

WARS WITHOUT AN END

Soldiers from the four corners of the earth

1 J.H. Smith - British soldier and sapper - 25 years
 In the cemetery at Kemmel Chateau 12 soldiers who were all killed on 10 June 1916 lay buried neatly in a row. They all died in a tunnel deep under the Petit Bois (Little Wood) in Wijtschate. During the period 1915-1917, the underground war was a vicious conflict of thrust and counter-thrust, played out 30 metres below the surface of no-man's-land. Both sides knew that the other side was digging, the key to success was to eliminate your enemy's mines and explode your own before they could do the same to you. But locating your enemy's galleries was a difficult and dangerous task. One British tunneller - or 'sapper' - expressed it as follows: "You knew they were there somewhere, but you could only guess what they were up to. It wasn't so bad when you could hear them working. But when everything went silent, that was when it got really scary." Silence often meant that the enemy was about to explode a countermine, and this is what the Germans did 15 metres below the Petit Bois on the morning of 10 June 1916. Their aim was to collapse the tunnel they knew that the British were digging - and this time they scored a direct hit. A series of detonations brought down the roof of the British gallery over a length of 90 metres. 13 sappers, including James Henry Smith from Romford in Essex, were trapped in a length of tunnel that was 27 metres underground, 1.2 metres high and just 90 centimetres wide. It took six and a half days of non-stop digging to reach the trapped men, but by the time the rescue party arrived 12 of them - including James Smith - were already dead. William Beldon, a mine worker from Rotherham, was the only one to survive. His 12 less fortunate comrades were buried next day in Kemmel Chateau cemetery.

2 Major William Redmond - Irish soldier and member of the British Parliament - 56 years
 In 1914, Ireland was still a part of Great Britain. This led to huge political tension in the island. There was a fierce and often violent dispute between the radical nationalists, who demanded total independence from London, and the equally radical unionists in the north of the country, who wanted to maintain the links with the rest of the United Kingdom at all costs. William Redmond (* Ballyrent, 15 April 1861) was a nationalist at heart but of a more moderate kind, who believed that self-government - or 'home rule' as it was known - could and should be achieved by peaceful constitutional means. For this reason, when war broke out he encouraged Irishmen to join the 16th Irish Division, which was then part of the British Army, believing that such a display of loyalty to the crown in time of crisis would persuade the British to grant home rule when the war was over. In an impassioned speech from the balcony of the Imperial Hotel in Dublin, he spoke the now legendary words: "Old as I am, and grey as are my hairs, I will say: Don't go, but come with me." Willie Redmond was commissioned as a captain and was later promoted to major in the 6th Battalion, Royal Irish Regiment. At the same time, he remained active in the British Parliament during his visits back to England. In his last speech, he exhorted his fellow Irishmen of all persuasions to follow the good example of co-operation set by the (largely Catholic) 16th Irish Division and the (largely Protestant) 36th Ulster Division at the front. During the opening day of the Mine Battle on 7 June 1917, Redmond was wounded by a shell splinter. Private John Meeko, a stretcher-bearer in the unionist Ulster Division, rushed to his aid and dressed his wounds. He then tried to carry the 56-year-old parliamentarian on his shoulders back to the safety of the front line, but was wounded himself before he could go very far. For his bravery, Meeko was awarded the Military Medal, but his efforts were all in vain. William Redmond died of his wounds a short time later at an aid post in Dranouter. His troops took his body further back behind the lines to

the village of Loker, where he was buried in the garden of the local convent. And there the man who was once known as 'the Peter Pan of British politics' still lies in his lonely grave.
3 Corporal William Leonard - American soldier - 28 years
 Corporal William (Billy) Leonard (* 11 December 1889) was the son of John and Winifred Leonard from Flushing, New York. During the war, he served with the 27th (New York) Division. In civilian life he had been a journalist. His friends knew him as a sociable young man, who liked a laugh and a joke. This was reflected in his newspaper articles, where his unique approach to interesting stories was always laced with humour. It was this same interested curiosity that ultimately led to his death. Although he had no need to go up to the front line, he volunteered for the task, saying that he just wanted to see what it was like 'up at the sharp end' 14 July 1918 - the French national holiday - was a cold and wet day in Flanders. That night a British guided a party including Billy up to the Scherpenberg hill, beyond which lay no-man's-land and Mount Kemmel. The area was full of Germans and danger was ever present. Even so, Billy persuaded a number of British soldiers to take him out on patrol to repair some barbed wire entanglements between the lines. The work party left the safety of their trench around midnight and stumbled forward into the dark. They had only just set out when the British opened up with a fierce artillery bombardment of the German positions. Unsurprisingly, the Germans retaliated in kind. The work party rushed back towards the trench but a shell exploded in their midst. A British soldier was killed instantaneously and Billy was hit in the stomach by a large piece of shrapnel. The other British troops picked up his limp and bleeding body and dragged him back to their own lines, but when they arrived they found that he was already dead. He was buried with the British soldier on the southern slopes of the Scherpenberg hill, but his remains were later transferred

to Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery (plot B - row 02 - grave 14). He was the first American battle casualty to die on Flemish soil.
4 François DESVEAUX - French soldier - 23 years
 François Desveaux was a second lieutenant in the 106th 'Chasseurs à Pied' (Light Infantry) Regiment. He was born in Autin, in the department of Saône-et-Loire, on 2 December 1895. Before the war, he was educated at the celebrated Villa Saint-Jean public school in Switzerland, where the famous writer-avator Antoine de Saint-Exupéry also studied between 1915 and 1917. 'Farwell, said the fox. I leave you with my secret, and it is a very simple secret: you can only see good with your naked eye. The things that are essential are invisible to the naked eye.' (From 'Le Petit Prince' (The Little Prince) by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry). François Desveaux died on 20 May 1918 at the foot of the Scherpenberg hill, near the hamlet known as Bruloze. The French were attempting to recapture a narrow-gauge railway that they had recently lost to Germans, but François was caught in the crossfire of the German machine guns as he advanced. In 1919, his father published a series of extracts from his son's war letters. These letters paint a picture of a dedicated officer, who was concerned for the health and welfare of his men. '4 May 1918. 1900 hours. I eat and read through our orders. They are not very clear. We are to move out to the left from Loker, opposite Kemmel. There is no longer talk of any attack... I try to organize my troops so that they can defend themselves, if attacked by the enemy. One of my men is lying flat on the ground in the bottom of the trench. I touch his arm and ask him to stand up, but he does not answer. He is dead.' 'In another letter, a friend of François described his reaction to situations of this kind: 'The death of one of his men always made a deep impression on François Desveaux. He liked them, just as they liked him. Each time, he somehow managed

to find new energy and courage. He was universally praised by his men for his positive approach and his calmness in all circumstances, which had a motivating effect on the morale of his troops. Even during the fiercest bombardments, he was prepared to risk death or injury in order to stay with his men.'
5 Servais Dauchy - Belgian field policeman - 50 years
 5 October 1914: The Germans are closing in on the Westhoek. Uhlans, members of the elite German cavalry, are already making probing reconnaissance raids into the region, to locate the positions of their British and French opponents. On 5 October, a large squadron of 600 Uhlans passes through Waasten and Nieuwkerke, riding on to Dranouter and Loker, where they spread out into smaller groups. At the foot of the Rodeberg hill two of the cavalrymen stumble by chance across Servais Dauchy (* 27 January 1865), the local field policeman, talking to one of his friends, Desire Lagache. One of the Uhlans has already been wounded, and he is bitter and angry. Although Servais is dressed in civilian clothes, the brass buttons on his waistcoat betray that he is the holder of an official position. For this reason, the Germans seize hold of him and search him in his pocket. They find a gun, which is usual for him to carry. The unlucky pair are immediately arrested and dragged to the nearby village of Westouter, where they are chained to the iron railings around the churchyard. The mood is grim and everyone knows that there is a good chance that the men will be executed. Yesterday, the Germans lost one of their comrades during a shooting incident in Werwik and killed one of the local citizens in reprisal. Today, it looks like they are still out for revenge. Jules Vandromme, the burgomaster, who lives opposite the church, sees what is happening and runs outside. He begs the Germans to be allowed to take the bodies of the two villagers will write. He said that they should take him, who had nobody else in the world, but not Servais, who had a wife and four young children. But the Germans are deaf to his pleas. The policeman is shot dead with four bullets. Fortunately, his friend is released unharmed... Servais is now remembered on the war memorial in Westouter and also on the national memorial in the Zoniën Forest in Brussels to the field and forestry policeman who died during the Great War.

