

PASSCHENDAELE 100
POPPY PINS



Passchendale 100 Poppy Pins

- The Battle of Passchendaele, Third Battle of Ypres was fought in the West Flanders area of Belgium between July 31st and November 10th, 1917.
- Millions of artillery shells were fired, destroying the man-made and natural drainage of the land. When the rains came, soldiers were fighting the mud as much as the enemy.
- By the time the battle reached the village of Passchendaele on November 6th 1917, over 90,000 Commonwealth soldiers had died. 60,083 of them were British.
- Most were killed by German artillery or machine gun fire, but tragically many perished by drowning in shell holes, swallowed by the Flanders mud, never to be seen again. Men still lie, now at peace, beneath the fields of Flanders.

- To mark the Centenary of Passchendaele, The Royal British Legion have commissioned 60,083 special Poppy Pins, each remembering a British soldier who fell during the battle.
- The commission has been awarded to Christopher Bennett and TMB Art Metal - a company with extensive experience in working with heritage metals and turning them in to high quality pieces.
- Made from British brass artillery shell fuses found on the battlefield sites, each pin contains earth recovered from the fields and mixed with red and green enamel.

The finished commemorative Poppy Pins possess the very essence of the battlefields that these brave men fought upon, died upon and that many still lie at peace beneath.

—Wearing one brings a tangible connection with their sacrifice and creates a unique and highly personal tribute.

Available exclusively
at the
Royal British Legion's Poppy Shop

Limited edition Poppy Pins retail at £39.99.

*100% of net profits from the Poppy Shop go to the Royal British Legion,
so the charity can continue supporting serving and ex-Service men and
women, veterans and their families.*

To purchase online, go to: www.poppysshop.org.uk



The evening splendour of the Cloth
Hall, Ypres, March 2017.





The construction of the medieval hall was originally completed in 1304, but was destroyed by shelling during World War 1. In this 1917 view, only the sparsest of foundations remain.



A painstaking reconstruction of the hall was commenced in 1933, allowing us to marvel today at its pre World War 1 splendour.

This 'then & now' 1917/2017 image shows the massive challenge the experts faced.



The Menin Gate was built over the Menin Road on the entrance to Ypres in 1927 and is carved with the names of 54,397 men with no known graves.

Hundreds of thousands of men passed along the Menin Road on their way to battle during World War 1, many of whom never returned.





Every evening at 8pm, on every day of the year, buglers from the Ypres Fire Brigade play the Last Post.

It is an enduring and emotional tribute to the men who paid the ultimate price and the event rarely fails to attract many people paying their quiet respects.

Near the "Totemuhle" or "Death Mill" at Langemarck (an area heavily fought over) the TMB Art Metal team gather earth. It will be taken back to England, mixed with similar soils from other locations and applied to the poppies.



