

ROUTES OF REMEMBRANCE: EXPLORING THE YPRES SALIENT AND ITS BATTLEFIELDS, 1919-1939

- *Mark Connelly and Tim Godden* -

This article will examine Ypres as a memory site through a study of the routes visitors took across the landscape of the region's battlefields and militarised zones from 1919 to 1939 and how these created 'pathways of remembrance'.¹ Traces of these routes survive today, but many have disappeared reflecting both changes in the dominant memory and conception of the conflict, as well as the immense alterations to transport and communications, particularly the ubiquity of private car ownership. This article is about how and why people moved through the Ypres battlefields in the way they did and what this reveals about the significance of certain sites.

Much research on the commemoration and memory of the Great War in the twenties and thirties concentrates on how vast numbers of people sought to deal with the deaths of their loved ones, or veterans attempts to interpret their wartime experiences.² In addition, such studies often focus on memorialisation and commemoration on the home fronts or 'safe areas' of combatant nations. Far less research considers battlefields as sites of memory and tourism.³ It is the contention of this study that battlefield sites and spaces were crucial to British war remembrance in the twenties and thirties, and that the ways of passing through the landscape, and how sites were linked, was a highly important part of that experience. In this instance, 'British' refers to the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland, as well as the Irish Free State (as it was at this time). During this period, 'British' and Britain' also had implications of the wider Britannic world, the 'Greater Britain' of the Empire. This broader definition of Britain and Britishness was extremely important for war remembrance. As the guidebooks of the time show, there was a deep awareness of the regions of the British Isles, and the components of the Empire, but all were understood as part of the wider British family which had fought and suffered together.⁴

The creation of these British axes of remembrance was as much the result of sheer utilitarian and

practical considerations as deeper emotional and psychological drivers relating to specific sites. Landscape studies have argued that humans have a complex relationship with the environment around them, they both shape it and absorb it; it reflects human intervention and forms it. Certain spaces within the landscape have been labelled or given special status by humans, and this transforms them from space to place.⁵ For Britain and the Empire, Ypres was transformed from space to a place with an almost mythical status during the war when five great battles were fought around the city giving it a high profile in reportage and propaganda. Its status was formally recognised and reinforced at the war's end by the various memorial schemes drawn up by the British government.⁶ The explanation of the strategic importance of Ypres, which had turned it into such a sanguinary site, was also linked to its status as a place of remembrance and tourism: its proximity to, and ease of access from, the Channel coast. Hard military realities created emotional ties which then combined with the practicalities of accessing Ypres making it the crucial site for battlefield visiting. From the moment the conflict ended, British visitors began to arrive seeking out the graves of loved ones, or the place where they were lost, to wonder at the amazing spectacle of the battlefield, and explore the sites they had once fought

1. For overarching studies of Ypres as a memory site see DOMINIEK DENDOOVEN, *Ypres as Holy Ground: The Menin Gate and the Last Post* (Koksijde, 2001); DELPHINE LAUWERS, 'Le Saillant d'Ypres entre reconstruction et construction d'un lieu de mémoire' (Florence, Department of History and Civilization, European University Institute, 2014); MARK CONNELLY and STEFAN GOEBEL *Ypres* (Oxford, 2018); JOHAN MEIRE, *De Stilte van de Salient* (Tielt, 2003).

2. For examples see ANNETTE BECKER, 'From Death to Memory: the National Ossuaries in France after the Great War', *History and Memory*, no. 2 (5), 1993, p. 32-49; P. DONALDSON, *Ritual and Remembrance: The Memorialisation of the Great War in East Kent* (Newcastle, 2006); A. GAFFNEY, *Aftermath: Remembering the Great War in Wales* (Cardiff, 1998). JAY WINTER, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* (Cambridge, 1995).

3. DAVID LLOYD's *Battlefield Tourism: Pilgrimage and the Commemoration of the Great War in Britain, Australia and Canada, 1919-1939* (Oxford, 1998) continues to be the major text on British and Commonwealth battlefield tourism in the twenties and thirties. By contrast, Tourism Studies has inspired much research into contemporary interests. For examples see the work of Jennifer Iles and Caroline Winter.

4. For examples, see H.A. TAYLOR, *Good-bye to the Battlefields* (London, 1930); GRAHAM SETON HUTCHISON, *Pilgrimage* (London, 1935); R.H. MOTTRAM, *Journey to the Western Front* (London, 1936).

5. See ARNOLD BERLEANT, *Living in the Landscape: towards an aesthetics of environment* (Lawrence, Kansas, 1997); EDWARD S. CASEY, 'Boundary, Place and Event in the Spatiality of History', *Rethinking History*, no. 4 (11), 2007, p. 507-512; MONICA JANOWSKI and TIM INGOLD, *Imaging Landscapes: past, present and future* (London, 2016); SIMON SCHAMA, *Landscape and Memory* (London, 1995).

6. The National Archives, UK, WO 32/5569 War Memorials: suggestions for preservation of battlefields at Ypres as war memorial; Commonwealth War Graves Commission Archive CWGC/1/1/9/B/5 Memorials to the Missing – Tyne Cot and Menin Gate. For the wartime significance of Ypres see CONNELLY and GOEBEL, *Ypres*, chapter 2.

over.⁷ How they moved across that landscape, the priorities and itineraries they created then reveal much about the different ways in which the war was remembered, and in particular the manner in which Ypres itself was imagined and conceived.

This study uses arguments drawn from the amorphous interdisciplinary umbrella covered by Memory Studies, which contains a diverse range of research examining the significance of particular sites and places. Largely inspired by the ground-breaking work of Pierre Nora, sites of memory studies have focused on many aspects of First World War commemoration. These include works on the practical and aesthetic processes of erecting war memorials, as well as studies centred on the remembrance rituals performed around them and other commemorative sites.⁸ While many studies of memorials consider the relationship to the surrounding geography (physical and human), few focus on the precise way in which visitors have navigated their way through the landscape spaces and the effect this had on the perception of a precise memory place. As Nicholas Saunders's work on the First World War has revealed, new perspectives can be achieved by examination of the conflict's material culture, landscapes and archaeology.⁹ It is a position shared by the In Flanders Fields Museum with its belief that the landscape constitutes the last witness to the conflict. Less well considered in memory studies of commemorative sites is the impact of human geographical features, particularly those

relating to communications - roads, railways, paths and tracks. Many researchers appear to take a helicopter approach in which they hover over one site or memorial, consider its nature and meaning, often contextualising it within the *immediate* environment, before moving on to another without considering the physical accessing of that place by visitors and how that process may influence interactions with it. Of course, the 'visitor experience' in the twenties and thirties was not solely shaped by the physical processes of arrival and exploration, as all carried preconceptions and were usually informed and assisted by tour guides, group leaders, or guidebooks and maps. This highlights another gap in the literature. There is now much work, from many disciplinary standpoints, on the history of tourist literature and guidebooks, and an equal range of work on the history of maps and mapping, particularly as vehicles of power through classification and taxonomy. There is also a body of research focusing specifically on First World War tourist guidebooks. However, a great deal of this work concentrates on the nature of the discourse, and is less interested in the guide as a practical tool for the visitor, and how the visitor used it while moving through the battlefield spaces.¹⁰ Examining the routes and pathways of remembrance and commemoration across the Ypres battlefields highlights Robert Macfarlane's point: "Paths are the habits of a landscape. They are acts of consensual making... Paths connect. This is their first duty and their chief reason for being. They relate places in a literal sense, and

7. For a discussion of the 'pioneering' routes see LAUWERS, 'Le Saillant d'Ypres entre reconstruction et construction d'un lieu de mémoire', p. 361-371.

8. PIERRE NORA, 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire', *Representations*, no. 26, 1989, p. 7-24; BRUCE SCATES's, *Return to Gallipoli: Walking the Battlefields of the Great War* (Cambridge, 2006) provides a relatively rare example of a study of a particular site and how it has been explored by different cohorts of visitors.

9. See NICHOLAS J. SAUNDERS and PAUL CORNISH, *Contested Objects. Material Memories of the Great War* (Abingdon, 2009), p. 1-10.

10. For examples see ESTHER ALLEN, '"Money and Little Red Books: Romanticism, tourism and the rise of guidebooks', *LIT: Literature and Interpretation Theory*, nos. 2 & 3, 1996 (7), p. 213-216; MATTHEW H. EDNEY, 'Theory and the History of Cartography', *Imago Mundi*, No. 1 (48), 1996, p. 185-191; JAMES R. ACKERMAN, 'Mapping, Battlefield Guidebooks, and Remembering the Great War' in ELRI LIEBENBERG, JOSEF DEMHARDT, SOETKIN VERVUST (eds.), *History of Military Cartography* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2016), pp. 159-177. YVES-MARIE ÉVANNON and JOHAN VINCENT (eds.), *Tourisme et Grande Guerre. Voyage(s) sur front historique méconnu (1914-2019)* (Paris, 2019); ELIZABETH MCKELLAR, 'Tales of Two Cities: architecture, print and early guidebooks to Paris and London', *Humanities*, no. 3 (2), 2013, p. 328-350. See also, DELPHINE LAUWERS, 'Battlefields as tourist attractions, Britons traveling to the Ypres Salient since 1919' (https://www.academia.edu/6613139/Battlefields_as_tourist_attractions_Britons_traveling_to_the_Ypres_Salient_since_1919 accessed 15 June 2016); BRIAN MURPHY, 'Dark Tourism and the Michelin World War 1 Battlefield Guides', *Journal of Franco-Irish Studies*, no. 1 (4), 2015, p. 1-9.

by extension they relate people... [but] Paths are consensual, too, because without common care and common practice they disappear.”¹¹

The practicalities of accessing the battlefields and moving through them

The ways and forms of linking, classifying and interpreting the sites of memory across Ypres thus deserves as much attention as the sites themselves. Veteran, and ardent Western Front pilgrim, Graham Seton Hutchison expressed the significance of the route as integral to the act of memory, remembrance and commemoration, writing in 1931:

“Go back to Ypres if you wish to recapture part of your former self. Tread the pavé roads. Plant the heel in the muddy soil. As you hear the squelch, or nailed boot echoing on cobbled stones, where you stand will become peopled, and your horizon broken by a forest of rifles and tin hats all askew. Walk swiftly across the fields as if expectant of a barrage of gas or a five point nine morning hate... And in the darkness, or with eyes closed, you will see visions – British soldiers huddled close for physical warmth and spiritual reinforcement... go back to Ypres. Saturate yourself in the atmosphere, sample again the soil, soaked with the blood of comradeship, and whose shrines are steeped with a spiritual love which passeth all human understanding”¹².

