

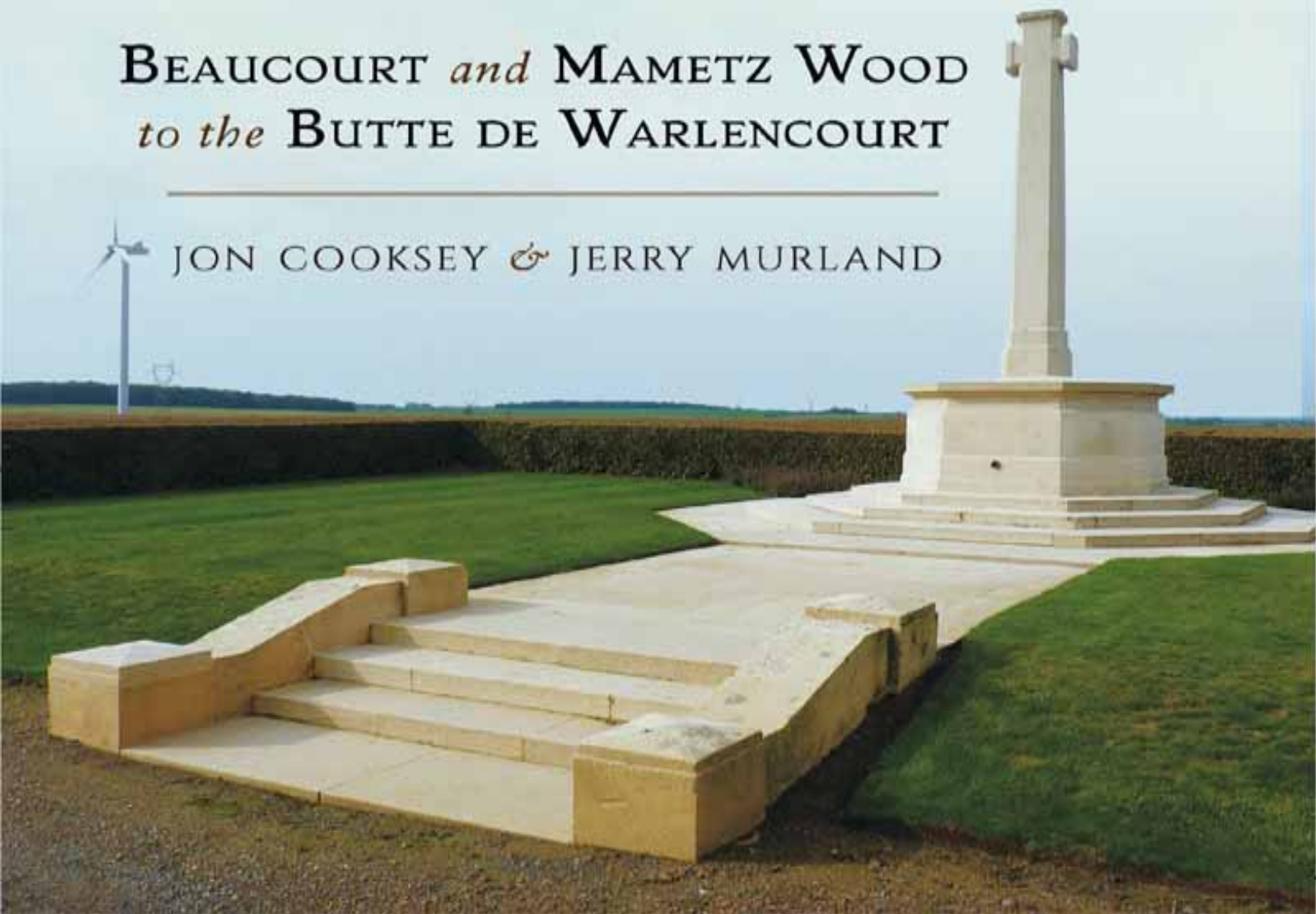


A VISITOR'S GUIDE

THE SOMME 1916 BEYOND THE FIRST DAY

BEAUCOURT *and* MAMETZ WOOD
to the BUTTE DE WARLENCOURT

JON COOKSEY & JERRY MURLAND



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Beaucourt and Mametz Wood to the Butte de
Warlencourt



The renovated crucifix marking the approximate spot where Captain Houston Wallace, 10/Worcesters, was killed on 22 July 1916. Wallace's name is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial.