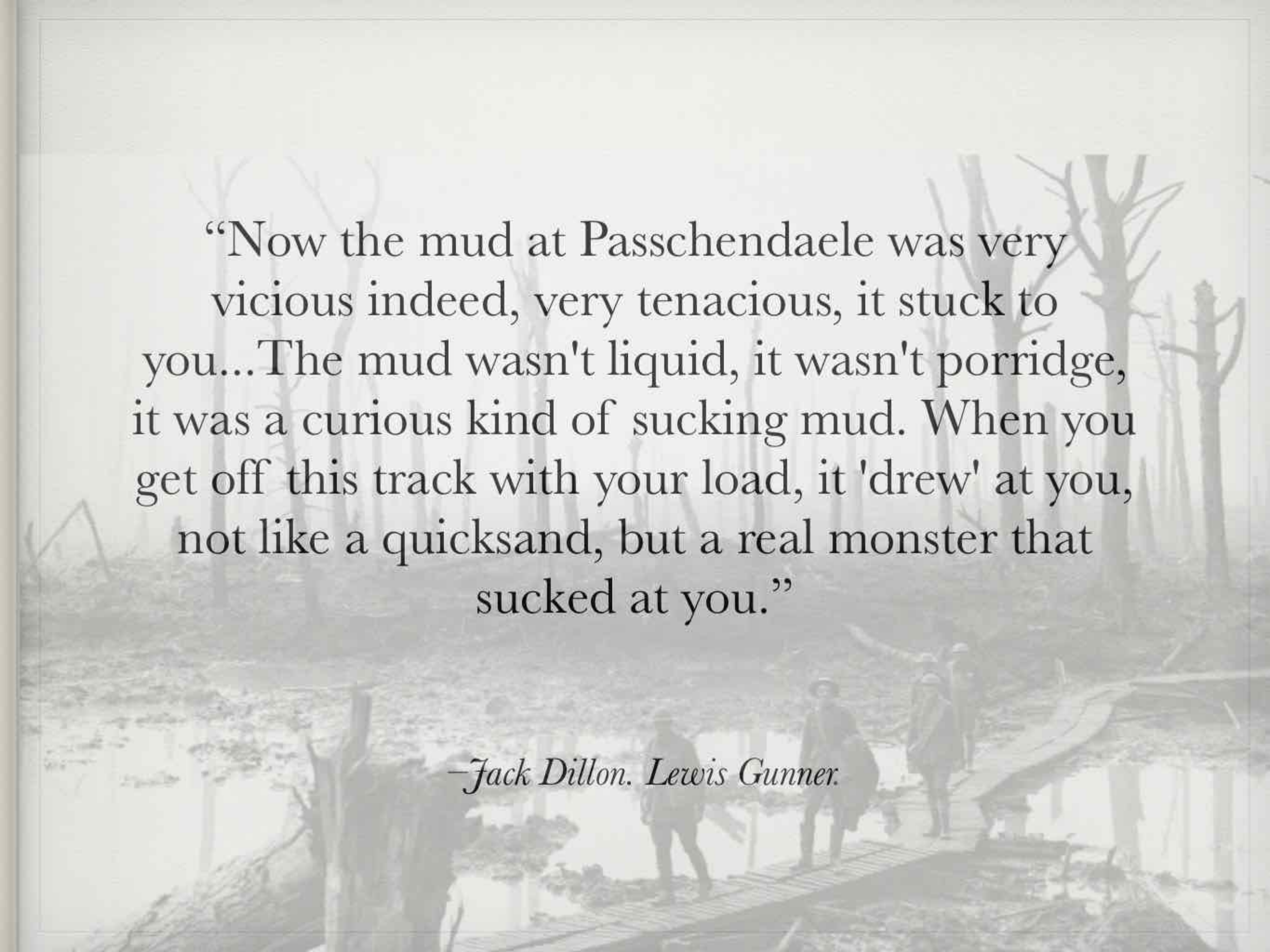
Earth is also collected near
Poelkapelle in February 2017,
the ground frozen solid from
the harsh winter.







The mud created truly awful conditions. The shelling destroyed any chance of the rain dispersing and the broken earth became a slurry. Shell holes were obscured and unforgiving of any man or beast who slipped into one.



“Now the mud at Passchendaele was very vicious indeed, very tenacious, it stuck to you...The mud wasn't liquid, it wasn't porridge, it was a curious kind of sucking mud. When you get off this track with your load, it 'drew' at you, not like a quicksand, but a real monster that sucked at you.”

—*Jack Dillon. Lewis Gunner.*



The village of Passchendaele was totally destroyed during the incessant shelling of 1917.

Nothing but the strongest foundations of its centrally placed church survived.

Like Ypres, the town was rebuilt after the war.