6 Archibald Ferguson Cameron - Canadian soldier - 38 years
 Archibald Ferguson Cameron was born on 17 September 1877. He was a native of Montreal in Canada and was still unmarried when he enlisted at the age of 37 on 5 October 1914 for overseas service with the Canadian Expeditionary Force. His recruitment as a volunteer in the 3rd Princess Patricia's Canadian Cavalry Brigade in Augsburg, near Munich, throughout the war he served with the Bavarian Army as a local commander on both the Eastern and Western Fronts (Lorraine, Somme, Gorlice-Tarnow, Przemyśl, Brest-Litovsk, Emilin, Verdun, Alsace, Champagne, Chemin des Dames). He received several decorations in the Military Order of Max-Jozef for his great gallantry in the field. On one occasion, on 25 June 1916 at Emilin (Poland), he launched several successive attacks on his own initiative against the Russian positions and, having captured them, lost off repeated counter attacks. For this he was awarded the Knight's Cross, a decoration that elevated him to the ranks of the German nobility. 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Heuvelland during the Great War

4 August 1914: Germany invades our country and marches on France. The German plan is to bring the French Army to its knees in less than six weeks by an outflanking march through Belgium. But the plan fails - and so the Germans switch their attention to the North Sea and the Channel ports, which are vital for the supply of men and materials from Great Britain. In October 1914, the ridge of high ground between Wijtschate and Mesen blocks the German race to the sea. This natural barrier is the last obstacle between them and the coast. The Allies realize all too well that a German breakthrough here could alter the course of the entire war. For this reason, British and French troops defend the ridge at all costs - and with success. In the middle of November 1914, the war of movement comes to an end and both sides dig in: the Germans on the high ground, the Allies in the valleys below them.

For the next two years, the British and French carry out a series of futile and bloody attacks on the strong German positions, bleeding their armies white. Finally realizing the hopelessness of these near suicidal attacks across no-man's-land, the Allies decide to adopt a different approach: they go underground instead. On 7 June 1917, the British force a breakthrough by exploding 24 deep mines under the German trenches. The front line moves forward at last, passing the village of Wijtschate and heading in the direction of the River Lys. But in the spring of 1918 it is the Germans turn to attack, and they regain much of the lost ground. They not only recapture the Wijtschate-Mesen ridge, but on 25 April they also seize Mount Kemmel. The town of Poperinge and the elusive breakthrough to the Channel ports once again seems within reach, but it is not to be. French reinforcements are thrown into the battle and bring this final German advance to a halt. In August, two American divisions - the 27th and the 30th - launch a new offensive under Allied command. Unable to resist any longer, the German Army gradually starts to withdraw from our region. The end is now in sight and the Armistice follows just months later, on 11 November 1918.



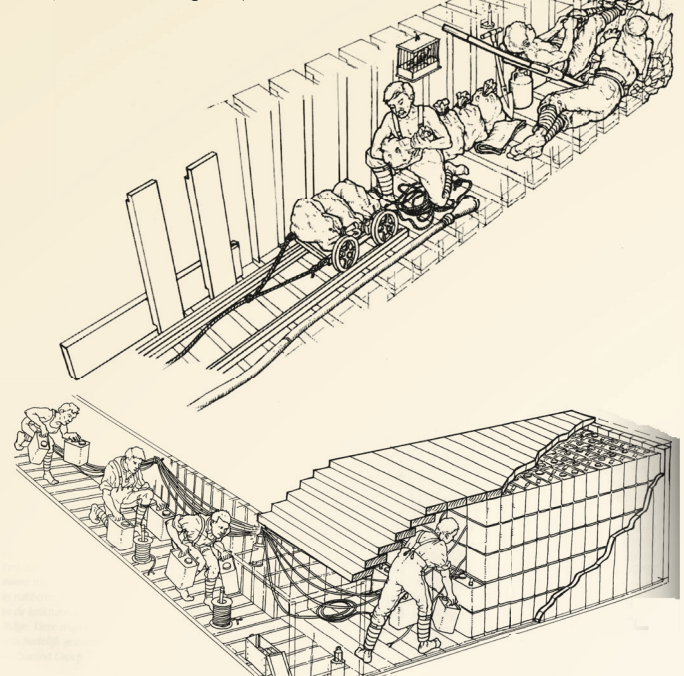
Four major battles were fought in part or in whole on the territory now covered by the municipality of Heuvelland:

- the First Battle of Ieper, sector Wijtschate-Mesen (12/10/1914 - 02/11/1914),
- the Battle of Messines Ridge, also known as the Mine Battle (07/06/1917-14/06/1917),
- the Battle of Mount Kemmel and the Scherpenberg Hill (17/04/1918-29/04/1918)
- and the Final Offensive (28/09/1918-02/10/1918)

The Mine Battle - June 1917

Spring 1917: the stalemate on the Western Front seemed unbreakable. In spite of numerous costly efforts by the Allies to breach the German defences, the trench lines remained intact. Built to withstand the destructive power of modern artillery, these trenches offered the defenders relatively good protection, so that they could always cut down the attackers with their machine guns before they had time to cross the deadly killing ground of no-man's-land. As the war progressed, so the defences became even stronger. In some places redoubts were built and everywhere concrete bunkers and gun placements began to appear. The chances of forcing a breakthrough 'overland' gradually decreased with each passing month. For this reason, the British decided to take the war 'underground'. Where the enemy positions were situated on higher ground, as was the case in Wijtschate, they decided to dig tunnels under the trenches, plant mines and simply blow them up. This was a military tactic of long standing, but it was in Heuvelland that the tactic was applied systematically and on such a huge scale for the first time. The British tunnellers dug galleries at 11 separate locations along the ridge running between Wijtschate and Mesen.

At the end these galleries 24 chambers were packed with high explosive.



The Germans knew what was happening and dug no fewer than 32 countermine shafts in a desperate attempt to locate and destroy the British mines. But it was all to no avail. At 3.10 a.m. on the morning of 7 June 1917, 19 of the mines were detonated, creating a massive explosion that could even be heard as far away as London. The German positions were literally blown sky-high, following which nine divisions and three reserve divisions of Australian, New Zealand, Irish and British troops moved forward to attack. By midday on 7 June, the village of Wijtschate had been liberated by the 16th Irish and the 36th Ulster Divisions.

The first American attack on Belgian soil - August 1918

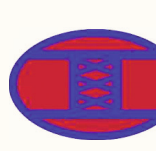
The soldiers who manned the front line in Heuvelland (from Mount Kemmel to Eizenwaide Castle and Zillebeke Lake) from July 1918 onwards were Americans from New York (27th Division) and from Tennessee and the Carolinas (30th Division).

During the night of 30-31 August 1918, the 27th Division sent out strong scouting patrols towards the German trenches. They encountered no resistance. On the next morning, 31 August, it was possible to advance the front line almost unopposed to a new position astride the Ieper-Kemmel road. Without warning and in great secrecy, the Germans had evacuated Mount Kemmel, which they had fought so hard to gain just months earlier. On the same morning, the 30th Division was also able to advance in the direction of Voormezele, but in contrast to the New Yorkers they soon met with heavy fire from the German rearguards.

The next day, 1 September, the 27th Division also began to encounter more stubborn opposition along the wooded slopes of the Wijtschate Ridge, where it soon became clear that the Germans had dug in and intended to make a stand. By the morning of 2 September their front line ran along the foot of the ridge, at the point where the Haring and Wijtschate streams flow. On the left, the 30th Division was able to capture Voormezele and took a number of German prisoners. On 3 September, the 27th Division was relieved by a British division, followed by the relief of the 30th Division on 4 and 5 September. Both American divisions were then transferred to France, where they continued fighting until the Armistice. During their actions in our region 406 American soldiers were killed and 1,707 wounded.



27th Division



30th Division

A remarkable relic: the remembrance oak in Loker



This tree was planted in the middle of a field, at the spot where local farmer Jacques Covameecker was killed by the explosion of an old wartime shell at a quarter to nine on the evening of 23 May 1983. Jacques was ploughing his land and decided to carry on as long as the light would allow, since heavy rain had been forecast for the next day. A shell buried in the earth became trapped in the spokes of his harrow and the constant vibration caused it to explode. The tractor was blown high into the air and came down to earth with a crash, burying itself deep in the newly turned soil. Jacques was killed instantaneously. The next spring his widow planted an oak on the exact spot where her unfortunate husband had met his end.