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Warlencourt

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This guide is dedicated to the memory of Jon Alan Cooksey 1958–2020

Beaucourt Revisited

I wandered up to Beaucourt; I took the river track,
and saw the lines we lived in before the Boche went back;
but peace was now in Pottage, the front was far ahead,
The front had journeyed Eastward, and only left the dead.
And I thought, how long we lay there, and watched across the wire,
While the guns roared round the valley, and set the skies afire!
But now there are homes in Hamel and tents in the Vale of Hell,
And a camp at Suicide Corner, where half a regiment fell
The new troops follow after, and tread the land we won,
To them 'tis so much hill-side re-wrested from the Hun
We only walk with reverence this sullen mile of mud
The shell-holes hold our history, and half of them our blood.
Here, at the head of Peche Street, 'twas death to show your face,
To me it seemed like magic to linger in the place;
For me how many spirits hung around the Kentish Caves,
But the new men see no spirits – they only see the graves.
I found the half-dug ditches we fashioned for the fight,
We lost a score of men there – young James was killed that night,
I saw the star shells staring, I heard the bullets hail,
But the new troops pass unheeding – they never heard the tale.
I crossed the blood red ribbon, that once was no-man's-land,
I saw a misty daybreak and a creeping minute-hand;
And here the lads went over, and there was Harmsworth shot,
And here was William lying – but the new men know them not.
And I said, 'There is still the river, and still the stiff, stark trees,
To treasure here our story, but there are only these'
But under the white wood crosses the dead men answered low,

‘The new men know not Beaucourt, but we are here – we know’.

Written in 1917 by Lieutenant Alan Patrick Herbert, late Hawke Battalion,
63rd Royal Naval Division

Suicide Corner was near the communal cemetery at Hamel on the D73

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INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A Visitor's Guide to The Somme 1916 – Beyond the First Day is a companion guide to *The First Day of the Somme* and the eighth in a series of guidebooks in which we have designed routes to provide the tourist with the opportunity to appreciate and explore the more remote parts of the battlefield. The Battle of the Somme with its dramatic opening on 1 July 1916 dragged on until 18 November of that year, and *Beyond the First Day* is an attempt to look in detail at some of the battlefields that were fought over as the British front advanced a mere 7 miles in five months of almost relentless attacks.

Please make use of Google Earth, or the French equivalent *Géoportail*, before your visit to familiarize yourself with the area and the routes you intend to use. Where possible we have used quiet roads and local pathways but please be aware that speeding traffic and farm machinery is always a possibility, even on the quietest of roads. Whilst we have ensured that vehicles are not left in isolated spots, we do recommend you take the usual precautions when leaving a vehicle unattended by placing valuables securely in the boot or out of sight and, being northern France, it is always advisable to carry a set of waterproofs and have a sensible pair of boots or shoes to walk in. Within the built-up areas cafes and refreshment stops are usually open during normal hours but it is a good idea to take something to eat and drink when away from your vehicle for any length of time. Cyclists will recognize the need to use multi-terrain tyres on their bikes and require the use of a sturdier hybrid or off-road machine. Regular visitors to the battlefields

will be familiar with the collections of old shells and other explosive material that is often placed by the roadside by farmers. By all means look and take photographs, but please do not touch as much of it is still in an unstable condition.