Paths linked sites, and were present within them. Paths were created by a range of agents, individual and collective; they were created informally and intentionally. Within the Imperial War Graves Commission cemeteries, the path was a consciously-created axis of movement designed to immerse the visitor in the environment. The path

itself was, therefore, a memorial in its own right, and demands study of how multitudes of paths were created and used.

For Seton Hutchison walking was integral to the pilgrimage, and pilgrimage by its very nature is a journey of thought, of remembrance. As such, the path is the agent through which memory is both recalled and retained. But, just as war experience was unique to the soldier or individual in question, so too was the individual's pilgrimage, and so too was the individual's path. A review in *The Observer* of the influential guidebook, *The Immortal Salient*, captured the cross-hatching of paths that were etched across the landscape of the old Salient. It remarked that the guidebook was one that “everyone with a special path to track in that maze of memories will be wise to choose”.¹³ In turn, this made the map more than a simple utilitarian item and transformed it into an icon in itself with its collection of signs and symbols, particularly when it also marked cemeteries and memorials. This maze of memories represents a layer of movement and path-making that is unique to the individual and identifies the act of walking and treading a path as a memorial form and act, as noted above. Indeed, the method by which the visitor moved through the landscape of the former Salient was an essential part of the pilgrimage process. Whilst the motorcar was a popular option, there can be no doubt that walking was considered the appropriate method to engage with the spaces and places of the old battlefields. J.O. Coop captured this sense of propriety in his 1920 guide, stating that “(u)nless the tourist is contented with a very superficial view of the battle area he will be compelled to do a considerable amount of walking”.¹⁴ Indeed the primacy of walking as the most appropriate way to see the former battlefields is borne out in a number of reports of individual pilgrimages.¹⁵

11. ROBERT MACFARLANE, *The Old Ways. A Journey on Foot* (London, 2013), p. 17.

12. *Ypres Times*, Vol. 5, No. 8, October 1931, p. 237-238.

13. *Observer*, 15 February 1925, p. 12.

14. Rev. J.O. COOP, *A Short Guide to the Battlefields* (Liverpool, 1920).

15. For examples of veterans undertaking walking pilgrimages see: *The Ypres Times*, “To Ypres in Civvies”, Vol. 4 No. 6, April 1929, p. 179 – 181, and *The Ypres Times*, “Ypres Calling”, Vol. 3 No. 6, April 1927, p. 151-154.

Whether the visitor walked or not, the experience of exploring the battlefield was very much dependent upon the individual or composition of the group. Graham Seton Hutchison quoted above was, of course, writing as a veteran for other veterans. His particular position revealed a crucial determinant of the visitor experience, which was the motivation and preconceptions of the individual, and in turn this could be mediated and affected by the number and nature of any fellow travellers. Some went alone, or in small family groups creating an intensely private world, some went in large groups combining veterans, family and friends. Veterans must have returned to their former world bearing a complex collection of memories and emotions complicated still further by interaction with their travel companions. Traveling with family was a chance to point out aspects of their own war service, should they wish to, while purely veterans' groups arrived with a very distinctive agenda and atmosphere which usually meant celebrating regimental or battalion exploits. Large mixed parties of veterans and families created the potential for both interaction and retreat into the separate, enclosed worlds of the two sub-groups. In such groups the veteran who brought along family members was constantly jumping between two worlds: the intimate one of his own relatives and the alternative masculine family forged during the war. Most visitors also came with a combined agenda of visiting both specific and 'generic' sites of common interest or importance. The mixture of visitors and their motivations for undertaking a battlefield tour was epitomised by the 1928 British Legion pilgrimage. Its sheer scale in terms of numbers taken and sites visited drew together a broad range of people with differing desires and interests, which was perceived by T.F. Lister, the first chairman of the British Legion:

"Everywhere one seemed to meet cars conveying relatives to their mournful task of lay-

ing a wreath in memory of some loved one... [But] to me perhaps the most interesting feature was to see a few people in the centre of a cornfield – which looked as much like the opposite to a battlefield as one could imagine – searching to locate a spot where they had lived below ground or had participated in some sanguinary encounter. These little parties, detached from the main groups were busily engaged refighting old battles, and doubtless, with a more comfortable view of the surrounding scenery, discussing some of the strategy of the war".¹⁶

The distinctions Lister identified were part of a wider debate concerning the status of battlefield visitors, which emerged in the immediate aftermath of the war and was a dominant part of the discourse, particularly between 1919 and 1921. A distinction was drawn between those deemed 'pilgrims' and those labelled 'tourists'.¹⁷ The pilgrim was defined as the person seeking consolation and wishing to pay respectful and humble homage to the dead, while also gaining a greater understanding of the precise conditions in which the men fought and died. Pilgrims were thus thought to be the acceptable face of battlefield visiting. By contrast, the tourist was often caricatured as a seeker of ghoulish delights and the 'wonders' of the battlefield. In reality, such distinctions were too crude and unsubtle, as most visitors tended to alternate between the two conditions. A former officer noted just this blurring on the 1928 British Legion pilgrimage when he spotted a group of female pilgrims "toiling bravely in the blazing sunshine, [who] ate their picnic lunches in the shadow of the tower [the Ulster Tower at Thiepval on the Somme]. Very few knew over what terrible ground they had passed, and fewer still understood just where it was they were so contentedly munching [a] ham sandwich and tomatoes."¹⁸ One moment a visitor could be weeping in a cemetery and the next enthusiastically buying

16. *A Souvenir of the Battlefields Pilgrimage, August 1928* (London, 1929), p. 143.

17. For examples, see article by HENRY BECKLES WILLSON, 'Ypres Holy Ground of British Arms', *Graphic* 15 November 1919, p. 6-7; FERDINAND TUOHY, 'The Old Line, Aged Twelve', *Sphere*, 9 July 1927, p. 6.

18. *Souvenir of the Battlefields Pilgrimage*, p. 43.

postcards and souvenirs. As Delphine Lauwers' pioneering research has shown, much of the cultural and economic infrastructure of Ypres during the twenties and thirties developed to accommodate the pilgrim-tourist and cater for the varied ways in which people wanted to explore, experience and interpret the battlefields.¹⁹ Battlefield guidebooks slotted into this framework offering the visitor a matrix around which the elements of specific significance to themselves could be oriented into a wider experience.

That experience commenced with the severely utilitarian processes of the modes of travel and way of arrival. For visitors approaching Ypres from the Belgian ports of Zeebrugge or Ostend, the journey commenced with exposure to two famous wartime incidents: the raids on the ports in April and May 1918, which were lionised out of all proportion to their actual military worth by the British media. *The Immortal Salient* guidebook prepared its users for perceiving Ostend and Zeebrugge as places of thrilling endeavour by commissioning an essay from Captain A.F. Carpenter, who had won a VC during the operation, and was a prolific publicist of the raids. Carpenter's dashing and dramatic account provided a whiff of glory to the whole thing, and made the points of arrival places of adventure and derring-do. This created an enduring legend ensuring visitors starting their battlefield tours at these points did so against a backdrop saturated with high rhetorical flourishes. The reality of both ports, at least for the first few years after the war, then served to meet that expectation, as the ruined blockships and German coastal defence installations were clearly visible. From here the visitor moved south-west, whether by train or car, until reaching Ypres by crossing what was formerly German-occupied territory. This was achieved by one of two variants. The first approached along the Yser front held by Belgian troops. Alternatively, visitors proceeded via Bruges

