



the WWI Salient Centenary

2014
**IEPER
YPRES
YPERN**
2018

Walking folder Ypres Salient-North / Entry point Klein Zwaanhof

Fighting for every metre of high ground

A 2.8 kilometre walk along the front line in the northern part of the Ypres Salient

Entry point Klein Zwaanhof >>> The small, original cemeteries
The front line at Caesar's Nose >>> Fortin 17: gentle slopes become hills of blood
The Writers' Path: poets and authors at the front
Yorkshire Trench and Deep Dug-Out



Three entry points in the Ypres Salient

The story of the Great War is told in an interactive and contemporary way in the In Flanders Fields Museum in the Cloth Hall in Ieper. The museum also explains how the landscape has become the last witness of these four terrible years of fighting. To help you to explore this landscape, you can make use of three entry points created along the old front line of the Ypres Salient: in the north at **Klein Zwaanhof** (Little Swan Farm); in the east at **Hooge Crater Museum**; and in the south near **Hill 60** and the **Palingbeek provincial park**. Remembrance trees mark the positions of the two front lines between the entry points.



Ypres Salient cycle route

People who prefer to explore the old battlefield by bike can follow the **Ypres Salient cycle route**. This 35-kilometre route starts and ends at the Cloth Hall on the Market Square (Grote Markt) in Ieper. The route links the three entry points: north, east and south. It also passes many other sites of interest related to the First World War. The route folder is available at all local tourist offices and at Hooge Crater Museum.



Remembrance trees

Along the **Ypres Salient-North** walking route nine (out of a total of 140) *remembrance trees* have been planted at points where the old front line crosses a (public) path or road. You can recognize these trees by the coloured metal protectors around their trunks. The red protectors indicate the German line; the blue protectors the French and/or British line. These were the colours used on the maps of the front during the war. Most of the trees have an info-board showing the position of the opposing lines, with a photo from the war years.

The remembrance trees are elms, a type that was common in the countryside around Ieper from many centuries. As a result of the war and Dutch elm disease, nearly all the old elms have now disappeared. The planting of new and more resistant elms as remembrance trees is also a way of restoring this beautiful species to its rightful position in the landscape.

Application Ypres Salient 1914 - 1918

The free application Ypres Salient 1914-1918 indicates the position of all the remembrance trees and makes suggestions for different walks from the three entry points. The trees emit a signal that allows you to locate the position of the front line on a map and on aerial photographs on your cell phone. Highly recommended!

The application is available in the App Store and Google Play. There is WIFI at entry point North.

DOWNLOAD
YPRES SALIENT
1914 - 1918



Ypres Salient 1915-17

The section of the front in **Ypres Salient-North** ran from the Ypres-IJzer Canal in Boezinge to what is now the northern ring road (Noorderring), just beyond the villages of Sint-Jan and Wieltje. The front line marked by the remembrance trees is the line as it stood between 1915 and 1917, when the Ypres Salient was at its smallest extent.

At the end of 1914, the war of movement ground to a halt in a wide arc around Ypres. After the first gas attack on 22 April 1915, the perimeter of this salient shrank considerably, creating a new front line just 3.5-4.5 kilometres from the city. This new front is sometimes known as the *small Ypres Salient*. It remained more or less unchanged for 2 years and 3 months.

During the *Third Battle of Ypres*, from 31 July to 10 November 1917, the British broke out of the *small Ypres Salient*. By the end of the battle, the new front (at its furthest point) was now 8 kilometres from the city. But the *German Spring Offensive* of 1918 saw the Ypres Salient tighten more closely around the city than ever before. Even so, the allied armies (British, French and Belgian) managed to hold the new line. Exhaustion and the arrival of American troops caused the Germans to finally surrender the Ypres Salient following a combined Anglo-Belgian offensive in September 1918.

With a destructive power never previously seen, four terrible years of war had ravaged the countryside, wiped towns and villages off the map and claimed the lives of thousands of civilians and more than 500,000 soldiers from around the world.

During this walk, you will explore a section of the old front line in the northern part of the Ypres Salient, which remained virtually unchanged between 1915 and 1917.

You can learn more about the local war history in the farm *Klein Zwaanhof*, Entry Point North. There is the reconstructed German bunker, *Fortin 17*, an introduction film and authentic war material.

➤ *Entry point* NORTH

Address: **Hoeve Klein Zwaanhof**
Kleine Poezelstraat 6 - 8904 Boezinge
Opening hours: from 01/04 to 15/11: 10am > 5.45pm
and from 16/11 to 31/03: 10am > 4.45pm



From *Klein Zwaanhof* to *Colne Valley*

➤ The walk starts in **Klein Zwaanhof** - the name means *Little Swan Farm* - where the **northern entry point** has been created, one of three entry points to explore the Ypres Salient.

