julien is still called Vancouver Corner to honour them.

During the war the area around Hooze had a bad reputation among British soldiers for being particularly dangerous. On 19<sup>th</sup> July 1915 Hooze Chateau was in German hands and the British 175<sup>th</sup> Tunnelling Company. R.E. exploded a mine the grounds of the Chateau making a crater 16 metres deep with a diameter of 40 metres.

They had used a charge of 3,500 lb of ammonal (high explosive). The crater still exists and is now a small pond. Next to the Cemetery is the Hooze Crater Museum containing armour and equipment as well as uniforms and other artefacts from the salient.

1. What do you think the German word “Flammenwerfer” means?

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2. In April 1915, the Germans first used chlorine gas at St. Julien. What other gases were used in World War 1?

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3. What symptoms did gas attack victims suffer from?

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4. Apart from Canadian troops, what other countries sent troops to the western front?

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5. Why was this?

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6. What can you see on the edges of the Hooze Crater?

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For almost the whole of the Great War Poperinge was one of the few unoccupied towns in Belgium. 'Pops', as it was known, was in the British Sector. It became a bustling and colourful garrison town away from the Front Line.

On 11<sup>th</sup> December 1915 the army chaplains Philip Clayton (known as Tubby) and Neville Talbot opened an 'Every Man's Club' in the town. All Tommies, regardless of their rank, were welcome.

The club became known as Talbot House, in honour of Neville's younger brother who was killed in July 1915.

It became a 'home from home' for all troops and had a library, reading room, chapel and beautiful gardens providing rest, relaxation and inner peace for soldiers away from the horrors of the war.

Talbot House is a living museum and is the cradle of the TOC H movement – a worldwide charity.

However, Poperinge also had a darker side. The courtyard of the Town Hall is where over 70 executions took place by firing squad.

There are two cells remaining where the condemned were held.



**1. Why do you think “Pops” was so popular with soldiers?**

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**2. What was so unusual about the Everyman’s Club?**

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**3. Explain the differences in the British Army between officers and men during World War One.**

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**4. For what reason do you think that over 70 soldiers were executed by their own side?**

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**5. Why do you think that the British Army tried to keep strict discipline on the western front?**

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Everyone has a relative who lived through or during the First World War. Many of you may well have relatives who died on the Western Front.

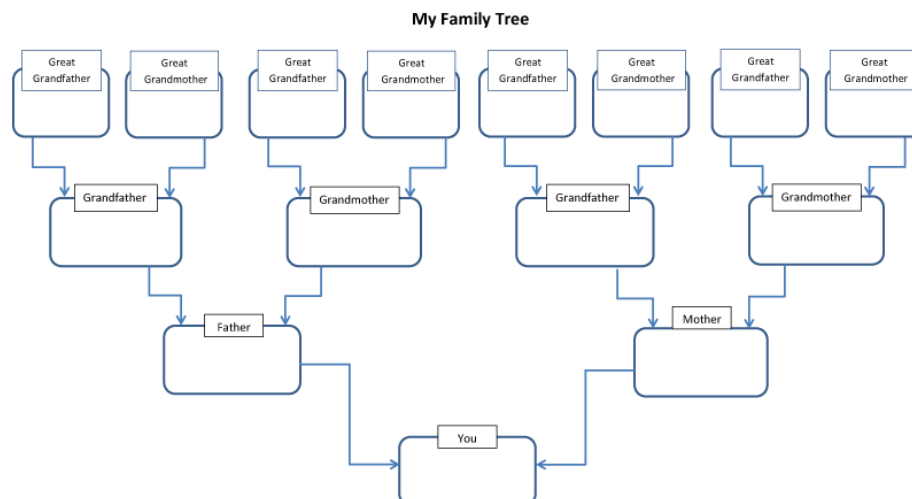
The Commonwealth War Graves Commission is responsible for running all of the British and Commonwealth cemeteries that you will see on your tour. They also have a record of all the servicemen who were killed in World War One.

It would be amazing to find a relative's grave on your tour and be able to pay your respects!

Follow these simple steps and make it happen!

### STEP ONE

Complete as much of the "My Family Tree" worksheet as you can. Allow a few weeks if possible. Go as far back in history as you can and if need be include other relatives, for example, uncles.







## STEP TWO

Once you have reached back to relatives from the time of World War One make a careful note of their names and as many other details about them as you can, such as if they died in the War, when and where they died and what service they were in, for example, the Army.

## STEP THREE

Go to [www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org) . On the homepage there is a simple form to enter the details that looks like this:-


The example shows J Smith, serving in the Army in World War 1.

After entering the information click **SEARCH**



You will then be shown the CWGC records that look like this:-

Name	Rank	Service Number	Date of Death	Age	Regiment / Service	Service Country	Grave / Memorial Reference	Cemetery / Memorial Name
SMITH, J	Private	8171	13/03/1915	19	North Staffordshire Regiment	United Kingdom	IX. C. 55.	CITE BONJEAN MILITARY CEMETERY, ARMENTIERES
SMITH, J	Private	15247	14/04/1916		Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment)	United Kingdom	IX. G. 62.	CITE BONJEAN MILITARY CEMETERY, ARMENTIERES
SMITH, J	Private	122850	28/09/1918	27	Machine Gun Corps (Infantry)	United Kingdom	A. 37.	LOUVERVAL MILITARY CEMETERY, DOIGNES
SMITH, J	Gunner	4856	19/02/1918		Royal Garrison Artillery	United Kingdom	V. C. 8.	ESTAIRES COMMUNAL CEMETERY AND EXTENSION
SMITH, J	Private	20477	21/04/1918		Border Regiment	United	II. C. 9.	LILLE SOUTHERN



