

Reflections on Ypres' centenary: An interview with Piet Chielens and Dominiek Dendooven

Piet Chielens, Dominiek Dendooven, Matthew Haultain-Gall and Delphine Lauwers

The imposing Ypres Cloth Hall is one of the most emblematic buildings of 1914–1918 and it stands at the symbolic heart of the salient. It also embodies the tripartite “First World War product” around which Flemish authorities marketed the centenary in Flanders¹. It is a site of memory, a canvas for commemorative events and houses one of the most important First World War museums in the region: the In Flanders Fields Museum (IFFM). Working alongside their colleagues in Ypres’ tourism department, the IFFM’s staff marshalled local commemorative initiatives throughout the centenary years. We were fortunate enough to sit down (virtually) with two key figures from this institution who have dedicated their lives to furthering the wider public’s understanding of the First World War: Piet Chielens (IFFM Director) and Dominiek Dendooven (Senior Researcher). The result was a candid and enlightening discussion reflecting on the centenary’s successes and shortcomings, the role of various stakeholders and the future prospects for commemoration in Flanders Fields.

What were your expectations before the centenary commemorations kicked off?

Did the centenary meet these expectations?

Piet Chielens: We did a lot of forward planning so we already knew that there would be considerable interest from all countries involved. Most of them approached us during the build-up. But, personally, I felt it was absolutely vital to acknowledge

the pronounced sense of ownership relating to the First World War that exists locally. There was a real danger that this local aspect would be overlooked in the official commemorative events and I stressed very early on that if commemoration failed to appeal to and involve locals, then we could not call the centenary a success at Ypres. After all, the IFFM is not an academic institution, but is an institution of and for Ypres; our first preoccupation was the local. In the end, both local and international involvement was a constant throughout.

So, the local was central, but how exactly did you gauge ‘success’ in reaching this type of audience and more generally?

Dominiek Dendooven: Visitor numbers are one such measure. We noticed that the centenary actually started in 2013 if you look at the numbers of visitors flooding through the IFFM’s doors. So, the boom in public interest began in 2013 before reaching a peak in 2014. Then things slowed down a bit, but there was an increase again in 2017–2018.

P.C.: In addition to the visitor numbers, those of us at the museum have always aimed to take an inclusive approach to history and this is particularly fruitful when commemoration can inspire further research. In Dominiek’s case, it led to him writing a PhD on Indian and Chinese involvement in the First World War². The centenary was rewarding in this respect because it served to bring new aspects to light. Viewed in this way, it was very successful; it raised new questions and greater awareness which was shared among the broader public.

D.D.: There was an enormous bottom up movement, especially from individual families who expressed considerable interest even if they had never been drawn to the history of the First World War. They wanted to know what happened to their ancestors during the conflict. Responding to their requests has become more and more a part of the

1. MÉLANIE BOST AND CHANTAL KESTELOOT, “Les commémorations du centenaire de la Première Guerre mondiale”, *Courrier hebdomadaire du CRISP*, no. 2235–2236, 2014, p. 29

2. DOMINIEK DENDOOVEN, *De vergeten soldaten van de Eerste Wereldoorlog*. Berchem, 2019; *Asia in Flanders Fields. Indians and Chinese on the Western Front, 1914-1920*, Barnsley, forthcoming.

museum's core business. I can't say how many people exactly approached us during the centenary, but it was in the thousands.

P.C.: This is due to the fact that people are much more interested in *histories* than "History" with a capital "h". This search for local and family-related stories brings insight because individuals want to know everything there is to possibly know about just one small speck on the map or a particular relative. Through these little stories you encounter big issues. That is what makes it so fascinating and is one of the reasons for our success. So yes, responding to individuals' requests is our core business, but such targeted questions and small stories also sustain and inform our own research and lead us to broader questions. It's very much history that is alive in the present.

D.D.: It also makes you realise how many issues are yet to be addressed and raises the question as to why this is the case. For instance, how is it possible that there is only one PhD thesis³ on the Belgian refugees? We're talking about millions of people. If soldiers are often cast as heroes, the refugees are losers. Donald Buyze exemplifies the phenomenon Piet has explained. Buyze was drawn to the topic of the *Zivilarbeiter* – labourers forced to work by the Germans, of which thousands died⁴ – because one of his ancestors was such a labourer and when he started looking into this ancestor's experience, he found that nothing consequential had been written about them. There are even gaps in the military historiography of the war. The focus has always been on the men at the front, although half the forces involved were wor-

king behind the front line. If someone comes to us to ask about his grandfather who was in the artillery, it is very difficult to provide much information and it is even worse if the ancestor was in a transport company or a labourer. Historians have tended to overlook these people.