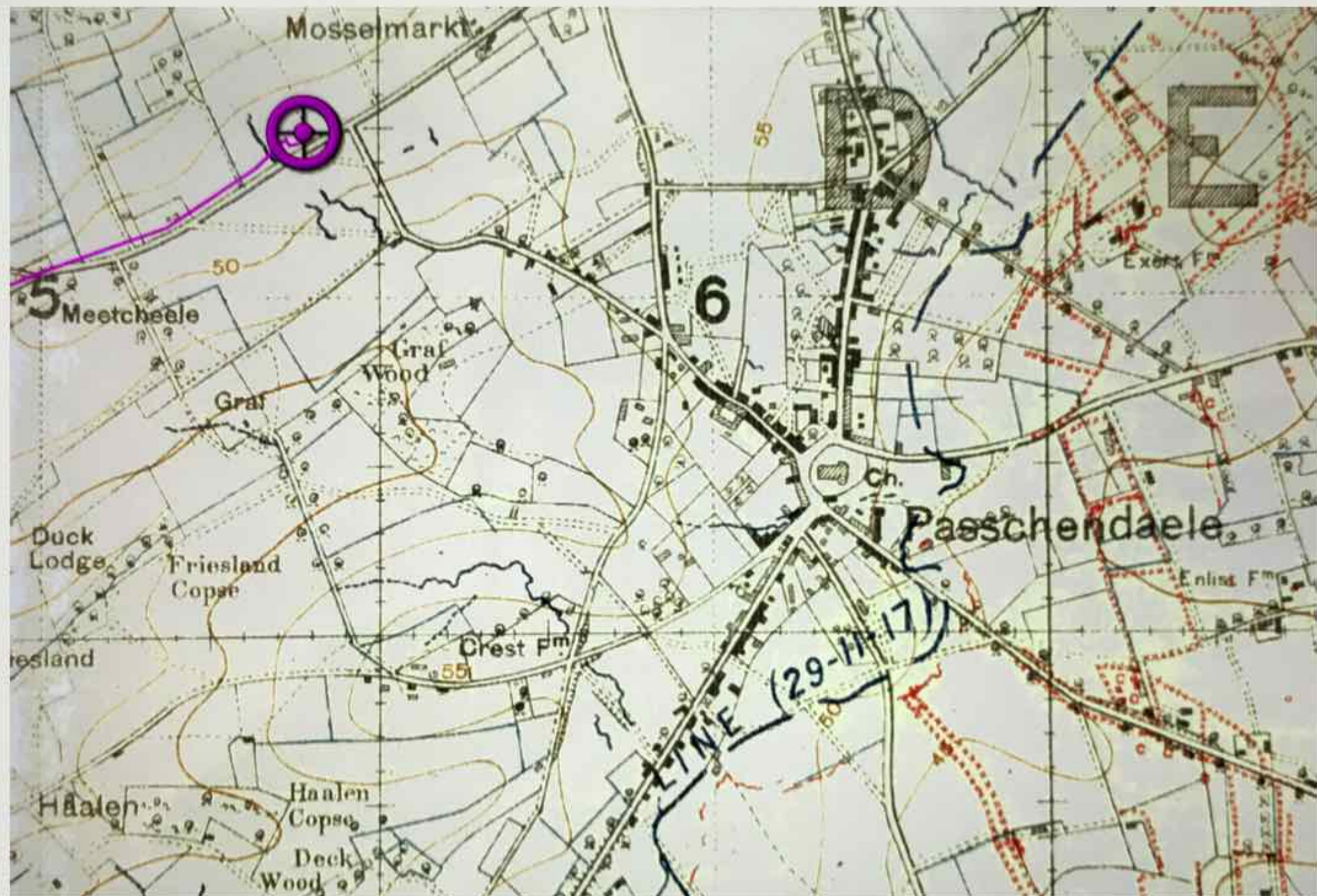




Passchendaele New British Cemetery contains over 2,100 graves mostly from the Battle of Passchendaele. 1,600 contain unidentified remains, "Known unto God".



With Passchendaele church steeple in the background, Chris Bennett of TMB Art Metal chisels away at the frozen ground to recover some battle-scarred earth. February 2017.



A GPS enabled iPad loaded with trench maps is used to precisely locate where to take earth samples. Usually drawn on a 1:10,000 scale, trench maps were produced by both sides, indicating with a fair degree of accuracy the various trenches, fortifications, obstacles and terrain.