Surname  
 Given Name  
 Forename

Country (commemorated in)  
 Country

Cemetery or memorial

War  
 First World War

Date of death (starting)  
 Date of death (ending)

Served with  
☐ United Kingdom Forces  
☐ Australian Forces  
☐ New Zealand Forces  
☐ Canadian Forces  
☐ Indian Forces  
☐ South African Forces

Served in  
☒ Army  
☐ Air Force  
☐ Navy  
☐ Merchant Navy  
☐ Civilian War Dead  
☐ Miscellaneous

Rank  
 Service Number  
 Regiment  
 Secondary Regiment

Remembrance and Awards  
 Please select

Additional Information

To narrow your search try to put in as many other details that you have found in the Filter Results form that looks like this:-

Then click Filter Results



**CWGC**  
Commonwealth War Graves Commission

  
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## STEP FOUR

Click on their name and you will see more details about them and where they are buried.

### Casualty details

**SMITH, JOHN WILLIAM**

Rank:

Service No:

Date of Death:

Age:

Regiment/Service:

Grave Reference

Cemetery

Lance Corporal

241822

26/09/1917

21

Leicestershire Regiment

2nd/5th Bn

XIV. B. 1.

TYNE COT CEMETERY

 **VIEW CERTIFICATE**

This is a PDF file and requires **Adobe Reader** to view.

**Additional Information:**  
Son of John and Eliza Smith, of 95, Leicester Rd., Mountsorrel, Loughborough, Leicestershire.

**TYNE COT CEMETERY**



Country:

Locality:

Belgium

West-Visanderen

Find out more about this Cemetery including, visiting information, reports and plans and any emergency notices.

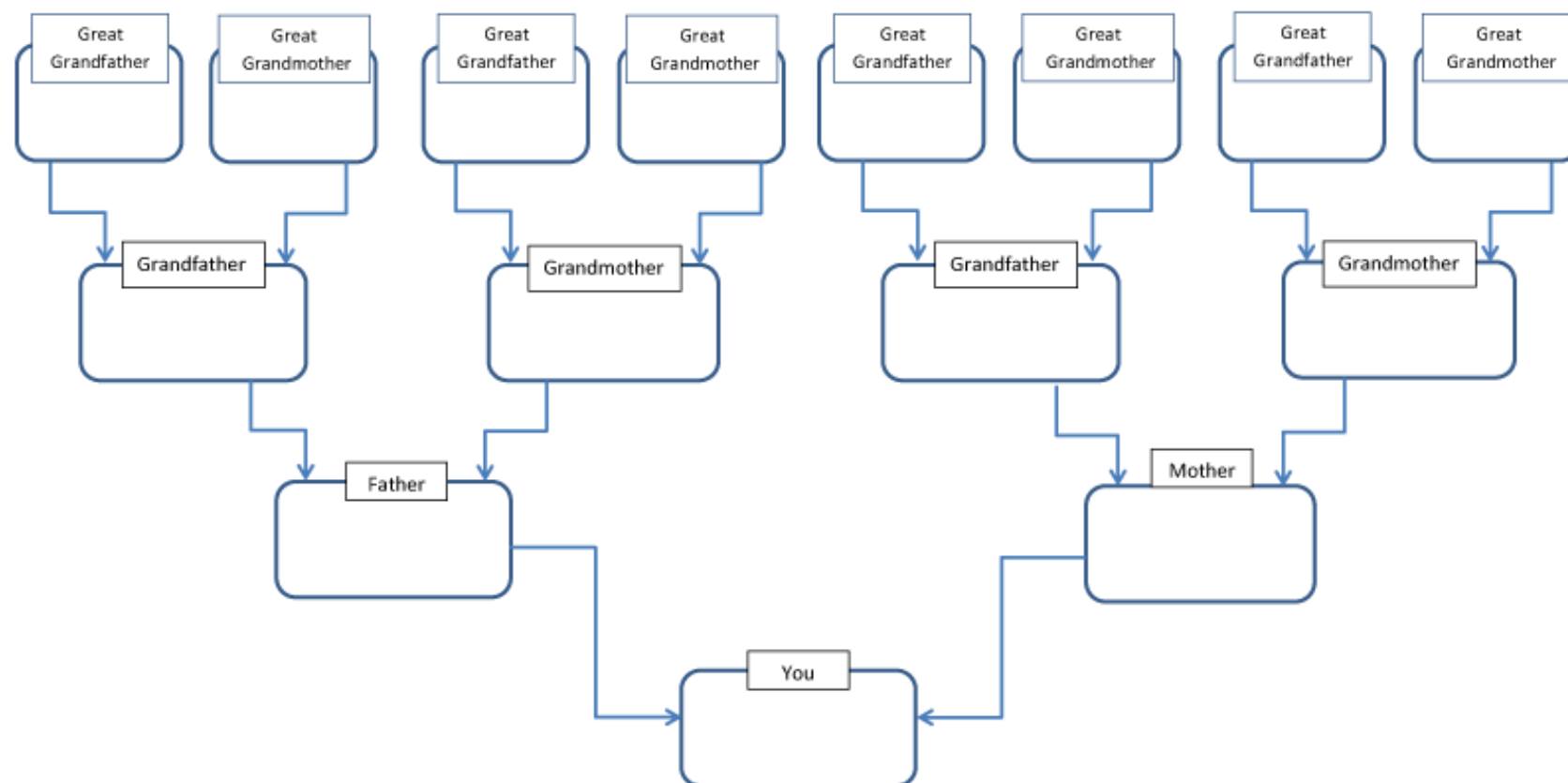
[Find out more >](#)



**CWGC**  
Commonwealth War Graves Commission



### My Family Tree



**CWGC**  
Commonwealth War Graves Commission



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