This sad incident reminds us of the dangers inherent in all wars, even long after they have finished. It is generally accepted that a third of all the shells fired during the Great War failed to explode. Some 5% of these shells contained gas or other lethal chemicals. Each year, DOVO - a specialized unit of the bomb disposal service of the Belgian Army - collects on average 250 tons of unexploded projectiles from local people (mainly from farms or building works). They still receive about 3,500 calls per annum, even though the war has been finished for 100 years! During the period 1918 to 2011 a total of 599 shells exploded in the southern part of the Westhoek region, sometimes as a result of being badly handled, sometimes as a result of sheer bad luck. These explosions killed 358 civilians and seriously wounded another 535. 73 of the explosions occurred in Heuvelland! These figures show just how deadly the shells and grenades of the Great War really were - and still are.



From: 'The land of lethal scrap. Victims of explosion in the front region from 1918 to the present day', John Desreumaux

Post-war reconstruction - a unique challenge

After four years of war, six of Heuvelland's eight villages had been wiped off the map. The other two - De Kijte and Westouter - had been badly damaged.



Once the war was over, the people gradually returned to the villages from which they had been forced to flee by the fighting. All they found was ruin and destruction. Often, not a single house was left standing. As a result, they were initially required to live in woodpile huts, known as barracks. From 1919 onwards, the rebuilding of their former homes was started. Usually, the most important public buildings were constructed first: schools, churches, post offices, town halls, etc. As 'pilot' buildings in the reconstruction process, considerable attention was devoted to their architectural design, resulting in a number of visually striking edifices. Together with the recreation of the pre-war street plan, these architectural 'jewels' formed the 'monumental' framework for the resurrected villages.

Once the layout of the streets had been set, the individual homes gradually were added. This reconstruction period lasted from 1919 to 1926, although in some places work continued until the 1930s. In less than 10 years, all the ruined villages had been rebuilt. It was a remarkable achievement. These new villages were not exact copies of their pre-war predecessors, but were built in a uniform style with uniform materials. The aim was to provide an 'improved' version of what had existed before 1914.

Even so, the architects drew much of their inspiration for the pilot buildings from the architecture of the past, such as the neo-Gothic and the neo-Flemish Renaissance styles. The private homes and farmhouses displayed the characteristics more traditionally associated with the rural nature of the region.



The overall result was one of soberness and restraint. Heuvelland has 3,038 residential homes and other buildings; no fewer than 1,531 of these were built in whole or in part during the reconstruction period. This means that the streetscape in the various villages is still relatively homogenous and visually harmonious. Many of the facades show a high degree of uniformity and rhythmic coherence. Typical examples are the Kasteldreef in Kemmel (GPS 50.783206, 2.98529) or in the Sulferbergstraat in the heart of Westouter (GPS 50.797293, 2.747038). This creates a unity in simplicity that is unique in the Westhoek and in Flanders. Moreover, it is a unity that represents a clear link with the war-torn past of our region.

Traces in the landscape

Four years of brutal war left many scars on the landscape of our region. Some of these are still visible, although many are now covered with a soft, green mantle of vegetation. This is often the case, for example, with many of the surviving bunkers from the war years. Other wartime features are now buried underground, such as the tunnels and dug-outs that formed such a key part of the subterranean war. The summary below lists 157 officially registered war-related relics in Heuvelland. This list has been compiled largely on the basis of the VIOE WO database. 124 of the relics are a direct consequence of military action of one kind or another during the war years. 61 of them have been protected monument status.

- 67 bunkers, sometimes in groups, 42 of them of German origin
- 11 craters
- 1 trench system - Bayernwald
- 3 pre-WWI objects (including the clock face from the church at Kemmel)
- 1 concrete bridge
- 4 underground installations
- 3 'impressions' of trenches in the landscape
- 1 well, where horses were watered
- 36 cemeteries
- 30 monuments, including:
 - 4 demarcation stones
 - 3 memorial crosses
 - 3 memorial walls
 - 9 memorial plaques, stones or signs
 - 7 memorial columns
 - 1 stained-glass window
 - 1 tree
 - 2 statues



The non-registered items scattered across the countryside are even more numerous. Local farmers still make use of the stone blocks recovered from old wartime bunkers to pave their farmyards or to harden the access paths to their fields. And here and there you can still see the old corkscrew pickets - sometimes known as 'pigs' tails' - that were once used to erect barbed-wire entanglements in no-man's-land.