The historical information provided with each route has of necessity been limited but we have given an overview around which to develop your understanding of what took place and why. Nevertheless, we have made some additional suggestions for further reading which should widen your appreciation of the events that took place on this sector of the Western Front over 100 years ago. Appendix 1 contains a timetable of the Battle of the Somme which will provide battlefield visitors with a detailed chronology of exactly when each sector was captured and the particular battle in which it was linked to, whilst Appendix 2 lists the cemeteries and memorials associated with the posthumous Victoria Cross holders. In acknowledging the assistance of others, we must thank Sebastian Laudan for his help in researching German accounts of the battles and James Buchanan from *Rutland Remembers* for permission to use the aerial photograph of the AIF Burial Ground. To Andrew Mackay our thanks must go for the use of his photograph of Crucifix Corner. As we go to press, I have had the news of the premature death of Jon Cooksey, my co-writer and battlefield companion of many years. In memory of Jon I have included a poem by A.P. Herbert who fought in the Battle of Beaucourt with the Royal Naval Division during November 1916 and returned a year later to survey the ground he had fought over. Like Jon, he had a special affinity with the men of the RND and his words, although over 100 years old, remind me of the smiling figure that was Jon Cooksey.



Unexploded ammunition is a common sight on the Somme battlefields. Look by all means but for your own sake, and those who may be with you, do not touch.

VISITING MILITARY CEMETERIES



Fabian Ware (left) standing with Sir Douglas Haig and King George V (on the extreme right).

The concept of the **Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC)** was created by **Major Fabian Ware** (1869–1949), the volunteer leader of a Red Cross mobile unit which saw service on the Western Front for most of the period of the war. Concern for the identification and burial of the dead led Ware to begin lobbying for an organization devoted to burial and maintenance of those who had been killed or died in the service of their country. On 21 May 1917 the Prince of Wales became the president of the IWGC with Fabian Ware as its vice-chairman. Forty-three years later the IWGC became the **Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC)**. Neither a soldier nor a politician, Ware was later honoured with a knighthood and held the honorary rank of major general. The commission was responsible for introducing the standardized headstone which would bring equality in death regardless of rank, race or creed and it is this familiar white headstone that you will see now in CWGC cemeteries all over the world.



A profusion of CWGC signposts.

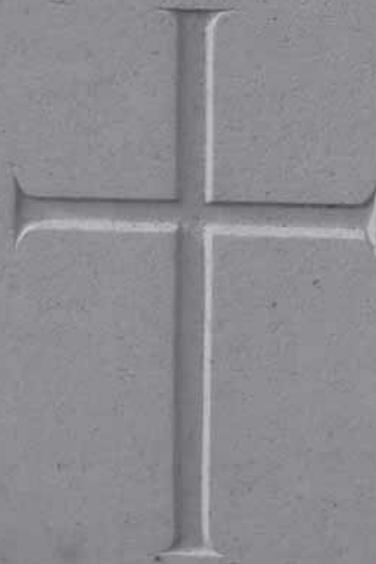
CWGC cemeteries are usually well signposted with the familiar green and white direction indicators and where there is a CWGC plot within a communal cemetery, such as **Bazentin-le-Petit Communal Cemetery and Extension**, the familiar green and white sign at the entrance, with the words

Tombes de Guerre du Commonwealth, will indicate their presence. The tall Cross of Sacrifice with the bronze Crusader's sword can be found in many cemeteries, where there are relatively large numbers of dead. The larger cemeteries also have the rectangular shaped Stone of Remembrance. A visitor's book and register of casualties is usually kept in a bronze box by the entrance. Sadly, a number of registers have been stolen and to prevent this from happening you may find a cemetery register in the local *Mairie*.

CWGC cemeteries are noted for their high standards of horticultural excellence and the image of rows of headstones set amidst grass pathways and flowering shrubs is one every battlefield visitor takes away with them. On each headstone is the badge of the regiment or corps or, in the case of Commonwealth forces, the national emblem. Below that is the name and rank of the individual and the date on which they died together with any decoration they may have received. Where the headstone marks the grave of a non-Christian, the emblem most commonly associated with their faith replaces the simple cross. Headstones of Victoria Cross winners have the additional motif of the decoration inscribed on it. At the base of the headstone is often an inscription chosen by the family. Headstones marking the unidentified bear the inscriptions chosen by Rudyard Kipling, 'A Soldier of the Great War' or 'Known unto God'. Special memorials are erected to casualties known to be buried in the cemetery but whose precise location is uncertain.