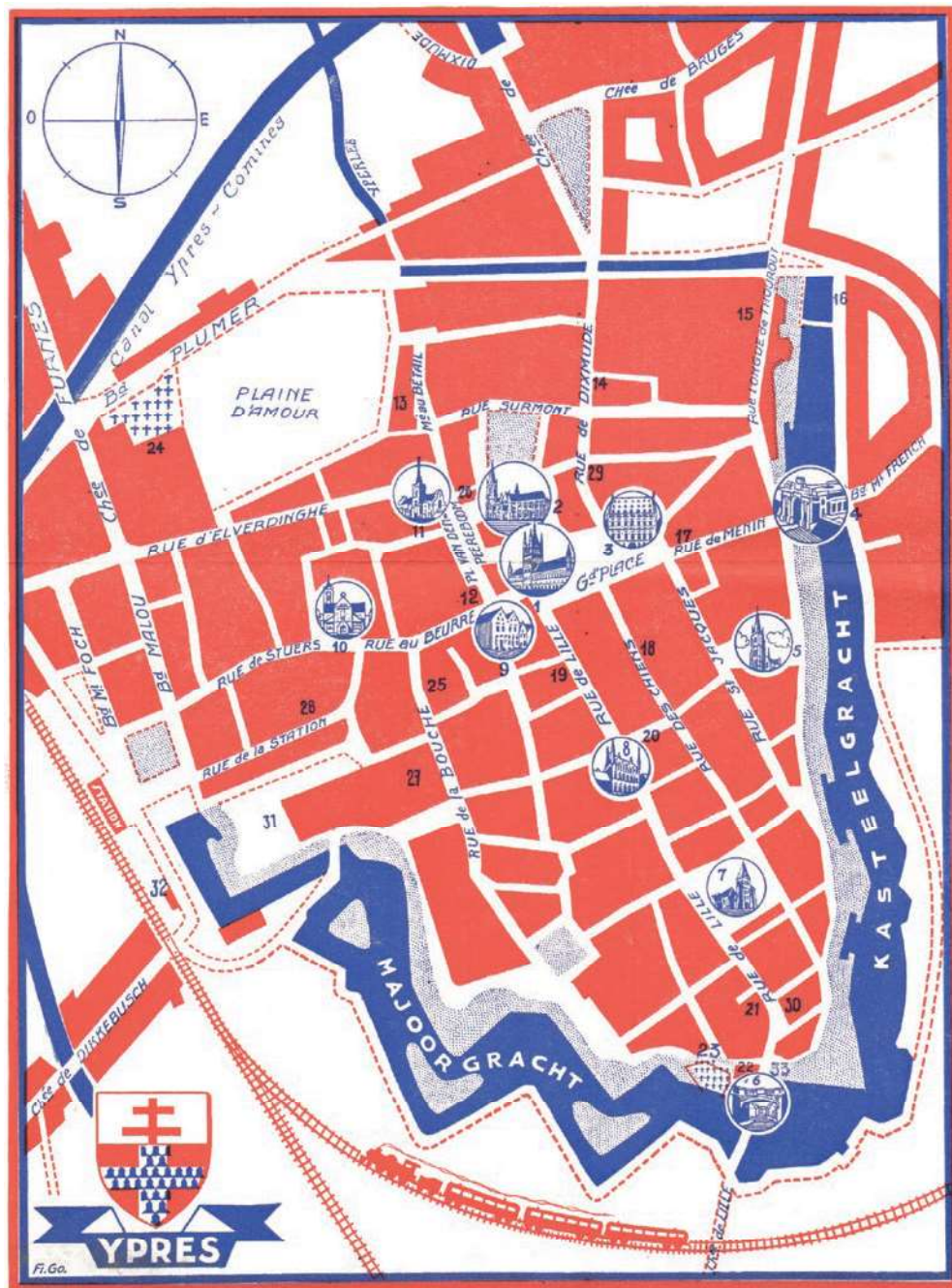
and Roulers, and thus came down to the Menin Road traversing the main axis of the battlefield from German to British lines. For those coming from the direction of Dixmude, a short essay on Belgian army operations in *The Immortal Salient* provided orientation and context. However, this zone was clearly seen as a place of transit, for the commentary provided no advice on places to stop other than a list of sites the Belgian government had identified for preservation. As far as British visitors were concerned, the real battlefield began at the BEF's boundary, but the first indication of the transition was the increasing presence of ruin and desolation. A Banbury man writing up his experiences for his local newspaper in the autumn of 1921, noted the alteration in the landscape on reaching Dixmude. "From now onward to Ypres it was one continuous sight-seeing of devastated country appalling to look upon and saddening to contemplate.... [it was] beyond description."²⁰

Greatly improving communications to and from Ypres was the restoration of the railway in 1919, and with it the link to the coastal ports and towns. This naturally drew visitors to the station and then made the area around it particularly dense with visitor-focused activities. The station square was home to the YMCA hostel, and a major hotel, Skindles. (There was already a hotel of this name in Poperinghe. It was the successor to a café much frequented by British officers who had named it Skindles in honour of their favourite hotel on the River Thames near Maidenhead.) This point of arrival drew people into the heart of Ypres from the southern direction along the Rue au Beurre. The significance of the street as a main thoroughfare for visitors probably explains why a British expatriate decided to establish his bed and breakfast establishment here. His 'Empire Tea Room' was described on advertisements as next to St. Nicholas's church "just being rebuilt and halfway between the Station and the Grand Place".²¹

19. LAUWERS, 'Le Saillant d'Ypres entre reconstruction et construction d'un lieu de mémoire'. See in particular, p. 262-371.

20. *Banbury Advertiser*, 13 October 1921, p. 4

21. Advertisement in *Ypres Times*, Vol. 3, No. 2, April 1926, p. 27. The original advert placed soon after the business was established described its position as being 'enxt to the ruined Church of St. Nicholas', Vol.2, No. 3, July 1924, p. 82.



Plan of Ypres from R. Buckinx, Ypres and its surroundings. A Little Guide for Tourists (Ypres, c. 1936).

For those using private motor cars, the axes were often determined by the accessibility and safety of the region's roads. When the Ypres League produced its map of the battlefields in 1925, it carefully delineated between those easily navigable by cars and those deemed impassable to motor traffic. Drawing upon its established style and doubtless looking to appeal to its usual audiences, Michelin's 1919 guide created a tourist itinerary based on the motor car. Its approach was very much underpinned by the idea of getting as much seen in as short a time as possible. As a French company viewing the war and its geography from a French perspective, the departure point was one few British visitors would have adopted as a base – Lille. Recommending a two-day visit, the first day was a drive north-east moving through Messines and Wytschaete before completing a circuit running across the Menin Road and ending up in Poperinghe. The second day was very much like a pre-war trip to the *Petite Suisse Flamande* crossing the hills of the region west of Ypres and returning to Lille via Armentières, Estaires, Béthune and La Bassée.²²

The authors of *The Immortal Salient*, Beatrix Brice and Lieutenant-General Sir William Pulteney, had no doubt at all as to the most fitting route into Ypres. For them it was the west-east axis, which meant the best way of approaching was to cross the channel at Folkestone or Dover for Boulogne or Calais: "There is one great advantage to British pilgrims by this route, in that they enter the Salient through Poperinghe and along the road that was the main thoroughfare for our troops. It has the feeling of being the right avenue of approach to the Holy Ground of British Arms."²³

Thus, the precise arrival point in Ypres could then shape the route through the city, and with it the remembrance experience. Among the earliest

guides was the Toc H publication, *The Pilgrim's Guide to the Ypres Salient*, published in 1920. It created a circuit of remembrance within Ypres itself with the aim of "helping the pilgrim to understand the condition of life in Ypres during the four years when it was occupied by British troops".²⁴ Here the intention was very much one of a pilgrim's progress of imitating the pathways of endurance and endeavour trod by others. Two other Christian organisations, the YMCA and the Church Army, an Anglican outreach and missionary society, sought to assist pilgrims visiting the war graves, and their precise locations within Ypres helped to create particular *foci*. The Church Army was based in a series of huts next to the prison ruins and was thus convenient for people arriving from the direction of Poperinghe. Its position also encouraged people to visit the Reservoir Cemetery, which lay just behind its buildings. This route into Ypres via the Rue d'Elverdinghe became even more important once St. George's Memorial Church was completed in March 1928. For many visitors it was as much part of the experience of being in Ypres as the Menin Gate, as revealed by a veteran on pilgrimage in 1930: "Up betimes on Sunday morning, and to the Church of St. George, for Holy Communion. Our hearts filled with pride as we entered the warriors' church, its windows filled with insignia of gallant regiments who fought and suffered to keep this old town inviolate".²⁵ Within wartime Ypres the routes into the city and back out into the Salient converged in one place, the Menin Gate.²⁶ It was not always clear that a memorial would be built at the site of the original city gate, despite Henry Beckles Willson's attempts to secure it as a Canadian battle exploit memorial in his time as Town Major.²⁷ Once the site was selected as the location for one of the Memorials to the Missing of the Salient the historical narrative of the place fundamentally shaped the architectural response.

22. *Ypres et les batailles d'Ypres/Ypres and the Battles of Ypres* (Claremont-Ferrand, 1919), p. 48-49.