Following the devastating gas attack on 22 April 1915, German troops advanced to the location of this **northern entry point** at **Klein Zwaanhof**. They quickly dug a new front line on the gentle slopes of *Pilkem Ridge*, which runs between the Ypres-IJzer Canal and the road to Zonnebeke (*Zonnebeekseweg*). French troops were able to cling on to their positions along the *Kleine Poezelstraat*.

Klein Zwaanhof quite literally stands on the site of two British trenches dating from 1915 and 1917. More information about these trenches can be found on the panels in the car park and in the entry point building. North of the car park, along the *Kleine Poezelstraat*, a number of remembrance trees mark the position of the allied front line.

The first gas attack on 22 April 1915 led to the collapse of the French front. About 1,200 soldiers died from asphyxiation (gas poisoning). The German infantry reached the Ypres-IJzer Canal at Boezinge. From there, the front line ran south-westwards away from the canal towards the *Moortelweg*.

➤ The walking route leads south along the *Kleine Poezelstraat* - you turn right when you leave the **Klein Zwaanhof** entry point. After about 300 metres, you will see a small British cemetery on your right-hand side.

Colne Valley Cemetery was created after the British took over this sector. The name refers to a river valley in West Yorkshire, where the troops who fought here came from. The cemetery contains the graves of 47 British soldiers, who died between July 1915 and February 1916. Even though it was very close to the front line, the cemetery remained in British hands throughout the war.

The cemetery is situated in the valley of a stream known as the Zwaanhofbeek. After the site was partially enclosed by the new industrial estate, which was built on higher ground, a problem arose with the drainage. For this reason, it was decided to raise the level of the cemetery as well.

Until the First World War, the agricultural landscape in this locality was full of hedges, copses, wooded banks, avenues of trees, etc. The troops of both sides used these landscape elements to provide shelter and strengthen their defences. Near **Colne Valley** there was a broad bank of trees running eastwards towards the grassy fields higher up the slope. The British constructed an important communication trench alongside these trees, linking their first and second lines.

▶ Just beyond **Colne Valley Cemetery**, turn left onto a path that leads across the fields. This path runs almost parallel with the original communication trench.

The path ends at a large meadow, which you can enter through a spring-hinged gate (please close after use!). Walk a little to the left.



Caesar's Nose Cemetery

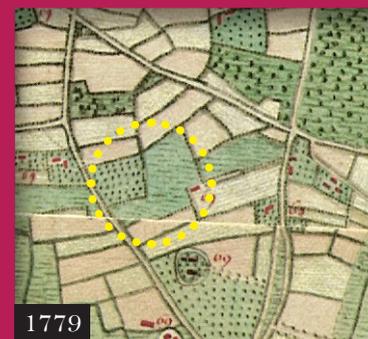


2005

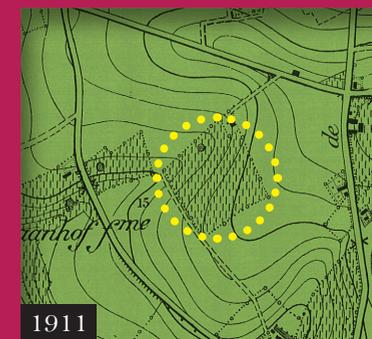
A centuries-old meadow in no-man's-land - *Caesar's Nose Cemetery*

In the corner of the field stands a remembrance tree that marks the position of the British front line from May 1915 onwards. Follow the edge of the field. You are now crossing the **no-man's-land** that separated the opposing armies for two years.

This large meadow has survived both the passage of the centuries and the ravages of war relatively unscathed. The troops of both sides dug their trenches along the hedges that lined the edges of the field, leaving the meadow itself more or less untouched, because it was too wet - as testified by the old pond, which is also centuries old. In this way, an ancient meadow became a part of **no-man's-land**, and was spared the greatest destruction.