A huge 9.2 inch Howitzer in action during the Battle of Passchendaele. An incredible number of shells of various sizes and types were fired, each of which had a brass detonating fuse fitted to the shell nose.

A live shell found by a farmer near Langemarck. Of the millions of high explosive shells fired, around 25% failed to detonate because the soft, muddy ground cushioned their impact.

Every year, more come to the surface and although they now rarely explode, it still gives the local farmers a degree of concern as they plough the fields.





A British shrapnel fuse lies on a field near Passchendaele, a century after firing. Most of the fuses are recovered by farmers while harvesting crops and while the fuses are inert, randomly picking up battlefield detritus is not recommended as items such as hand grenades could still detonate.



TMB founder Chris Bennett photographs and recovers the shrapnel shell fuse - the first person in 100 years to touch it.

The fuse was a timer, designed to detonate the shell in the air above the enemy and release its lethal payload of lead balls.





Brass British shell fuses,
recovered by a farmer in the
Zonnebeke area, form
some of the material
from which TMB's unique
Passchendaele 100 Poppy Pins
are made.

A mix of shrapnel and impact
fuses are used.





L to R: Francis Claeys, CEO of the community of Zonnebeke. Sabine Vanderhaeghen, Elderman of the community of Zonnebeke. Chris Bennett, TMB Art Metal

DONATION ACT

Memorial Museum Passchendaele 1917 (MMP1917 / gemeente Zonnebeke - Berten piestraat 5A, B-8980 Zonnebeke - +32 51 77 04 41 - info@passchendaele.be) (the donator),
 Represented by
 Name: Evy Van de Voorde
 Function: collections manager

to
 Organisation: The Royal British Legion / TMB Art Metal London
 Name: Chris Bennett
 Function:
 Address:
 Phone number:
 E-mail:

To donate the following items:

MZ 13235	Fuse T&P. N°85.I	Tijd- en schokontstekingsbuis N°85.I. Volledig in messing. Gradatie op 2de ring van 0-21. Voorzien van afschermkapje. "LOT 124 1916 / BH N°85-1"
MZ 13236	Fuse T&P. N°94.IV	Tijd- en schokontstekingsbuis N°94.IV. Volledig in messing. 4 ringen. Neus met gleuf. Op onderste ring gradatie van 0-22. "N°94 IV / 7/18 / 1 6 8"

MEMORIAL MUSEUM PASSCHENDAELE 1917 • Berten Piestraat 5A, B-8980 Zonnebeke
 T +32 51 77 04 41 • F +32 51 78 07 50 • info@passchendaele.be • www.passchendaele.be

More fuses were donated by the Memorial Museum Passchendaele - newly refurbished, it's well worth a visit.



The brass fuses are prepared for melting at a sand casting foundry in West London....





....Once in the crucible, they are heated until red hot and the brass starts to melt....





....Getting hotter and hotter. At around 1,000 degrees the fuses deform and eventually become liquid metal.



As the shell fuses melt, considerable slag forms and this is scrapped from the surface before the molten brass is poured.

Amazingly, about 25% of the metal is lost during this process, either burning off or having to be removed as slag.





When the temperature is right, the crucible of 1917 British Passchendaele shell fuse brass is lifted from the kiln and prepared for pouring.





The metal is poured into sand casting boxes in its initial stage of transformation from....

....World War 1 munition designed to kill, into fund raising symbols of remembrance and peace.





Once cooled, the sand casting boxes are opened to reveal bars of shell fuse brass.

The bars will be cut up and cleaned before later re-melting and final re-casting into poppies.

This initial melting into bars cleans the metal and makes it more practical for the 'lost wax' jewellery casting process.





At the casters in Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter, wax effigies of the poppy are created.

The 'lost wax' process of casting is so called because for each and every poppy, a sacrificial wax must first be produced.