The Battle of Mount Kemmel - April 1918

April 1918: The First World War had been raging for four long years in our region. The German advance in November 1914 was brought to a standstill on the ridge of low hills running across the western part of West Flanders, the last defensive position of any importance between the invaders and the coast. If the Germans had broken through at this point, allowing them to capture the Channel ports at Calais and Dunkirk that were so crucial to the supply of men and materials to the British Army, the war might have taken a different course. But the Allied line held, albeit at huge cost, and so the stalemate of trench warfare began. During the next three years the situation at the front changed very little and the trench lines on the Wijtschate-Mesen ridge remained more or less static. All this changed with the entry of America into the war (April 1917) and the collapse of the Russian Army (Peace of Brest-Litovsk, March 1918). The German High Command realized that they needed to use the troops released from the Eastern Front to win the war on the Western Front before the huge manpower resources of the United States could be deployed. Using these fresh divisions, the Germans launched a series of massive offensives, one of which was targeted on the Heuvelland region. This offensive reached its highpoint with the Battle of Mount Kemmel on 25 April 1918. The hill was lost, but the French Army was able to bring the German advance to a halt at the foot of the Scherpenberg, the next hill in the range. Throughout the summer, the no-man's-land between these two hills was the scene of continuous fierce fighting, with key positions regularly changing hands. But the Germans were unable to force the breakthrough they so urgently needed. Gradually, they ran out of both men and supplies, and by July the offensive had ground to a halt. Their last desperate gamble had failed.



A war without end ...

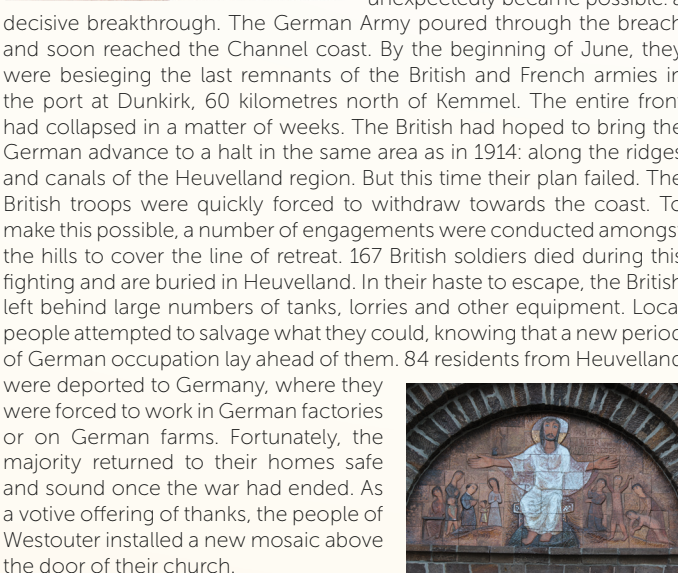
The First World War was a total war in which nations threw everything they had into the struggle, in a desperate attempt to achieve final victory. Manpower, coal and steel production, wood production, animals, capital, foodstuffs: everything was subordinated and sacrificed on the altar of battlefield success. The winner was destined to be the side that could hold out the longest during this 'Materialschlag' or war of resource exhaustion. The following stupefying figures make clear the monstrous scale of this struggle:

- 70 million soldiers from 55 different countries fought on the various fronts;
- By 1918, 80% of the world's population was at war with each other;
- 18-20 million fathers and mothers lost a son;
- 20 million soldiers suffered either physical or psychological damage;
- 590,000 Belgian refugees spent the war in exile abroad;
- In 1917 the Allies paid 325 million dollars a month to the United States for the purchase of war materials;
- In 1918 alone, 198,000 kilometres of wood were chopped down, more than five times the circumference of the earth;
- 1.5 billion shells were fired on the Western Front, 5% of them containing chemical weapons;
- 9 million horses were rewarded for their faithfulness to their human masters with death;
- Belgium lost 18% of its pre-1914 national wealth, expressed in machines, buildings, bridges, agricultural land and money;
- After the war, one million tons of surplus munitions were dumped in the sea, spread over 80 separate locations;
- In the aftermath of the war, during the period 1918-1919, an estimated 20 million people died of Spanish flu;
- After returning home, 1,400,000 soldiers quietly committed suicide.