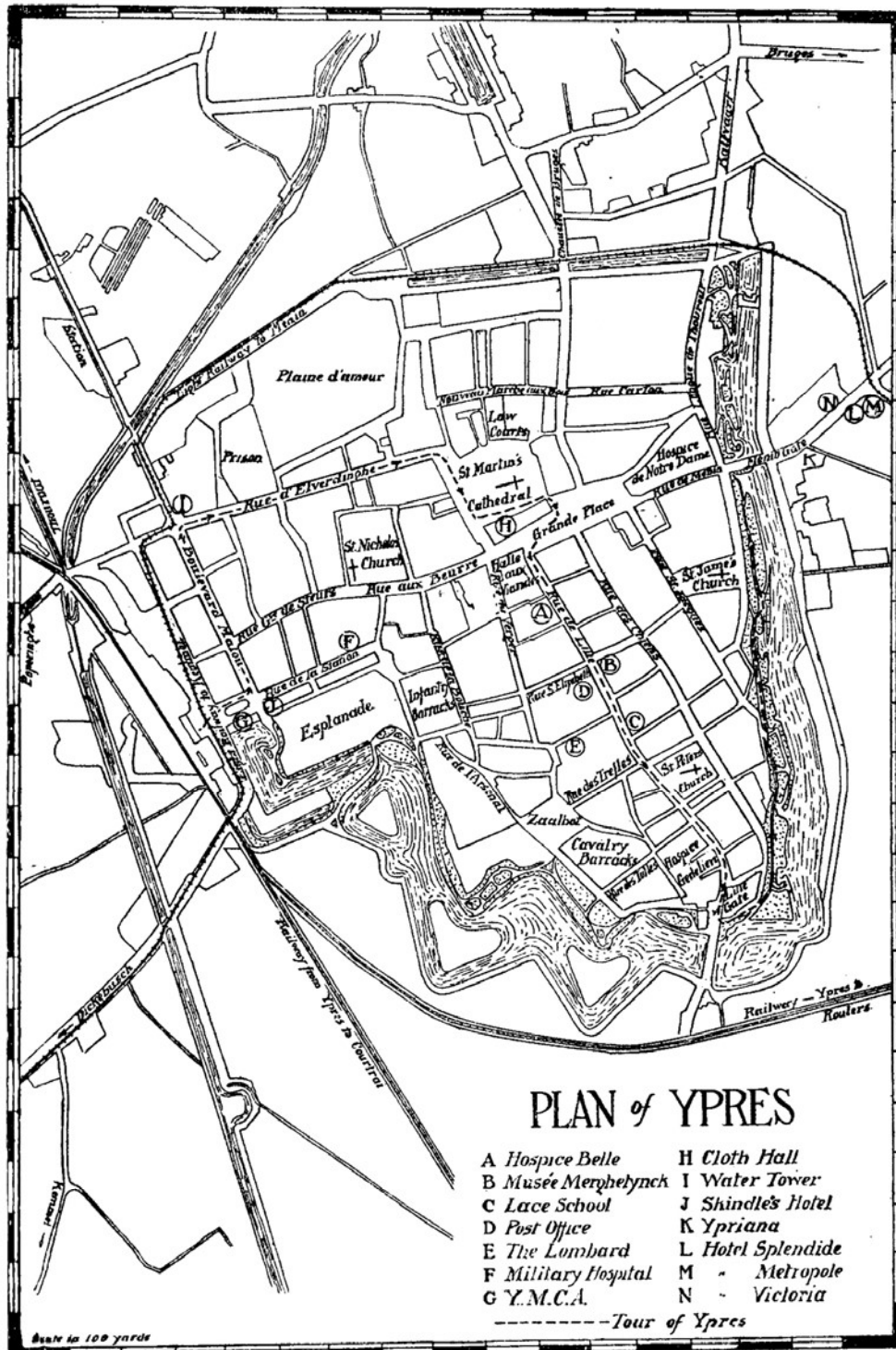
23. Lieutenant-General Sir WILLIAM PULTENEY and BEATRIX BRICE, *The Immortal Salient. An Historical Record and Complete Guide for Pilgrims to Ypres* (London, 1925), p. 80.

24. *Pilgrim's Guide*, p. 53.

25. *Ypres Times*, Vol 5, No. 2, April 1930, p. 42.

26. Albeit a metaphorical association, there were other routes out to the frontlines of the Salient via other gates, but the Menin Gate was the one that projected eastward and directly along the axis of intended advance.

27. For more detailed discussion on the post-war memorial battleground of Ypres see CONNELLY and GOEBEL, *Ypres*.



Plan of Ypres from The Pilgrim's Guide to the Ypres Salient (London, 1920).

The nature of the Menin Gate has been contentious from its unveiling. The war poet Siegfried Sassoon, in a poem laced with vitriol towards the memorial and its form as a triumphal arch, infamously termed it the 'sepulchre of crime'.²⁸ However, as Dominiek Dendooven points out, the idea that the Menin Gate can be considered a triumphal arch purely based on its form, is undermined by the architecture and the detailing, specifically the use of the empty coffin to crown the Ypres-side archway.²⁹ There is another aspect to the architectural treatment of the memorial and that is the central function of the path within the structure. In February 1918 the architect of the Menin Gate, Sir Reginald Blomfield, issued a memorandum outlining an approach to the architectural treatment of the cemeteries for use by the IWGC's cadre of Junior Architects.³⁰ Within this memorandum Blomfield made it clear that the retention of the historical narrative of the site should come before any other architectural or design principle. At the Menin Gate, Blomfield adhered to his own principle, the route that passes through the gate contains the historical significance of the site, and in turn gave the memorial and the lists of names such emotive power. In architectural form Blomfield states that this was the point where the personal histories of each man, alive or dead, diverged into the shell hole-ridden landscape beyond Ypres. Not only did Blomfield's design ensure the history of the site was retained, it also enabled pilgrims to make the same journey as the soldiers who tramped through this gap in the ramparts on their way to the battlefield for four years. In spite of the feelings of Sassoon's poem, Blomfield's design ensured that no one could bypass the memorial, instead progression through it as part of a route was essential to the overall effect. In the context of this article, it shows the IWGC's clear recognition and understanding of the central importance of the path in the creation of a memorial: sites such as the Menin Gate were consciously conceived as links in a chain designed to interpret the entire

landscape. In addition to its function as a memory site, the Menin Gate also continued the axes of memory that ensured pilgrims passed from the channel ports, through Poperinghe, Vlamertinghe and the outskirts of Ypres, to the defining path of the salient, the Menin Road. The dual importance of this route in both practical and pilgrimage terms was evident in the painted wall advertisement in Ypres' western suburbs on the Poperinghe road. It provided details of the British Legion's Haig House Tea Room on the square in Ypres, highlighting its information services, poppy wreaths, luncheons and teas. The British Legion understood that this west-to-east axis was *the* pilgrim route, and was therefore the best place to inform visitors of its presence in the town.

As the hub point for a series of roads and communications networks radiating out in all directions, Ypres offered visitors many different ways to explore its surroundings. Others then used this foundation to offer suggested routes. One of the most assiduous creators of pathways of remembrance across the Ypres battlefields was the Ypres League. Founded in 1921 by the journalist and writer, Henry Beckles Willson who had served on the staff of the Canadian Corps during the conflict and was town major of Ypres in 1919, and Beatrix Brice, poet and enthusiastic propagandist for the original BEF, the League was dedicated to maintaining the sacred aura Ypres had achieved during the war. Committed to the idea of battlefield pilgrimage, the League produced a series of publications outlining the wartime history of each location on the battlefield. Additionally, it oversaw the erection of a series of signposts with information boards marking key sites. The combined effect of these projects was the creation of a plethora of routes across the entire Ypres front, but it was a remembrance trail that privileged particular perspectives and ways of conceiving the battlefield. The League's signboards included among its list sites none but the most enthusiastic of Great War

28. SIEGFRIED SASSOON, 'On Passing the New Menin Gate', *War Poems* (London, 1983), p. 153.

29. DENDOOVEN, *Ypres as Holy Ground*, p. 71.

30. CWGC 1/1/5/3 A Report on the Cemeteries of the British Expeditionary Force, February 1918 by REGINALD BLOMFIELD.

historians and buffs would recognise today, and yet they were clearly considered notable at the time. They were pathways and routes of remembrance created from a tapestry of memory vivid in detail and colour because it was informed by veterans and their families who held dear a much greater range of sites than the average visitor of today. It took decades and the consequent fading of such personal connections to alter the scales and focus of these original routes. The most obvious effect of the signboards was to ensure that the landscape continued to be labelled and read according to the wartime nicknames and anglicised versions used by the army. Of the forty signposts, only three retained their Belgian names, Nonne Bosschen, Polderhoek Chateau and Gheluvelt Wood. The temporary Tommy semiology and taxonomy of the war was solidified, and were further driven home by British newspaper reportage of all visits to such sites which insisted on using these terms.³¹

The vast majority of these signposts were clustered in the Salient, as opposed to the wider Ypres front stretching down to Ploegsteert with only one, that at La Plus Douve (where there were two IWGC cemeteries), being south of Wytschaete, the southern hinge point of the Salient. Further, there was intense clustering around Polygon Wood, the district around St Julien, and between the Menin Road at Hooge running down to the canal near Spoilbank. This meant a focus on the engagements of 1914 along the Menin Road, the actions of 1914 and 1917 around Polygon Wood, and the fighting in 1915 around St Julien. Less attention was paid to the battle of Messines, and no attention at all to an event now very much part of the modern memory of the war, the 1914 Christmas truce. Explaining fully the League's privileging of certain sites

over others is difficult, particularly given its close association with Field Marshal Plumer. Although Plumer was intimately connected with all the major battles fought around Ypres, he achieved his greatest triumph in June 1917 when he masterminded the successful capture of the Messines ridge. After the war, when Plumer was elevated to the peerage, it was natural that he should wish to perpetuate the connection with those actions and he took the title Lord Plumer of Messines. The League therefore had an influential patron whose reputation was associated with the wider Ypres front, and yet it remained largely indifferent to a broader geographical conception of the battlefield. The imbalance of the focus is also difficult to understand given the League's equal interest in the original cohort of the British Expeditionary Force, the so-called 'Old Contemptibles', which fought across the Ypres front in the first battle of 1914. It was perhaps the sheer aura that surrounded the term the 'Ypres Salient', which had become so embedded in the Britannic world through its constant repetition in wartime discourse, that kept the League so dedicated to one particular zone of the Ypres battlefields.