The waxes are put onto a 'tree', embedded in a can of ceramic material which is hardened. The melted wax runs out, leaving a vacated impression in to which the metal is poured.





The previously cast bars of shell fuse brass are re-melted to once again form a liquid in readiness for pouring in to the casting can.



Once the correct temperature is reached (it's a very fine line between casting success and failure) the molten 1917 brass is poured into the ceramic casting can.





Once the metal has had a chance to cool and solidify, the 'can' is dunked in water to soften it up and the cast tree removed. Still hot and steaming, this is a fascinating moment to see the transformation from 1917 brass to commemorative poppy pins.



The tree, now cleaned and ready for cutting. The poppies will be individually removed from the central trunk, examined to make sure the quality is good and then sent to the finishers. The trunk and sprues will be reused - as little as possible of the precious metal is allowed to go to waste.



The samples of earth gathered from the various battlefield locations around Passchendaele are brought to the factory. Soil was also collected from Essex Farm and while not a Passchendaele battlefield, it was where John McCrae wrote the poem 'In Flanders Fields' (in 1915) leading to the adoption of the red poppy by the Royal British Legion.



The samples of earth are mixed and then ground down to a fine powder.

Although less visible than the brass the poppies are made of, in many ways this is a much more profound element of the project, as the earth comes from the very ground the soldiers fought upon, died upon and that many still lie at peace beneath.





Once in fine powder form, the earth is mixed with both the red and green enamel before experts carefully apply it to the poppies.





Once polished, with enamels applied and application of lacquer to avoid tarnish, rows of Passchendaele 100 Poppies await pin clutches, mating with Everyman Remembered certificates and final boxing



Tyne Cot Cemetery, near Passchendaele, is the largest Commonwealth cemetery in the world in terms of graves. There are 11,961 servicemen of the First World War buried or commemorated, 8,373 of whom are unidentified. In addition, within the cemetery, the Tyne Cot Memorial commemorates nearly 35,000 names from the UK and New Zealand who died after August 22nd 1917 and whose graves are not known.



As with all Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) cemeteries, Tyne Cott is beautifully maintained and is a fitting and worthy tribute to the brave souls who rest there.

Each Poppy Pin is accompanied by a Royal British Legion Everyman Remembered certificate.

One of the first 1917 Poppy Pins issued was dedicated to Private John Sutherland of the Seaforth Highlanders.

Private Sutherland died on August 22nd 1917 and now rests at Tyne Cott.

Aged just 23, he was from Flotta, Orkney. Tragically, his brother William also lost his life on the Somme in 1916.





Vicky and Chris Bennett of TMB Art Metal visit Tyne Cott to seek the last resting place of Private John Sutherland.

Every CWGC cemetery has a register with names in alphabetical order and he was listed on page 221 - the same number as the hotel room we were staying in - it felt like our visit was meant to be....





The team locates John Sutherland's grave and
 it's emotional knowing that our Poppy Pin
 represents his life and his death - and that he
 rests amongst such peace and tranquility









A beautifully finished Passchendaele 100 Poppy Pin rests amongst the metal and earth from which it is made.

*Available exclusively from the
Royal British Legion Poppy Shop.*

About the Royal British Legion

WHAT WE ARE HERE FOR.

The Legion is at the heart of a national network that supports the Armed Forces community through thick and thin - ensuring their unique contribution is never forgotten. We've been here since 1921 and we'll be here as long as they need us.

LEADING THE NATION IN REMEMBRANCE.

The Royal British Legion is the national custodian of Remembrance, safeguarding the memory of those who have fought and died in conflicts past and present, as well as the unique contribution made by all those who served.

OUR COMMUNITY.

As the country's largest Armed Forces charity, we couldn't be prouder of our national network of over 220,000 members and over 100,000 volunteers. Without their passion and dedication, our work would not be possible.

We also work with many partners and other charities to direct support wherever and whenever it's needed, so we can help everyone who approaches us.





At the going down of the sun
And in the morning,
We will remember them.