The centenary has provided the wider Belgian public with an impetus to research their ancestors and I have the impression that at least half, maybe even two thirds of the people who approached us for information between 2013 and 2018 were Belgians. And it was not only individual families, but also local historical organisations who realised that they did not know what happened to their communities between 1914 and 1918. And, of course, public involvement was not limited to bottom up interest in one's ancestor. I was really impressed with the scale of public participation in events like *Light Front*⁵ and *Coming World Remember Me*⁶ where people actively wanted to take part in cultural forms of commemoration.

Were these types of events planned with active public involvement in mind? That would have been quite a shift from more official forms of commemoration that usually require the wider public to do little more than listen to speeches or lay wreaths.

P.C.: I was very closely involved in the conception of *Light Front*. It all started with quotes from Great War literature: people standing on the hills in West Flanders – such as Edmund Blunden or the Belgian pastor van Wallegghem – who noted that they could see the whole front lit up from Nieuwpoort all the way to Arras at night.

3. PhD published as MICHAEL AMARA, *Des Belges à l'épreuve de l'Exil: les réfugiés de la Première Guerre mondiale. France, Grande-Bretagne, Pays-Bas*, Bruxelles, 2008.

4. Donald Buyze was a teacher and amateur historian. He had given tens (if not hundreds) of lectures on the subject of the *Zivilarbeiter* since 2014 and was writing a book on the subject when he suddenly passed away in June 2020.

5. *Light Front* took place on 17 October 2014, involving 8,750 people holding torches in a line that stretched from the Belgian coast to the Lys Valley (87 km). It was an initiative of the Province of West Flanders' 'Gone West' project and linked nine towns together: Nieuwpoort, Diksmuide, Houthulst, Ypres, Langemarck-Poelkapelle, Zonnebeke, Heuvelland, Messines and Ploegsteert. It also involved members of the Belgian royal family. <https://www.plugstreet1418.be/en/retrospective/plugstreet-in-the-heart-of-light-front-17-10-2014>

6. From 2014 to 2018, as a tribute to the 600,000 victims of the First World War in Belgium, 600,000 clay figurines of bowed soldiers were moulded and baked by participants at workshops in Belgium and abroad. See the artist Koen Van Mechelen's website: "Coming World Remember Me", <https://labiomista.be/en/lock/coming-world-remember-mee>



A typical scene for many families during the centenary: Jan and Piet Vanhee researching their great uncle Paul Vandenbussche's war with Dries Chaerle of In Flanders Fields Museum (seated), which resulted in a 'family day' following the traces of their great uncle during the war, and the donation of his personal documents to the museum, July 2016 (In Flanders Fields Museum).

The idea was taken up by *Gone West*⁷, but getting to the point where we had a person standing with a torch on the former front every ten metres or so – almost 10,000 people – from the coast all the way down to Ploegsteert, that was indeed something else. And once you were in place, you just stood there on your own; it was something incredibly special. *Coming World Remember Me* had even more exposure and provided further proof that people wanted to be involved in something that took a novel approach to First World War remembrance and that taking part in such a cultural manifestation was important to them. That was probably the best thing to have come out of the centenary, to have individuals say to themselves: “I’m going to take part in an event where I will play an active role”. In this way, participants internalised the act of commemoration and this was quite remarkable. Being a part of the centenary meant an awful lot to those who participated and certain events managed to bind them together in a shared spirit of commemoration.

What type of commemorative acts did you feel were less effective?

D.D.: I felt there was a cleavage between official and ‘other’ commemorations. Sometimes they overlapped, but most official commemorative events were isolated. More generally, we saw a worrying trend towards purely national, even isolationist forms of official commemoration. While the bottom up commemorations strived to be inclusive, the top down commemorations sought a return to the national, invoking nationalist and, in some cases, militaristic rhetoric.