The Immortal Salient provided thirteen routes, some of which were broken down into variants. Route I formed a rough semi-circle moving north along the Yperlee canal, across to Langemarck, then east via Poelcappelle and Westroosebeke to Passchendaele. From here it snaked in a south-easterly direction to Broodseinde and Nieuwe Kruiseecke (a place now almost totally ignored) and then back to the Menin Road. Route II was Ypres to Pilckem, including two variants, both of which linked back to Route I. The third was Ypres to Poelcappelle with one variant, while

31. For the full list see *Ypres Times*, Vol. 2, No. 2, April 1924, p. 53; Vol. 2, No. 8, October 1925, p. 220. Tommy cemetery names also created their own discrete axes of remembrance. There were the three great curiosities of Dozinghem, Bandingham and Mendinghem. All three were field hospital sites and their names were typical pieces of soldier humour, as they blended an impression of Flemish place names with the medical functions of dosing casualties with medicines and analgesics (Dozinghem), dressing wounds (Bandeghem) and returning to health (Mendinghem). The names thus created a mini-circuit of remembrance in their own right. For a study of soldiers' nicknames for places see Ross Wilson, "'Tommifying' the Western Front, 1914-1918", *Journal of Historical Geography*, no. 3 (37), 2011, p. 338-347. The immense focus on Hell Fire Corner and the demarcation stone provides an excellent example of the constant repetition of a wartime name. For examples of the coverage see *Belfast News-Letter*, 8 March 1924; *Western Daily Press*, 6 August 1923, *South Notts Echo*, 30 July 1927.

the fourth went down to Broodseinde through Potijze, Zonnebeke and Polygon Wood. Route V ran along the Menin Road to Dadizeele with two variants. One ran southwards from Hell Fire Corner to Sanctuary Wood, and the second went north along the path of Cambridge Road (as it was marked on trench maps). Two routes then took in the district between Zillebeke and Hollebeke including Hill 60 and Battle Wood. Route VIII ran in the direction of Armentières moving eastwards from St. Eloi going via Oost-taverne through Gappard to Warneton and thence from Houplines to Armentières. The next also terminated in Armentières via Saint Eloi, Wytshaete, Messines and Ploegsteert, without any reference to the Christmas Truce, through Le Bizet to Armentières; a variant via Messines to Neuve Eglise was offered as part of this route. The notable element of the Armentières routes is their length and number of places included. When compared with the more clustered, overlapping and detailed pathways across the northern section of the Salient and those hugging the Menin Road, the distinct weighting towards particular sections of the battlefields becomes obvious. Routes X to XIII also ran south-west taking in Vierstraat and Kemmel, and included a variant from De Seule to Armentières, which it is difficult to imagine anyone opting to take now. Those stretching behind the lines were also possibly of more interest to veterans wishing to seek out old places of rest, camps and billeting, and included a route running as far as Bailleul, a town many veterans remembered fondly for its range of diversions when out of the line.³²

Seven of the thirteen were therefore firmly in the Salient. But this clustering was by no means unique to the Ypres League, and nor did it invent it. *The Pilgrim's Guide to the Ypres Salient* (1920), suggested six routes, of which only one ran much

further south than St. Eloi, this being a route to Kemmel via Dickebusch.³³

The northerly and Menin Road 'corridor' focus was thus a common element. It was underlined in *The Immortal Salient* by the order in which it categorised its routes radiating outwards from Ypres. The first listed were those "to the north and are described one after the other right round east, south, west, and north again". Deviations from the main routes were offered at certain junction point crossroads described using the military term as "debouches".³⁴ These routes also privileged the direct military confrontation and the immediate British military hinterland. German-occupied Belgium and the experiences of local people were of little interest to the League, as the guide made clear: "South-east of a line Gheluwe-Armentières only important roads are marked [on its tourist map], as there is nothing of interest to visit in that quarter."³⁵ Each route was then conceived as a series of different sights and sites, which meant an equally varied intellectual and emotional experience. Route I provides a typical example. It consisted of twenty-three points, ten were cemeteries, four were British and Empire unit memorials, the Guynemer memorial, one demarcation stone, the pillbox lines at Pilckem, and one Ypres League signpost.

The Immortal Salient was a very successful guide-book requiring four printings in a year. Doubtless encouraged by this success, Brice and Pulteney collaborated on a follow-up, *Ypres – Outpost of the Channel Ports*. Published in 1929 in a handy pocket-sized edition, its subtitle made its nature clear, *A concise historical guide to the Salient of Ypres*.

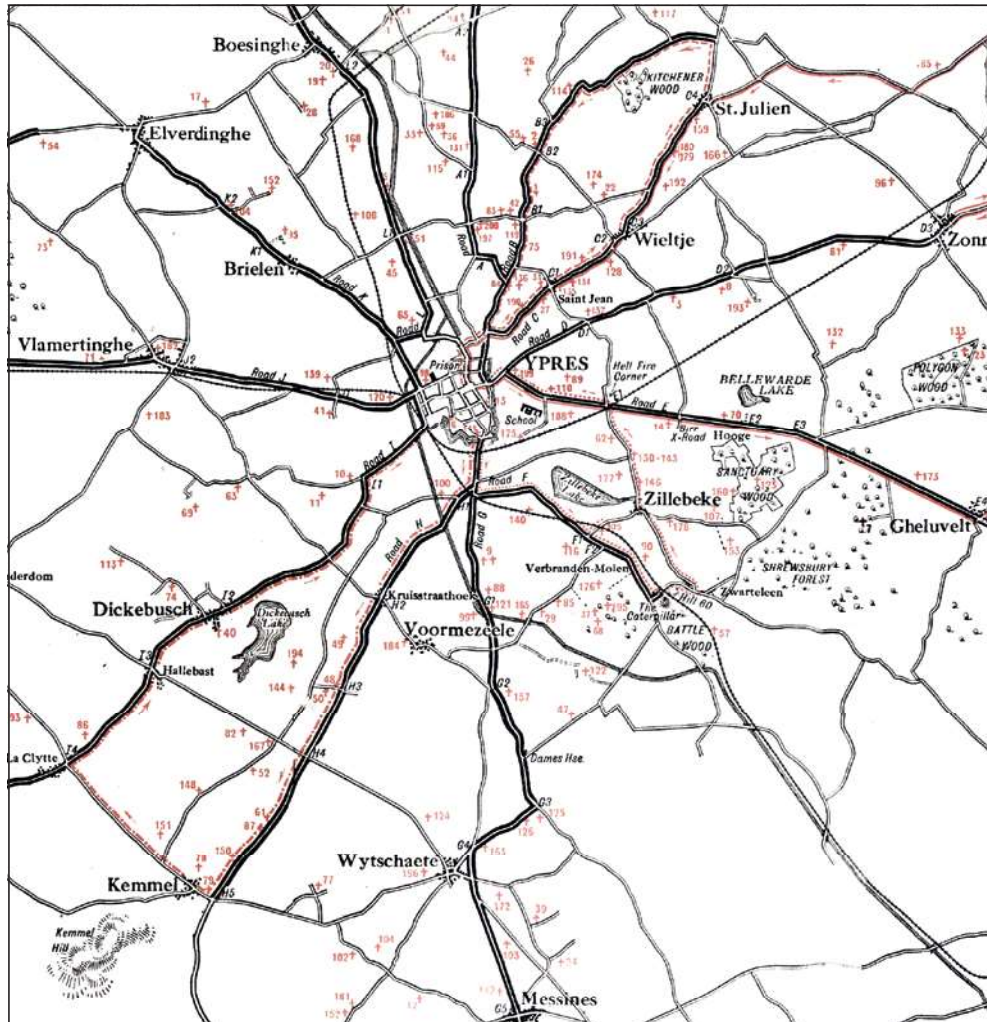
Lacking the depth of *The Immortal Salient*, it took a more broad-brush approach and highlighted seven routes. Two ran north of the Menin Road,

32. For examples see Captain ATHERTON FLEMING, *How to See the Battlefields* (London, 1919), p. 13; *Ypres Times*, Vol. 5 No. 5, January 1931, p. 13.

33. *The Pilgrim's Guide to the Ypres Salient* (London, 1920), p. 53-62.

34. PULTENEY and BRICE, *The Immortal Salient*, p. 22.

35. PULTENEY and BRICE, *The Immortal Salient*, p. 22.



Map of the battlefields from *The Pilgrim's Guide to the Ypres Salient* (London, 1920). Note the exclusion of the section Messines to Ploegsteert in this map.

and one hugged its southern fringe, one covered Poperinghe to Ypres, and three were firmly focused on the southern sector of the battlefield spilling beyond the strict limits of the Salient. These routes moved very much in a south-westerly direction taking in Wytschaete, Messines, Loche and on across the border to Bailleul. But once again, this meant a very light touch on Ploegsteert with the memorial and cemetery mentioned only in passing and with little comment on the area.³⁶

Wishing to avoid being overly prescriptive, and doubtless aware that all visitors would bring their own agenda, *The Immortal Salient* made it clear that it was not providing “suggested tours”, but a series of routes with “every detail of interest” along each road, as well as sketching in the history of the surrounding landscape. The suggestions made also included thematic elements which could provide the core of an itinerary. Thus, it noted the best places to gain panoramic views of the battlefields from the north (Pilckem Ridge), the east (Tyne Cot cemetery), and the south (Hill 60 and Mont Kemmel) with the best central spot being Clapham Junction on the Menin Road.³⁷ For those interested in trenches, it was Bellewaerde Ridge, Observatory Ridge and Sanctuary Wood, which meant a clustering running across the Menin Road at Hooze. Dugouts could still be found at Wytschaete, along the canal bank and at Ploegsteert near Hyde Park Corner. For tanks, Hooze and St. Julien were recommended, and Messines and Wytschaete were the best for mine craters. Of course, cemeteries were of huge importance and provided what might be called the emotional anchors, but these were interspersed with elements of tourist wonder in the form of craters, pill-boxes, and the remains of trenches and tanks. Historical interpretation came from a combination of aids used in conjunction with physical reference

points in the landscape. First was the League’s noticeboard sites. Secondly, the various commanding high points, but these only made sense if the person had a certain facility with maps and, perhaps, a compass. Finally, there were the cemeteries themselves, which were often built with a deliberate eye to interpretation of the landscape and contained useful historical details in the notes published in the registers.³⁸