The blitzkrieg steamrollers over Heuvelland

In May 1940, the Germans invaded our country again. The well-coordinated German attacks with tanks and planes - the dreaded Stuka's - punched a hole in the Allied front near the French city of Sedan. What had proved so elusive during the First World War, suddenly and unexpectedly became possible: a breakthrough. The German Army poured through the breach and soon reached the Channel coast. By the beginning of June, they were besieging the last remnants of the British and French armies in the port at Dunkirk, 60 kilometres north of Kemmel. The entire front had collapsed in a matter of weeks. The British had hoped to bring the German advance to a halt in the same area as in 1914: along the ridges and canals of the Heuvelland region. But this time their plan failed. The British troops were quickly forced to withdraw towards the coast. To make this possible, a number of engagements were conducted amongst the hills to cover the line of retreat. 167 British soldiers died during this fighting and are buried in Heuvelland. In their haste to escape, the British left behind large numbers of tanks, lorries and other equipment. Local people attempted to salvage what they could, knowing that a new period of German occupation lay ahead of them. 84 residents from Heuvelland were deported to Germany, where they were forced to work in German factories or on German farms. Fortunately, the majority returned to their homes safe and sound once the war had ended. As a votive offering of thanks, the people of Westouter installed a new mosaic above the door of their church.



War never brings peace!

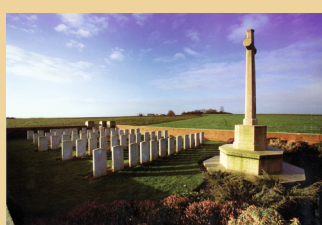
The amateur dramatics production 'Nooit Brengt een Oorlog Vrede' (War Never Brings Peace) was first staged in a barn in Kemmel from 11-15 November 1978. This idea for a 'peace play' first originated in 1977, when many people who had experienced the war were still alive. The group 'Opbouwwerk Heuvelland' wanted to preserve their treasure trove of wartime stories and decided to launch an oral history project. They interviewed local people in their own homes and recorded the conversations on tape. These fascinating reminiscences formed the basis for the content of the play. The audience was instantly gripped by the misery and the fear, but also by the small and unexpected moments of happiness experienced by men and women who they realized were just like themselves. They saw themselves reflected in their neighbours, who had lived through the horror of 1914-1918. This personal identification with the war's victims led the people of the Westhoek to start looking at the conflict in a new light. It was no longer viewed simply from the perspective of the generals and the military strategists, but also through the eyes of ordinary people and the soldiers at the front. This opened up opportunities for new avenues of approach: the stories of the wartime refugees, the difficult coexistence of soldiers and civilians behind the lines, the execution of 'deserters'. It was in the wake of this play and the change of mentality it engendered that a social climate was eventually created in which the In Flanders Fields Museum could blossom and flourish.



Summary of war dead in Heuvelland	UK	Ireland	France	Canada	Australia	New Zealand	South Africa	Other lands	Germany	Total WWI	Total WWII	Unknowns
CABIN HILL CEMETERY	38	4	0	0	25	0	0	0	0	67	0	0
CROONAEART CHAPEL CEMETERY	75	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	75	0	7
DERRY HOUSE CEMETERY No. 2	109	17	0	0	37	0	0	0	0	163	0	0
DRANOUTRE CHURCHYARD	79	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	79	0	0
DRANOUTRE MILITARY CEMETERY	380	41	0	19	17	1	0	0	1	459	0	0
GODEZONNE FARM CEMETERY	76	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	79	0	44
IRISH HOUSE CEMETERY	89	14	0	0	14	0	0	0	0	117	0	40
KANDAHAR FARM CEMETERY	205	12	0	6	186	31	0	3	0	443	0	11
KEMMEL CHATEAU MILITARY CEMETERY	924	106	0	80	23	1	0	1	0	1135	21	4
KEMMEL CHURCHYARD	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	25	0	0
KEMMEL No.1 FRENCH CEMETERY	291	0	0	1	3	1	0	0	94	390	0	260
KLEIN-VIERSTRAAT BRITISH CEMETERY	769	11	0	8	8	7	1	1	0	805	0	109
LA CLYTTÉ MILITARY CEMETERY	999	7	0	50	10	3	6	7	0	1082	0	238
LA LATERIE MILITARY CEMETERY	526	32	0	190	3	0	0	0	0	751	0	180
LINDENHOEK CHALET MILITARY CEMETERY	279	6	0	15	9	4	0	2	0	315	0	67
LOCRE HOSPICE CEMETERY	233	6	0	1	2	1	0	1	2	246	14	12
LOCRE No.10 CEMETERY	58	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	75	133	0	14
LOKER CHURCHYARD	184	0	0	31	0	0	0	0	0	215	0	0
LONE TREE CEMETERY	30	58	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	88	0	9
MAPLE LEAF CEMETERY	85	1	0	39	4	37	1	0	9	176	0	0
NIEUWERKE CHURCHYARD	62	17	0	1	10	2	0	4	0	96	10	0
QOOST TAVERNE WOOD CEMETERY	1054	26	0	21	16	2	0	0	0	1119	117	783
MOUNT KEMMEL OSSUARY	0	0	5294	0	0	0	0	0	0	5294	0	0
PACKHOUSE FARM SHRINE CEMETERY	59	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	59	0	0
POND FARM CEMETERY (Wulvergem)	176	120	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	301	0	3
R.E. FARM CEMETERY	132	0	0	47	0	0	0	0	0	179	0	11
SOMER FARM CEMETERY	65	2	0	0	24	0	0	0	0	91	0	1
SPANBROEKMOLEN BRITISH CEMETERY	8	50	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	58	0	6
SUFFOLK CEMETERY	47	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	47	0	8
TORREKEN FARM CEMETERY No.1	70	0	0	0	20	0	0	0	14	104	0	0
WESTHOF FARM CEMETERY	74	3	0	1	43	10	0	5	136	0	6	
WESTOUTER CHURCHYARD AND EXTENSION	78	0	0	18	1	1	0	0	3	101	0	1
WESTOUTRE BRITISH CEMETERY	154	17	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	175	5	52
WULVERGEM CHURCHYARD	38	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	38	0	6
WULVERGHEM-LINDENHOEK ROAD MILITARY CEMETERY	786	84	0	52	30	57	1	0	0	1010	0	352
WYTSCHAETE MILITARY CEMETERY	956	26	0	5	13	1	1	0	0	1002	0	673
	9212	660	5294	588	498	161	12	20	208	16653	167	2897
% by nationality	55.32	3.96	31.79	3.53	2.99	0.97	0.07	0.12	1.25	100		17.40