1779



1911

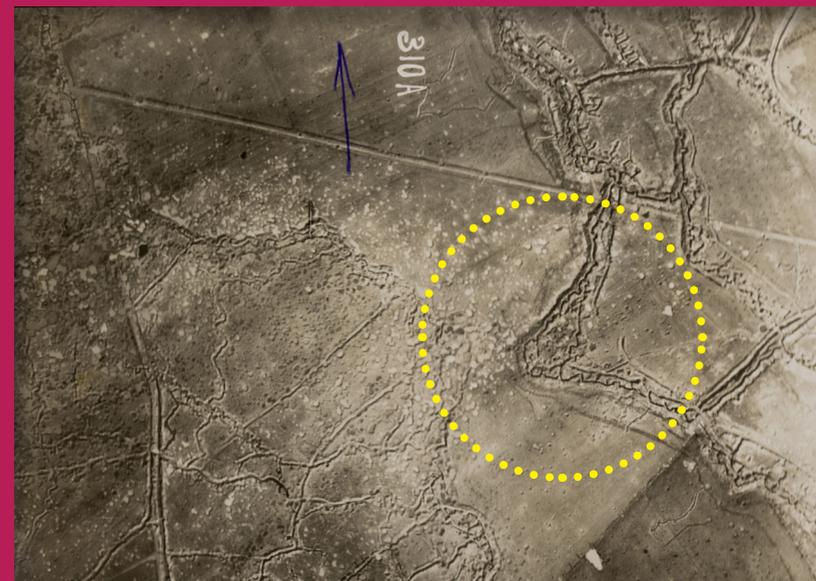
▶ Walk around the pond and turn left, leaving the meadow by a second spring-hinged gate. This brings you to a second small cemetery.

This small cemetery, **Caesar's Nose (Welsh) Cemetery**, is one of a chain of seven cemeteries on *Pilkem Ridge*. The cemeteries were all started shortly after the major attack launched on 31 July 1917, which marked the opening of the *Third Battle of Ypres*. After the front line had moved forwards, it was possible to bury the dead in parts of no-man's-land that had not been completely obliterated by shellfire. The next cemetery in the chain is at 850 metres away on the *Moortelweg*. It contains the graves of 79 British soldiers and was built alongside an abandoned farmhouse that stood in the middle of no-man's-land until September 1917, which explains the name: *No Man's Cot*.



Fighting amongst the dunghills

This photo from 28 April 1915 shows how the front lines gradually took shape. The French dug in along the western side of the meadow, making use of the existing hedges and ditches. The photo also shows a series of black dots just below the meadow. These are the piles of dung that the farmers had dumped alongside their fields, but were unable to spread when the fighting started. The French gradually pushed forwards trench by trench towards the Germans, working their way between the dunghills. After weeks of hard fighting, the front line finally came to rest amidst piles of manure.



How an emperor's nose becomes part of the front line

Both the French and the British liked to give their own, often ironic, names to the places where they fought. Sometimes the existing Flemish names were too difficult for them to pronounce. Sometimes there was a particular reason for giving a place a particular name. This was certainly the case with **Caesar's Nose**.

After the gas attack, the French tried to win back some of the ground they had lost. On 16 May 1915, they managed to capture a section of the German front line on both sides of the *Kleine Poezelstraat*. On the eastern side there was a communication trench running at right angles towards the last section of the old front line still held by the Germans. After the fighting, this communication trench became part of the new German front line, creating a sharp bend as a result. On the trench maps and in aerial photographs, this bend looked exactly like a hooked nose. Cleopatra had long been famed in history for the 'sharpness' of her nose, but the imperial British were more inclined to see the 'Roman' nose of her lover: Julius Caesar. And so this triangular bulge in the line became known as **Caesar's Nose**. It was also the name given to the cemetery started here in September 1917, which largely contains the graves of Welsh soldiers.

Between 6 and 9 July 1915, the British managed to capture an isolated section of trench on the west side of this same section of the German front line. This trench was known as *Südspitze* by the Germans, but was renamed *International Trench* by the British. The British quickly connected the captured trench with their own front line. The Germans dug a new frontline to connect the two projecting ends of their old positions.

▶ After visiting **Caesar's Nose (Welsh) Cemetery**, walk further along the neatly mown grass path, which, like the cemetery, is impeccably maintained by the **Commonwealth War Graves Commission**.

At the end of the path you will see the remembrance tree marking the German front line. The info-panel shows how the contours of the front line here formed the famous **Caesar's Nose**. You have now safely crossed **no-man's-land**.

▶ Follow the gravel path to the left towards the *Moortelweg*.

The German front line at **Caesar's Nose** was situated in the field to the left. Each year, dozens of old shells are still found here, which are collected and made safe by DOVO, a bomb disposal unit of the Belgian Army. The path eventually joins the *Moortelweg*, which is 20 metres above sea level. Its higher elevation made this seemingly modest ridge a position of great strategic importance. From here (until 31 July 1917), the Germans could look down on the British in the lower-lying valley of the *Zwaanhofbeek*.

A little to the east of this spot, heavy fighting also took place in May 1915 around an old tavern known as *het Morteldje*. In the same month, equally fierce fighting took place still further along *Pilkem Ridge* at the old manor house marked on the maps of the time as *Château de Langhemarcq*, which the British with typical irony renamed *Mouse Trap Farm*. Hundreds of British troops died here, many as a result of two German gas attacks.