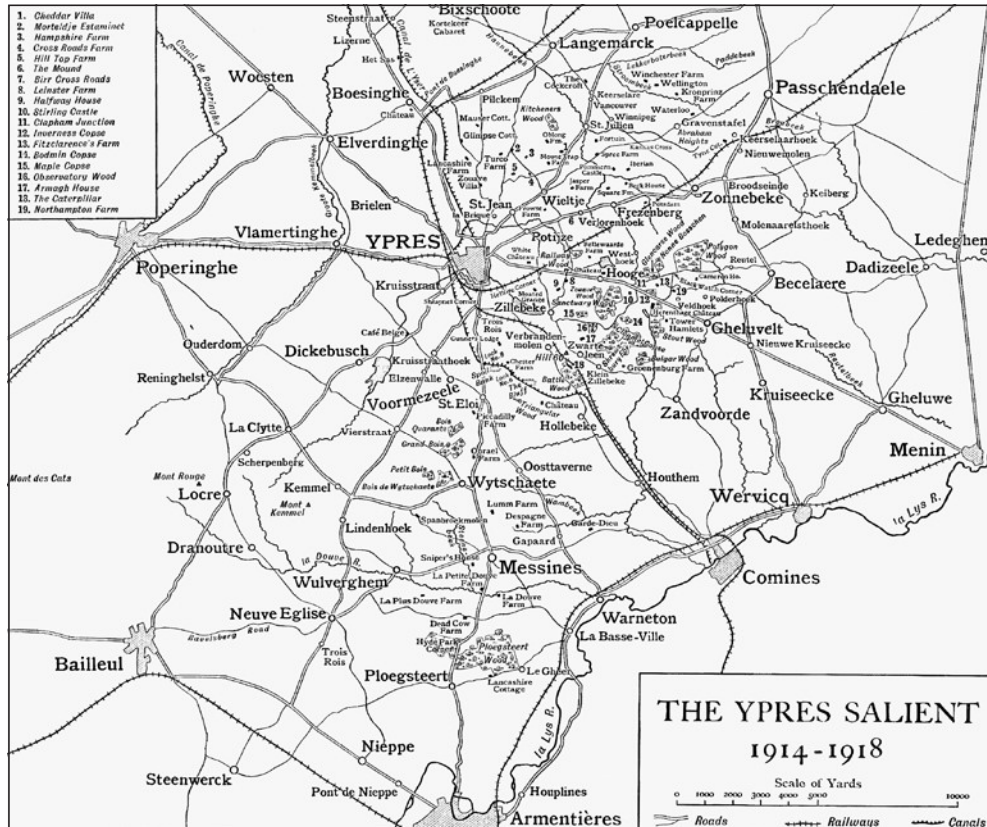
As has been stressed, the common element in creating the routes of remembrance in the twenties and thirties was that the vast majority of people were not travelling in their own private car, and if they did use a motor vehicle, it would probably be with a driver and guide booked locally. For the charabanc tour operators, the ease of accessibility for motor vehicles was the key determinant of the route. A typical example was the service provided by the tourist excursions company, Red Cars of Blankenberghe, which offered a tour of the Ypres battlefields. Its itinerary was designed with the very clear intention of squeezing in as much as possible in one day. To achieve this required every site to be easily accessible to motor-vehicles, which in turn meant an itinerary designed around the best quality roads. As it started out from the well-established seaside town, its line of approach allowed for the inclusion of some Belgian army sites such as the observation post at Clercken and Houthulst Forest. It was then on to Poelcappelle for the ruined tanks and the Guynemer memorial, next was the Canadian memorial at St. Julian before pressing on to Hell Fire Corner, Shrapnel Corner and Hill 60. Then it was into Ypres for lunch and a quick visit to the Cloth Hall ruins and Menin Gate before the return via Essex Farm Cemetery, Boesinghe, Dixmude and two more Belgian sites, Pervyse and Nieuport for the “interesting fortifications”, and then “home along the sea front”.³⁹ Red Cars,

36. BEATRIX BRICE (with the assistance of Lieutenant-General Sir William Pulteney), *Ypres – Outpost of the Channel Ports. A Concise Historical Guide to the Salient of Ypres* (London, 1929).

37. PULTENEY and BRICE, *The Immortal Salient*, p. 23.

38. See TIM GODDEN, ‘Designing Memory: The Junior Architects of the Imperial War Graves Commission and the Creation of a Spatial Memorial in the British War Cemeteries on the Western Front’, (Unpublished PhD, Canterbury, School of Architecture and Planning, University of Kent, 2019).

39. ‘Red Cars of Blankenberghe’ promotional leaflet c. 1925. (Authors’ collection.)



Ypres League map from Beatrix Brice and Lieutenant-General Sir William Pulteney, *Ypres – Outpost of the Channel Ports* (London, 1929).

like many similar operations with long experience in the tourist trade, created an itinerary designed purely for profit. It undoubtedly gave visitors great value for money in terms of quantity, even if such a tour meant little more than the most fleeting of stops at each place. Although many visitors did use such services, they often did so alongside their own independent explorations. This meant many people were reliant on foot or bicycle, often in combination with local bus and light railway connections. In turn, this restricted what a visitor might achieve in any one day and thus encouraged more detailed exploration of a fewer number of sites and places. It was a phenomenon reinforced further by the fact that visitors, whether veterans, their relatives, or relatives of the dead, were highly likely to be interested in particular places connected with their personal or family history and experiences. Combining their own interests with the suggested routes of the guidebooks, turned visitors into creators of their own routes and circuits of remembrance. When these visitors were part of particular groups, such as a regimental association, paths and ways were created which were then followed on return visits. As these routes became familiar through repetition, certain sites, and ways between them, gained their own peculiar status. This process formed what might be called 'micro-geographies' of remembrance within the larger memorial landscape.⁴⁰

When two veterans of the 6 King's Shropshire Light Infantry visited Ypres in the spring of 1930, they very much devoted themselves to old haunts and sites related to their battalion. They started their tour walking up the Menin Road to Railway Wood to search for traces of their old trenches, and on the following day went to Vlamertinghe British Cemetery to visit the graves of old comrades. Poperinghe and its environs were then visited to search out their old billets. An essential part of the trip was Langemarck to see their divisional memorial, which was particularly interesting, as "our old battalion had a large share in the capturing of this place in 1917". On their last day, the magnetic appeal

of a micro-geography of personal remembrance exerted itself and they returned to Hooze and back to Railway Wood. However, the easy accessibility of the site, either on foot or by the steam-tram and bus, may also have been a factor. The specificity of their routes and pathways of remembrance was made clear in their account written for the *Ypres Times*, the journal of the Ypres League: "We had not visited Hill 60, and many other famous spots, because we confined our pilgrimage to places we knew in the war days. We were satisfied that our programme had been fulfilled; nothing remained but to return to England, our minds freshly stored with memories of wonderful, if terrible, days."⁴¹ Yet even this seemingly 'pure' pilgrimage also contained visits to the "many famous spots" including the Menin Gate, Tyne Cot and Essex Farm cemeteries and the Canadian memorial at Hill 62.

For members of Toc H, the Christian fellowship initiated by the former army chaplain, the Reverend P.B. ('Tubby') Clayton, Poperinghe was the central focus. This small town, some eight miles (13 kilometres) from Ypres, was the main hub for British troops operating on the Flanders front. It thus became home to the rest and recreation centre established by Clayton, which he named Talbot House, in honour of Gilbert Talbot, brother of his close collaborator, the Reverend Neville Talbot. Known as Toc H in army signals parlance, this particular formulation of its name quickly caught on and was commonly used by soldiers. After the war, Clayton transformed the aims and objectives of the centre into a Christian movement, which spread across the Empire. Dedicated to the maintenance of the wartime spirit of comradeship and self-sacrifice, Clayton and Toc H placed a great deal of emphasis on battlefield visiting as a way of keeping those qualities alive while also revealing their relevance to contemporary life. Such an aim made Toc H a central player in developing touring routes through its many publications. At the same time as producing generic information and suggested routes, Toc H also had specific routes of

40. For an exploration of the concept of 'micro-geographies' of remembrance see CONNELLY and GOEBEL, *Ypres*, p. 35-38, 93-108.

41. *Ypres Times*, Vol. 5, No. 2, April 1930, p. 40-45.

remembrance of its own, which related to the history of the organisation during the war. A pamphlet produced by Clayton during the Second World War, *The Salient Facts*, outlined the key locations in the Toc H narrative.⁴² It includes some of the core sites, including Tyne Cot and the Canadian Memorial at St. Julien, but it also foregrounded places such as the grave of Archie Forrest, the first communicant in the old hop loft. In addition, the Lone Tree Crater at Spanbroekmolen, acquired for Toc H by Lord Wakefield and subsequently named the Pool of Peace, was marked, as well as Dingley Dell, the place Talbot House was briefly relocated to in the spring of 1918. The frontispiece then served to reinforce the preferred British approach to the Salient through a map clearly identifying the Poperinghe-Ypres axis as the principal route.