P.C.: Official commemoration was only successful if it incorporated broader cultural aspects because official services can be overly sterile. Many of them adopted a purely military format very early on and they have never really evolved beyond that. Only

those countries that were able to expand on these traditional forms of commemoration through the inclusion of cultural elements were really able to break out of that militarist mould. There were two major examples of this: France and Germany. It had always been on the French political agenda to stress the fact that there was a longstanding history of commemoration between France and Germany⁸. As for the official German stance, it attempted to frame the centenary from, I would say, a rather historical point of view. The message transmitted was that commemoration can help us learn from the past in order to avoid committing the same mistakes, and this message overlaps with our belief [at the IFFM]; this capacity to learn from the past is the reason why we should care about history. So, the official French and German voices were the only ones that really stood out from the more nation-centric discourses of the Belgians, the Britons, the Australians, you name them, whose rhetoric sounded as if it had been written on 12 November 1918: “We have won! Hooray!”

D.D.: Along with the return of the nation, it was also the return of the “hero”. Of course, we’ve had stories about heroes for years, but the generic use of this term made a comeback during the centenary and I think it has to do with the broader political and societal context in which we find ourselves. We have seen this turn towards a *discours identitaire* in many countries and all the old lies that this entails. Calling all those who died – the military dead at least – in the First World War “heroes” is a plain lie.

P.C.: In addition to the rather limited and limiting forms of official commemoration, we also noted an incredible number of initiatives involving re-enactment. Ypres was the exception to this because, in the years leading up to 2014, we predicted that there would be a demand for re-en-

7. *Gone West* was the cultural initiative of the Province of West Flanders in support of the centenary of the First World War.

8. For more on France and Germany’s commemorative rapprochement, see, for example, VALÉRIE ROSOUX, PIERRE BOUCHAT AND OLIVIER KLEIN, “Retelling the War to Give a Chance to Peace. A Comparative Analysis of Great War Memories”, in *Experience and Memory of the First World War in Belgium: Comparative and Interdisciplinary Insights* (Historische Belgienforschung), ed. GENEVIÈVE WARLAND (ed.), Münster, 2018, p. 151–6.

actment and we resisted this along with the Last Post Association. We felt there was a danger that, in turning to re-enactment, we would water down the wider military context of commemoration. A uniform that is worn as a costume is not the same as a uniform which represents the monopoly of violence granted to the wearer by an official state. Because we presented a united front with the Last Post Association and received backing from the city council, we were able to ensure that no commemorative event within the municipality of Ypres involved re-enactment. Consequently, we avoided this general trend.

Was the decision regarding re-enactment unanimous at the local level?

P.C.: It is important to distinguish between the municipality of Ypres and elsewhere, notably Zonnebeke. The Memorial Museum Passchendaele 1917 has thrived on the success of big re-enactment events and there was a demand for this during the centenary. I noticed that the Belgian army was especially interested by such events. A tent promoting the army was always nearby during re-enactment weekends at Zonnebeke. This blurring of the lines between re-enactment and the present-day Belgian military reached its apotheosis with the event commemorating the liberation of Belgium⁹, which included a parade of re-enactors following in the footsteps of the Belgian army of 1918. It was fascinating to see how the military attempted to link the victorious army of 1918 with the Belgian army of today.

D.D.: In Ypres, on the other hand, there has never been a tradition of re-enactment. Our concern with re-enactments largely boils down to two factors. First, even if the uniform is an exact replica of one worn one hundred years ago, it is worn out of context; it is too benign and, as a result, it belies everything that has to do with war. Second, re-en-

actment draws attention away from other aspects of commemoration.

P.C.: Expanding on that first point, we feel that re-enactment fails to engage with the period in a nuanced manner. There is an argument that re-enactment serves an educational purpose, that, by showing a uniform and being precise about the technicalities of the equipment, we will have a better understanding of what it was like one hundred years ago.¹⁰ I can understand where this comes from and, if you go back hundreds of years, then it could offer us a window into the technicalities of how wars were fought back then. However, I would argue that warfare has not changed so much between 1914 and 2014 that it is unrecognisable; shooting someone with a rifle is exactly the same so this technical insight is unnecessary. Moreover, re-enactment may give the impression that getting tiny details right is a way of directly tapping into the experiences of the generation that lived through the First World War. I would argue that it has nothing to do with it; one good war poem is more informative than all the re-enactments we saw during the centenary. It risks reducing the First World War to the details and fails to grapple with the larger questions. It does not shed light on how international communities dealt with the end of the war and the consequences of the peace treaties. And this brings us back to the inability of official commemoration to break out of well-established traditions. Everything stopped on Armistice Day 2018. There was no motivation to organise significant commemorative events for Versailles and the other treaties.