The threat of *Fortin 17*

▶ Turn left onto the *Moortelweg* and walk back towards the valley and the old British front line, which you reach at the crossroads with the *Kleine Poezelstraat*. Make a small detour to the right (200 metres there and back) until you arrive at the remembrance trees.



The trees show just how close together the opposing trenches were at this spot. No-man's-land was only 50 to 60 metres wide, with a difference in height of less than 2 metres. After May 1915, the Germans constructed a new front line here, including one of the earliest 'strongpoints' in the Ypres Salient. This redoubt was known as **Fortin 17**. There was also a sniper's post nearby, opposite a French (and later a British) advanced post.

Fortin 17 was built from loose blocks of prefabricated concrete, positioned around an existing wooden shelter. The bunker was rediscovered in 2001. It is part of this bunker that has been reconstructed in the *Klein Zwaanhof* display.



Archaeology in the northern part of the Ypres Salient

In the 1970s, it was decided to construct the new *Ieperlee Canal* industrial estate on the eastern bank of the old *Ieper-IJzer Canal*. At that time, there was little interest in the archaeological heritage of the First World War. This all changed in 1992, when the third extension of the industrial estate led to the discovery of a number of human remains. A group of amateur archaeologists - *The Diggers*, under the leadership of Patrick Van Wanzele and Aurel Sercu - undertook to search the site and eventually recovered the bodies of 215 soldiers of three different nationalities. In the course of their work, they also excavated numerous military structures from the war years, including **Yorkshire Trench & Dug-Out**.

Walk back along the Kleine Poezelstraat towards **Klein Zwaanhof**. Just past the pond, which was created by the junction of two trenches, turn right onto the gravel path. After 400 metres you will arrive at the **Yorkshire Trench & Dug-Out** on the Bargiestraat.

The Writers' Path

Just as important as the wartime landscape and material relics of war are the texts and testimonies left behind by the great literary figures who fought in Flanders. No other part of the front can boast such a concentration of writing talent as the northern sector of the Ypres Salient. Along the path leading to **Yorkshire Trench** you can learn more about six important poets and authors who served near here:

Ernst Jünger (Germany), Lieutenant, 8th Company, 73rd Fusilier Regiment, fought (amongst other places) at Dobschütz Wald /Wood 15 on 31 July 1917. Work: *In Stahlgewittern (Storm of Steel)*

Liam O'Flaherty (Ireland), Private, 2nd Battalion, Irish Guards, served between the canal and Ruisseau Farm from July to September 1917. Work: *Return of the Brutes*

Hedd Wyn (Wales), Private H.E. Evans, 15th (London Welsh) Battalion, Royal Welsh Fusiliers, wounded on 31 July 1917 at Hagebos (Iron Cross), died at Corner House, buried in Artillery Wood Cemetery. Work: *Rhyfel*

Francis Ledwidge (Ireland), Private, 1st Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, killed on 31 July 1917 at Carrefour des Roses (Rose Crossroads), buried in Artillery Wood Cemetery. Work: *Songs of the Fields, Songs of Peace, Last Songs*

David Jones (Wales), Private, 15th (London Welsh) Battalion, Royal Welsh Fusiliers, fought near Yorkshire Trench in July 1917. Work: *In Parenthesis*

Edmund Blunden (England), Lieutenant, 11th Battalion, Royal Sussex Regiment, served (amongst other places) at Cross Roads on 31 July 1917. Work: *Undertones of War*



Yorkshire Trench & Deep Dug-Out

The reconstructed **Yorkshire Trench** with its **deep dugout** was first built in 1917, during the preparations for the *Third Battle of Ypres*. The trench was fitted with *A-frames*, which allowed the water to drain away under the floor surface of duckboards. This kept the trench relatively dry.

Yorkshire Trench replaced an earlier trench that had been dug during the fighting in 1915. This trench had been made without *A-frames*, so that it regularly became flooded. It was also relatively shallow and therefore unsafe. The position of this trench is suggested by the wooden duckboards on the surface.

Yorkshire Trench also contains an underground shelter or **deep dugout**, which served as a headquarters for two battalions.

Two wooden staircases lead down to two corridors at a depth of 10 metres, with 11 small rooms running off them. The position of the corridors and the rooms are marked approximately on the surface by the gravel paths. Each room had a separate function: pump room, carpenter's workshop, storeroom, armourer's workshop, a lateral corridor with four accommodation rooms, command post.

The trench and its dugout were rediscovered in 1992. The site was restored in 2001-2002 and opened to the public in 2003.

After your visit to **Yorkshire Trench**, return via the **Writers' Path** to **Klein Zwaanhof**.



Track X Cemetery





Original A-frames
Yorkshire Trench &
Deep Dug-Out

Ieper Tourist Office – In Flanders Fields Museum

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