From their base in Poperinghe, Toc H pilgrims would often take public transport to Kemmel to gain a view over the battlefields before making their way back via Sanctuary Wood, which formed part of a particularly important micro-geography.⁴³ Sanctuary Wood was one corner in a rough triangle of sites starting at Hell-Fire Corner on the Menin Road stretching to Railway Wood, down through Hooze and Sanctuary Wood to Hill 60 and back to the Menin Road. Hell-Fire Corner was an iconic point and for many marked the moment of transition from the last element of the old 'behind the lines' into the actual space of the former battlefield. Its significance was reinforced by the demarcation stone erected by the Ypres League in 1923, which was deemed a piece of "sacred ground" by the local landowner, Baron de Vinck, who donated the site for the memorial.⁴⁴ Sanctuary Wood attracted attention due to its preserved trenches, and it sat

between the Canadian memorial on Hill 62 and Sanctuary Wood Cemetery. For Toc H pilgrims this cemetery was particularly important, for it contained the grave of Lieutenant Gilbert Talbot, the inspiration behind the name of the Poperinghe base. As was commented on the 1927 pilgrimage, "The evening rally of all the pilgrims was in a cemetery, too – there could be no other place for them than Sanctuary Wood."⁴⁵

From the sites at Sanctuary Wood, many then made their way to Hill 60, the richest, and most contested, micro-geography of the salient. A mound created by the spoil excavated for the construction of the railway line, it was the site of intense fighting throughout the war. By the end of the conflict it was a mass of trenches and craters, remnants of tunnels and tunnel entrances, and was topped by an impressive British pillbox constructed by Australian engineers. Due to the almost continual combat at Hill 60, it gained much media attention, and by the Armistice had become an icon of the British Empire's endurance and dedication to the defence of Ypres. As Beatrix Brice's 1927 *Battle Book of Ypres* commented: "Through the wild days of furious battle... the contest for the hill had been an epic of valour, when man met man in desperate fight; and the British soldier established his ascendancy over the Prussian and once more proved his capacity to stay it out to the bitter end, though tried to the uttermost."⁴⁶ With so many units having fought on and for the hill, it was a site which attracted memorial activity and resulted in monuments erected by the Queen Victoria's Rifles and the 1st Australian Tunnelling Company.⁴⁷ Additionally, in the ravaged, treeless countryside, Hill 60 stood out starkly, and being

42. Rev. G.H. WOOLLEY and Rev. P.B. CLAYTON, *The Salient Facts* (London, 1945).

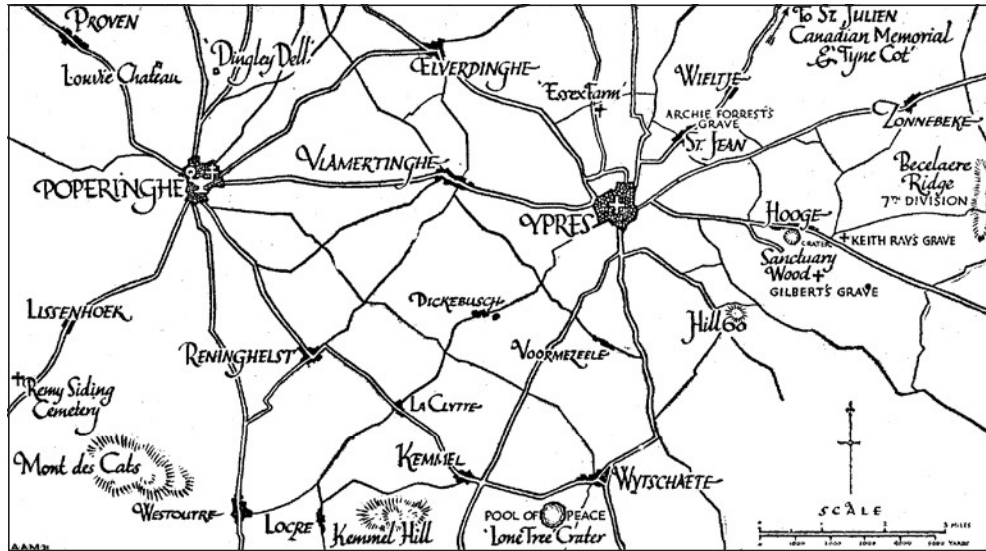
43. See *Toc H Magazine* pilgrimage coverage in Vol. IV, No. 10, October 1926, pp. 340-345; Vol. V, Nos 8 & 9, August 1927, p. 339-348; Vol. VII, No. 11, November 1929, pp. 358-365; Vol. IX, No. 9, August 1931, p. 311-314.

44. *Scotsman*, 8 August 1923, p. 4.

45. *Toc H Magazine*, Vol. V, Nos 8 & 9, August 1927, p. 347.

46. BEATRIX BRICE, *The Battle Book of Ypres* (London, 1927), p. 99.

47. For the discussions and memorial plans for Hill 60 see TNA WO 32/3138 Memorials and Graves: War Memorials, Hill 60. J.J. Calder's presentation to the nation for memorial; WO 32/5890 Memorials and Graves: 9th Queen Victoria's Rifles, London Regiment, at Hill 60, Ypres, Belgium; CWGC/1/1/10/B/29 Battle Exploits Memorial 1/22 London Regiment (The Queen's); 1/1/10/B/67 Battle Exploits Memorial 1st Australian Tunnelling Company – Hill 60; 1/1/15/31 Gifts – Hill 60 – Press cuttings only.



Map of the battlefields from G.H. Woolley and P.B. Clayton (for Toc H), *The Salient Facts* (London: 1945).
 Note the exclusion of the section Messines to Ploegsteert in this map.

so close to the Menin Road and Sanctuary Wood, almost inevitably became a magnet for visitors.

With immense rapidity Hill 60 evolved into a 'must see' location and brought together both the overt tourist and the more deeply motivated pilgrim. With so much to see and so many war-time obstacles making exploration of the site a challenge, a web of paths and tracks emerged. It was made more complicated by the fact that the hill was not one parcel of land but divided between multiple owners, each of whom realised they had a money-spinning opportunity and so sought to control access to their own section whilst enhancing its attractions. Hill 60's routes of remembrance were, therefore, a complex mix of commercial and commemorative as tunnel entrances were excavated and the tunnels made accessible, dugouts propped up, at least one small museum and associated café opened, and souvenir stalls in abundance. Such an atmosphere soon attracted critical comment. Writer and veteran Henry Williamson was disgusted by Hill 60, and angered by the children waving collecting boxes trying to charge every visitor a fee for simply wandering along the track towards the hill. Others complained of the clearly fake trenches and equally fake souvenirs on sale at every stall.⁴⁸ Brice described it as "now desecrated beyond any place in the Salient by horrible erections of booths and shanties".⁴⁹ Such was the scandal over the hill that a wealthy British businessman bought it and presented it to the nation.⁵⁰ The IWGC was then made responsible for the site, and one of its first acts was to consider visitor access with the intention of taking people away from the trenches and tunnels, presumably for reasons of safety and the doubtful authenticity of some, while still allowing exploration and contemplation.⁵¹

Cemeteries as axes of remembrance and interpreters of the landscape

As the Robert Macfarlane quote given earlier in the article shows, paths and memory are inherently connected. Within the context of the battlefield pilgrim, more specifically that of the bereaved relative, the cemeteries of the former Ypres Salient functioned as the end of a path. They were the destination that reconnected the pilgrim with the lost loved one. For the Reverend Matthew Mullineux, wartime army chaplain and founder of the pilgrimage organisation St. Barnabas Hostels, cemeteries very definitely fulfilled this function as the termination point of the pilgrimage-path, and for him were often the only features in the landscape worthy of consideration. Mullineux's organisation was utterly devoted to the task of bringing impecunious relatives to see the graves of their lost loved ones, and its first major group pilgrimage came in 1923 for the formal opening and dedication of Lijssenthoek Cemetery near Poperinghe. (In a quirk only seen in the Talbot House literature, this cemetery was known by its original wartime name of Remy Siding Cemetery.) Following the ceremony, the pilgrims were driven to Ypres for lunch after which they were "taken to a great number of outlying cemeteries" enabling each person to see "at last the grave of husband, son or father".⁵² This represented "a miracle of organisation" for "the whole 850 pilgrims were taken to visit each the grave which was the goal of the pilgrimage".⁵³ As for the meaning at the heart of the pilgrimage, the reporter for the *Yorkshire Post* had it impressed upon him by an old woman who told him: "'I can rest content, now I've seen the grave of my lad.' Her shining eyes testified to the depth of yearning which had at length been satisfied, and it was with the same spirit of affecting resignation that others got up

48. HENRY WILLIAMSON, *The Wet Flanders Plain* (London, 1929), p. 93-95; *Daily Mail*, 17, 19, 30 September 1930.

49. BEATRIX BRICE (with the assistance of Lieutenant-General Sir WILLIAM PULTENEY), *Ypres – Outpost of the Channel Ports. A Concise Historical Guide to the Salient of Ypres* (London, 1929), p. 3.

50. TNA WO 32/3138 Hill 60; CWGC1/1/15/31 Gifts – Hill 60.

51. CWGC/2/2/1/132 Commission meeting no. 132, 23 July 1930.

52. St. Barnabas Hostels, *St. Barnabas Pilgrimages Ypres, The Somme, 1923* (London, 1923), p. 19.

53. *St. Barnabas Pilgrimages, 1923*, p. 13.

from where they had been kneeling upon the turf and moved quietly away.”⁵⁴

Within the cemeteries themselves, the architects of the IWGC took immense care with access paths and routes through the cemetery spaces, and in some cases reinforced this through the use of the built architecture, to create processional ways that suggested the end of a journey.⁵⁵ For both the bereaved pilgrim and the returning veteran the cemetery served as a liminal space. For the pilgrim it was the cross over between the land of the living and the afterlife. For the returning veteran, however, the cemetery represented another part of the journey. In his study of the peregrine falcon, J. A. Baker noted how the birds navigated through landscapes by a “succession of remembered symmetries”.⁵⁶ These symmetries are unnoticed by the human eye, they are not even necessarily physical marks on the landscape, but marks on the mind. This abstract perception of the landscape is expanded to suggest that the peregrine views the world in a series of black and white maps. The cemetery, in the experience of the returning veteran, made tangible the mind marks and enabled the succession of symmetries to be recreated. The trench map of their memory unfolded over the landscape and filled in the gaps between cemetery, memorial and other waymarkers. Engaging with the cemeteries from this important perspective opens up understandings of their function within the landscape often overlooked in the historiography of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

In Ploegsteert Wood, the retained cemeteries were designed to form part of the historical narrative, but central to their emotive resonance was the designed inclusion of the path in the creation of a wider landscape memorial. This meant that the IWGC’s architects drew upon routes and paths

laid down during the conflict itself. During the war, Ploegsteert Wood was a mesh of communication routes, beginning as corduroy paths and, as they neared the front line, turned into trenches. The wood was a constant hive of activity throughout the conflict with most units of the BEF passing through at some point. However, there is one unit particularly associated with the wood - the London Rifle Brigade (LRB). The LRB was a territorial unit made up predominantly of bankers and clerks employed in the City of London, and one of the so-called class battalions of The London Regiment, where a certain level of education was a prerequisite for membership of the unit.