D.D.: Interestingly enough, that's where commemoration between 2014 and 2018 diverged most from the contemporary historiography of the First World War. In recent years, we've seen a trend towards the "greater" war¹¹, geographically and

9. "De bevrijding – La Libération", see: "De Bevrijding: 13 tot 19 Augustus", <https://www.warheritage14-18.be/nl/event/de-bevrijding-13-tot-19-augustus-2018>, accessed 22 December 2020.

10. For more on arguments for and against re-enactment, see KAREN SHELBY, *Belgian Museums of the Great War: Politics, Memory and Commerce*, London, 2017, 141–4 and 148–50 and Alexander Vander Stichele, "Living History", *Faro*, vol. 3 (1), 26–34.

11. A good example of this interest in the "greater" war is ROBERT GERWARTH AND EREZ MANELA (EDS.), *Empires at War: 1917-1923*, Oxford, 2014.



Re-enactors pose during the De Bevrijding – La Libération event, 19 August 2018 © Pascal Mathieu.

chronologically, and this was not reflected in the centenary.

Is this because the political will to address the “greater” war has been largely lacking among stakeholders invested in commemoration in and around Ypres?

D.D.: There have been times when certain stakeholders have pushed to go further, but only when politically viable. For example, it is worthwhile considering why there was a sudden increase in interest surrounding India and China’s involvement in the First World War. This occurred because India and China are increasingly important partners [for Flanders and Belgium] and when official visits were arranged to these countries, it was politically expedient to acknowledge the Indian and Chinese presence in Flanders during the war, to play that out and use it in public diplomacy¹². We did not see the same phenomenon when African or Caribbean countries were concerned. There was no interest in commemorating the presence of people from these places in Flanders because there was nothing to gain. Obviously, I am happy that Indian and Chinese involvement was increasingly recognised and integrated into commemoration during the centenary at Ypres, but there were so many others who were overlooked. When examining who is commemorated, we need to consider who benefits from it. If there is no political benefit, there will be no major drive to commemorate a particular group.

Who have been the most active stakeholders over the last four years then? Were they predominantly nations? Or have transnational, commercial, regional, local and individual actors played a significant role in shaping Ypres’ complex commemorative landscape during the centenary?

P.C.: It is clear that the wider public is our main sponsor – 65% of all our income is based on ticket and shop sales – but there has been a notable evolution in who makes up this public.

When we first began recording figures, about half of our visitors were Belgian while the other half came from abroad. Most of the visitors from this latter group were British. Twenty years on, about two thirds of our visitors come from overseas and from a wider variety of places. Visitors from the British Commonwealth still dominate, but we are reaching new publics, such as the Dutch and the Americans. Countries, embassies, the Last Post Association and the city of Ypres also have a stake in our institution, as do different tourism boards, other museums and historians. These are partners who have been with us all along and continue to play important roles. And, of course, there is the local community.

D.D.: In other words, those who were already stakeholders are still stakeholders, but there are just more of them now and the IFFM functions as the centre of this network. A considerable portion of our work involves bringing these different organisations and individuals together.

Have there been any novel commemorative trends in the last few years? Which stakeholders have been responsible for these?

P.C.: We’ve seen the return of some rather successful private initiatives. A standout example is that of the Hooze Crater Museum, which is based on the old-style *café-musée* of the 1920s, complete with the installation of fake “authentic” trenches. It is very much a symbol of how the commercialisation of the war is still going strong after all these years.

D.D.: All we can do as a museum is raise our voice when we think that a certain ethical line is crossed, such as in the case of a restaurant called *leperEat*¹³. It goes to show that some people with commercial interests are not always sensitive to the wider implications, but it is very hard to do something about the commercial exploitation of

12. For more on use of a shared history in diplomacy, see MATTHEW GRAVES, “Memorial Diplomacy in Franco-Australian Relations”, in *Nation, Memory and Great War Commemoration: Mobilizing the Past in Europe, Australia and New Zealand*; SHANTI SUMARTOJO AND BEN WELLINGS (eds.), Oxford, 2014, p. 170–2.

13. When said aloud, the restaurant’s name sounds like ‘ypérite’ in French and this was a term used to refer to mustard gas.

the war and its memory. Not everyone necessarily agrees either. When I spoke out about IeperEat, I received messages from a number of locals supporting the restaurant. Nevertheless, it is our duty as a museum to protect the memory of the war from over-exploitation.