First World War cemeteries: oases of quiet and contemplation

There are 36 military cemeteries in our region, containing the graves of 16,653 soldiers from at least nine different countries, including five Chinese labourers. As each nation had its own procedures for dealing with its war dead, not every soldier who died in Heuvelland is buried here. This is not the case, however, with the Commonwealth war dead, who were all buried as a matter of policy near to the place where they fell. This explains why there are still so many British military cemeteries scattered across the countryside. Initially, the same was also true of the German war dead, but in the 1920s and again in the 1950s the smaller German cemeteries in the Westhoek were systematically concentrated into four large sites at Menen, Langemark, Vladslo and Hoogebeke. The families of the French victims of the war had the option to have their loved ones repatriated to a military or civil cemetery in France, or else to be buried in situ in the country of their death. The French mass grave at the foot of Mount Kemmel now contains the remains of 5,294 French soldiers who never went home, only 57 of whom could be identified.



Belgium followed the French example and, after some hesitation, also allowed repatriation of those who died at the front to their home town. This option was also given to the families of the American soldiers who were killed in action overseas. 406 Americans lost their lives and a further 1,707 were wounded during the American offensive in Heuvelland at the end of August 1918. Of the fatal casualties, 130 are buried in the In Flanders Fields American Cemetery in Waregem, three (who died of wounds) are buried in the British military cemetery at Lijssenthoek (Poperinge) and the remaining 275 were repatriated for burial in the United States.

During the Mine Battle alone, 15,913 soldiers were killed, 23,953 were wounded and a further 10,595 were posted as 'missing, believed killed'. The Battle of Mount Kemmel in 1918 was equally bloody, with the French losing no fewer than 10,500 officers and men during the period 16-30 April. The total number of fatal casualties in our region during the war years is impossible to calculate, but runs into many tens of thousands.



The war cemeteries are now places of quiet and contemplation. Visitors from all over the world come to these burial grounds, not only searching for their lost relatives, but also to explore the links with the past that help to define who they really are. Most of the casualties in the region's cemeteries were victims of the First World War, but there are also 167 Second World War soldiers buried here, who died during the German advance and the Allied retreat to Dunkirk in May 1940. Both these wars were closely related and out of them developed the united Europe we know today, with its common institutions, such as the European Union. Or as the American historian Professor Jay Winter has put it: 'It is not the euro that is the symbol of a united Europe; it is the cemeteries of the First and Second World Wars.'

Time-line WWI and WWII in Heuvelland