The LRB arrived in Belgium in late 1914 and immediately began to shape the landscape of Ploegsteert Wood. Being a Territorial unit, it was attached to a Regular army battalion, the 1st Somerset Light Infantry, and duly given the responsibility of laying out and improving the communication routes from the rear areas up to the front line which passed through the wood. The LRB carried out extensive work in the wood and surrounding areas, naming each area after London streets in the process. The combination of the official work of the battalion and the additional unofficial use of cartographers from within the educated-ranks of the LRB to improve the trench maps of the sector, left a mark on the landscape that lasted for the remainder of the war.⁵⁷ By the end of the war the White Cross Touring Atlas, which was published prior to the formal concentration of burial sites, listed twenty-six separate cemeteries integrated into the tangle of London street names and other paths that had emerged.⁵⁸

In the immediate post-war period the concentration of cemeteries, through a combination of retention and creation, resulted in eight cemeteries within

54. St. Barnabas *Pilgrimages*, 1923, p. 15.

55. Track X, Maple Copse, and Woods cemeteries, all within the Ypres Salient, have varying types of processional path as part of the design.

56. JOHN ALEC BAKER, *The Peregrine* (London, 1967).

57. See K.W. MITCHINSON, *Gentlemen and Officers, The Impact and Experience of War on a Territorial Regiment, 1914-1918* (London, 1995).

58. ALEXANDER GROSS, *Whitecross Touring Atlas of the Western Battlefields* (London, n.d.[c.1921]).

or on the immediate outskirts of the wood. Central to the retention of these battlefield cemeteries in their original locations was the issue of access. By the careful selection of cemeteries in the concentration process, the IWGC achieved two important permanent effects on the landscape: a cluster of cemeteries that enabled the original geometries of the tracks and trenches to be retained as access to the cemeteries, and enough woodland to retain more of the original geometries to be kept as forestry tracks.⁵⁹ The result was that both the nomenclature of the wartime landscape, through the cemetery naming, and the geometries of the battlefield were enshrined as part of the space.

The importance of the path in the creation of this memorial landscape was emphasised further in two of the retained cemeteries: Strand Military Cemetery and Toronto Avenue Cemetery. In both instances, the original wartime path overlapped directly with architectural intervention at the entrance of the cemetery. Macfarlane notes that paths have an ability to transcend time-based boundaries and retain memory, saying of them that it is “as if time had somehow pleated back on itself, bringing continuous moments into contact, and creating historical correspondences”.⁶⁰ This interaction between the cemetery architecture and the landscape of the trench maps created a spatial and temporal exchange entirely dependent on the movement along a path. In both cases, this relationship was further established by the retention of the name of the original path in the cemetery title. For the returning veteran, the cemetery may well have provided the same function as for the pilgrim, but it also served as the place where the past and present met, enabling the veil of memory draped over the surrounding landscape to be lifted.

In his introduction to the hundredth anniversary rerelease of *The South Country*, Robert Macfarlane describes Edward Thomas as the great twentieth century writer of the path.⁶¹ Thomas’s prescient line from his poem ‘Roads’, writing his own elegy, said that “All roads now lead to France”.⁶² This referred to the mystical call of the battlefield to young men, but it is equally pertinent to those grieving families who wished to visit the last landscapes of their fallen loved ones. If Thomas is to be considered the poet of the path, then a contemporary of his, Edmund Blunden, must surely be considered the poet of the trench. In both his poetry and his prose Blunden chronicled the pathways created by the trenches scraped and gouged into the landscapes of the Western Front, and in doing so he recorded the idiosyncratic naming of these specific paths. In one notable poem, ‘Trench Nomenclature’, Blunden took the reader on a journey through some of those trenches, including the line;

“The Great Wall of China rose,
a four foot breastwork,
fronting guns
That, when the word dropped,
beat at once its silly
ounces with brute tons...”⁶³

That the Wall of China trench should appear in this poem suggests its importance within the wartime landscape. Indeed, the trench maps, which in themselves were an attempt to codify transient paths, show the Wall of China to be a major thoroughfare for troops on their way to the frontline of the Ypres Salient. A cemetery was established near the trench in 1917. According to the diary of Ivor Bawtree, a photographer of the Graves Registration Unit, it was known as China Wall Farm Gar-

59. Understanding the concentration processes carried out by the Directorate of Graves Registration and Enquiry in partnership with the IWGC is a difficult process due to the destruction of the majority of DGRE papers. Only by careful comparison between the scraps of information available can the decision-making and thinking be interpreted. See TIM GODDEN, ‘Designing Memory: The Junior Architects of the Imperial War Graves Commission and the Creation of a Spatial Memorial in the British War Cemeteries on the Western Front’.

60. ROBERT MACFARLANE, *The Old Ways*, p. 22.

61. EDWARD THOMAS, *The South Country - introduced by Robert Macfarlane* (Wimborne Minster, 2009), p. 10.

62. EDWARD THOMAS, ‘Roads’, *Collected Poems* (London, 1920).

63. EDMUND BLUNDEN, *Undertones of War* (London, 1928) p. 302.

den Cemetery.⁶⁴ This cemetery was thus defined by and named after a path, albeit an entrenched one. The post-war architectural treatment of the cemetery also retained the name, but curiously added a reference to the unit that formed the cemetery, naming it “Perth Cemetery (China Wall)”. However, the architectural treatment also utilised the geometry of the Wall of China trench in the laying out of the rear wall. In addition, the processional way created by an avenue of trees was designed not to lead the eye to the headstones, but rather to the rear wall and to the path after which the cemetery was named. At Perth Cemetery (China Wall) the architect’s design drew the visitor through a memorial space and in doing so created a platform through which the battlefield could be viewed and understood.

This article has set out to consider the landscapes of the Ypres Salient as a palimpsest of routes and pathways of remembrance. It has considered how and why visitors to the battlefields in the twenties and thirties moved through the landscape, and the importance of the sites and spaces in British war remembrance. Through understanding the way individuals and groups moved through the landscape, by placing as much focus on the paths linking sites of practical importance, as well as personal and historical significance, we begin to understand the centrality of the whole landscape as a memorial site. We also see a way of moving through the landscape that was largely impervious to change. As cemeteries were given their final architectural and horticultural format and memorials completed, they were incorporated as stopping points and markers. In considering the

visitor journey as a whole, this article has shown how the formal response to creating memorial sites placed emphasis on the act of movement as much as on the act of site-specific remembrance. At places such as Ploegsteert Wood, the spaces in between, the paths real and remembered, created an understanding of the landscape as memorial. The design of the cemetery and memorial sites, rather than distinguishing them from the surrounding landscape, show how the space in between has the characteristics of a place. The key agents in this retention of place in the broader landscape were the interventions by a host of individuals and organisations, such as the Ypres League signpost project and its accompanying series of guidebooks. These served to highlight the importance of the micro-geography of the Salient, both in establishing a seemingly authentic experience for visitors, and in defining individual paths of memory. The combination of practical, generic and personal sites defined how individuals and groups evolved specific paths through the landscape. The paths created were underpinned by a core visitor framework that included transport, its forms and reach across the former battlefields, and accommodation. From this central matrix, the other sites and subsequent routes between them were defined by the individual. The consideration of these multitudinous paths of remembrance, then, represents a role for the whole landscape in the experience of visiting and revisiting the former Ypres Salient. The Holy Ground of Beckles Willson and the Ypres League, rather than being limited to the many but scattered sites of memory, lays like a veil over the whole landscape.⁶⁵

Mark Connelly is Professor of Modern History at the University of Kent. His main research and teaching interest is the First World War. He is particularly interested in the commemoration of the Great War, and is currently working on a book about battlefield tourism in the twenties and thirties. He also works closely with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, and, with Tim Godden, helped devise the tours around Ypres in the footsteps of the original visitors, which run from the Commission’s leper office. His recent publications include Ypres (OUP, 2018; with Stefan Goebel) and The British Army and the First World War (CUP, 2017; with Ian Beckett and Timothy Bowman).

64. Imperial War Museum, Documents 2496, Private Papers of I.L. Bawtree.

65. Note on place names: all place and street names have been spelt according to the common way they were cited by the British during the war and into the 1920s and 1930s.

Tim Godden is an artist and writer whose work focuses on elements of landscape and memory. He completed a PhD in Architecture at the Kent School of Architecture in 2020. His thesis looked at the relationship between British war cemetery architecture and the landscape of the old Western Front in creating a spatial memorial. His visual work is intrinsically linked to his academic study, be that directly in the imaginings of intimate moments in the trenches, or the layers of memory that cover the whole landscape. He has previously published on landscape, memory and battlefield tourism.