P.C.: When you have half a million people coming to Ypres because of its war history, you are going to attract people who have a range of interests, from those who take the subject very seriously to others who see it in commercial terms. In the Hooze Crater Museum case, we can live with the resurrection of this old form of commercialisation, with the exception of the fake trenches. We take issue with these because, if you consider the landscape as the final witness to 1914-1918, an important source of information and an important anchor for commemoration, you cannot accept such blatant falsification. It is our role to remind others of the seriousness of the subject, and that it should be taken seriously.

Do most stakeholders often work closely with the In Flanders Fields Museum?

P.C.: We have been closely involved at various stages of stakeholders' projects, but it is not always up to us to decide the ultimate direction taken. The British commemoration of the centenary of the Third Battle of Ypres springs to mind. This event was broadcast live on the BBC and included the projection of images on the Cloth Hall¹⁴. We were asked to provide content for the British, but certain suggestions were taken up and others were discarded. In an event of that scale, we locals were never going to be much more than "décor". And, in the end, the final message of this event was literally taken from the walls of the Menin Gate. It just went to show that there was no real evolution in the official – in this case, British – approach to commemoration.

On other occasions, ideas or projects may stall because we are a big museum in a small town. The

concept of Ypres "city of peace" is a terrific one and the IFFM is the historical heart of that idea. We are part of a network of peace museums and pacifist organisations like Pax Christi and Handicap International have an interest in us, but they collaborate with us through a solitary local official who carries the burden for maintaining Ypres' status as a "city of peace".

Are there any people, institutions, countries and the like that should be major stakeholders but have been "missing in action"?

D.D.: As mentioned earlier on, it can be difficult to connect with community groups from non-European backgrounds or at least organisations for these groups as opposed to just individuals. The sole exception here are the Sikhs¹⁵. German participation also tends to be an individual rather than a group level. When official German events are organised, it is usually the Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge that is behind them and these reinforce the message that commemoration is important, not for old time's sake, but for who we are today and who we want to be tomorrow. Of course, these activities are not as prominent as the British ones, but they do generate quite a bit of local interest. This is because many of the people living in the former front zone are postnational in their attitude towards war commemoration; they are drawn to the local and global aspects of the war, as we are at the IFFM.

And what about the French? They are only a few kilometres away from Ypres and were also involved in the fighting in the salient.

P.C.: A member of the French *consulat général* staff in Brussels, Pierre Lemaire, showed a keen interest for the commemoration of France's First World War involvement in Belgium, which had been largely absent before the centenary. That just goes to show how much one person can influence the wider commemorative agenda. At an unofficial level, there were a number of families who

14. For a short video showcasing the images projected onto the cloth hall, see "Passchendaele 100: Stunning light display marks anniversary", 31 July 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/uk-40774277>, accessed 8 December 2020.

15. JOHAN MEIRE, *De stilte van de Salient: de herinnering aan de Eerste Wereldoorlog rond Ieper*. Tielt, 2003, pp. 351-371.



*The Ypres Cloth Hall as a canvas for the British commemorations of the third battle of Ypres, 30 July 2017
(Dominiek Dendooven collection).*

travelled to Belgium to place flowers where their ancestors were believed to have gone missing. This was remarkable because most of these families came from the deep south of France, not the border areas, and therefore had to travel quite long distances.

D.D.: General interest among the French, however, has remained low. We have good relationships with French institutions, museums, archives and the French Ministry of Culture but we have not been able to attract many visitors outside these institutions or who do not have a personal connection to the salient.

Now that the centenary has come to an end, can you tell us what you imagine the future holds for Ypres as a site of First World War memory? The bicentenary of Waterloo in 2015 was big on spectacle, but light on affective impact given the distance between the participants and the events they were commemorating. Do you see this being the case for Ypres in 2115?

D.D.: I do not think it will ever become something like Waterloo for a number of reasons. The numbers are incomparable. The fighting at Waterloo lasted a day or so; Ypres was in the front line for four years and some 500,000 people who died during the war were buried in the salient. Moreover, the centenary has shown just how important family connections are for maintaining, even sparking, interest in the First World War and those family connections won't just disappear¹⁶. Of course, with historical distance, there will be a certain amount of reification¹⁷, but it will never be a sterile thing because there will always be personal involvement. And then there is the local angle. If 1945 was *Stunde Null* for Germany, 1919 is

Ypres' *Stunde Null*. For the town and the region, it will always be the beginning of a new era.

P.C.: It won't go away because it is all so present. The landscape in which our museum is located and to which people are drawn is composed of layers and the war layer is just a part of it. It also happens to be one of the least densely populated areas in Flanders and attracts visitors because of that. When these visitors come here to escape the hustle and bustle of their hometowns, they cannot fail to notice the imprint the First World War has left. I mean, I think the only reason why I got involved in this whole business is because, as a child, I walked past a war cemetery four times a day. Visitors to the region are also confronted with the history of the war. As long as the commemorative landscape is there, there will be continuing interest in 1914-1918.

The final element to consider is the way our understanding of the First World War has broadened to encompass a range of experiences – not just military, but civilian as well – and recognise that different aspects – gender and culture, among others – influenced these. I believe you need a centre that is able to address as wide a range of experiences as possible. From a purely military point of view, the Somme is arguably more interesting than the salient, but its centres – Albert, Bapaume, even Péronne – are too small in a way to englobe all the other aspects of what a war means. Ypres, on the other hand, does englobe many of these other elements.

D.D.: This is where the IFFM comes in. Its principle focus has been, and will remain, to broaden our understanding of the First World War and make its commemoration more inclusive.

16. For more on the role of families and commemoration, see JAY WINTER, "Commemorating Catastrophe: Remember the Great War 100 Years on", *Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps*, vol. 113–14, 2014, p. 166–74.

17. Naturally, this has already happened with the passing of the veterans. For works that discuss the shifting meaning of the First World War in national contexts, see DAN TODMAN, *The Great War: Myth and Memory*, London, 2005; CAROLYN HOLBROOK, *Anzac: The Unauthorised Biography*, Sydney, 2014; MARK DAVID SHEFTALL, *Altered memories of the Great War: divergent narratives of Britain, Australia, New Zealand and Canada*, London, 2009; JONATHAN F. VANCE, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning and the First World War*, Vancouver, 1997.

Piet Chielens is currently the director of the In Flanders Fields Museum in Ieper (Ypres), Belgium. He will retire as museum director in 2021 and return to the IFFM as a volunteer. He has been responsible for the museum's permanent exhibitions, as well as a number of temporary exhibitions up to the present upgrade. From 1992 to 2007, he was also artistic director of Peace Concerts Passendale. He aims for a constant renewal of the memory of the Great War in Flanders and to give special attention to the ways in which micro- (personal, family and local) and macro-history (that of cultures, nations, and the world) can be linked. In addition to numerous publications in Dutch, he has co-authored two books in English: *The Great War Seen from the Air. In Flanders Fields 1914–1918* (with Birger Stichelbaut, 2013), and *Unquiet Graves. Execution Sites of the Great War in Flanders* (with Julian Putkowski, 2000).

Dominiek Dendooven holds a MA in History (Vrije Universiteit Brussel, 1994), an MA in Archival Science studies (Vrije Universiteit Brussel, 1995) and a PhD in History (University of Kent & Universiteit Antwerpen, 2018). He has worked at the In Flanders Fields Museum since 1997 and is currently a senior researcher there. He has been a guest lecturer at the University of Louvain – Courtrai Campus and an honorary research fellow of the United Service Institution of India, and of the School of History at the University of Kent. His research focuses on the presence of non-European troops on the Western Front during the First World War; war experience, consequences and interaction with local people; and the post-First World War reconstruction. He has published widely and been involved in creating exhibitions based on these topics since 2008. A book, based on his PhD thesis, on the war experiences of Indians and Chinese on the Western Front was published in Dutch in 2019. An English edition is forthcoming (Pen & Sword, 2021).

Matthew Haultain-Gall holds a PhD from the University of New South Wales and he is a scientific collaborator at the Université catholique de Louvain. His research focuses on the cultural and social impacts of the First World War. His first book, *The Battlefield of Imperishable Memory: Passchendaele and the Anzac Legend*, was published by Monash University Publishing earlier this year. Tracing how Australians have remembered and commemorated the battles of Messines and Third Ypres, it explores why these engagements occupy an ambiguous place in Australian collective memory today.

Delphine Lauwers was awarded a PhD from the European University Institute of Florence in 2014. Her doctoral thesis focused on Ypres as a transnational site of memory, exploring the memorial negotiations that centred on it since 1914. She has worked at the State Archives since 2015, first as a post-doctorate researcher (2015–2019) working for the *justinbellgium* research project (<http://justinbell.hypotheses.org>), which examined the prosecution of war crimes in Belgium over the course of the twentieth century. She is now in charge of the research project “Résolution-Métis”. This project is devoted to the history of Métis born in territories under Belgian colonial domination in Central Africa and the targeted segregation of which they have been the victims (metis.arch.be).