SECOND LIEUTENANT
C.A. SHEPHERD
NORFOLK REGIMENT
12TH OCTOBER 1916 AGE 20



Second Lieutenant C.A. Shepherd's headstone (I.B.1) in Guillimont Road Cemetery is of a standard 'World War' Pattern which you will find across all First and Second World War CWGC cemeteries. Post-war CWGC headstones have a notch cut into either shoulder at the top.

French War Graves

In the area covered by this guide there is one French National Cemetery at **Rancourt** with the attached Souvenir Français chapel where there are 8,566 burials and a further 3,240 contained in four ossuaries, making it the largest French cemetery on the Somme. A concentration cemetery, it testifies to the French sacrifice in the area from September to November 1916. Here you will find the concrete white grave markers used by the French ***Ministère des Anciens Combattants et Victimes de Guerre***. French military cemeteries are usually marked by the French national flag and those which are contained within communal cemeteries are often indicated by a sign at the cemetery entrance bearing the words: *Carré Militaire, Tombes de Soldats, Morts pour la France*.



The French National Cemetery at Rancourt.

German Cemeteries

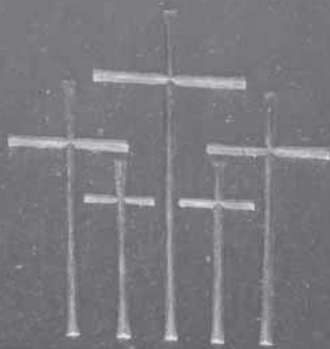
The German War Graves Commission, *Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge*, is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of German war graves in Europe and North Africa. Visitors to the German cemetery at **Rancourt** will find it in stark contrast to CWGC cemeteries. Here there are 11,422 burials, of which 7,492 lie in a mass grave. Two-thirds of the dead are from the Battle of the Somme between July and November 1916. Despite the unusual grey stone burial markers, they still exude a dark and often sombre ambiance. The granite headstones, which replaced the wooden crosses in 1972, each contain at least four names and a small chapel

made from red Vosges sandstone contains a carving of an internment by the Munich sculptor Geiger.

DEUTSCHER
SOLDATEN
FRIEDHOF
1914-1918

RANCOURT

CIMETIERE
MILITAIRE
ALLEMAND



The entrance to the Deutscher Soldaten Friedhof at Rancourt.

Equivalent Ranks

We have produced a rough guide to equivalent ranks which should assist you when visiting the cemeteries and memorials referred to in the guidebook.

British	German	French
Field Marshall	<i>Generalfeldmarschall</i>	<i>Maréchal de France</i>
General	<i>Generaloberst</i>	<i>Général d'Armée</i>
Lieutenant General	<i>General der Infanterie/Artillerie/Kavallerie</i>	<i>Général de Corps Armée</i>
Major General	<i>Generalmajor</i>	<i>Général de Division</i>
Brigadier General	No equivalent rank	<i>Général de Brigade</i>
Colonel	<i>Oberst</i>	<i>Colonel</i>
Lieutenant Colonel	<i>Oberstleutnant</i>	<i>Lieutenant Colonel</i>
Major	<i>Major</i>	<i>Commandant/Major</i>
Captain	<i>Hauptmann/Rittmeister</i>	<i>Capitaine</i>
Lieutenant	<i>Oberleutnant</i>	<i>Lieutenant</i>
Second Lieutenant	<i>Leutnant</i>	<i>Sous-Lieutenant</i>
Warrant Officer	<i>Feldwebelleutnant</i>	<i>Adjutant</i>
Sergeant Major	<i>Offizierstellvertreter</i>	<i>Sergent Major</i>
Sergeant	<i>Vize Feldwebel</i>	<i>Sergent</i>
Corporal	<i>Unteroffizier/Oberjäger</i>	<i>Caporal</i>
Lance	<i>Gefreiter/Obergefreiter</i>	

Corporal		
Private	Schütze/Grenadier/ Jäger/Musketier	<i>Soldat, Chasseur Artilleur</i>
Trooper	<i>Soldat/Pionier/Fahrer/Füsilier</i>	<i>Légionnaire</i>
Sapper	<i>Kanonier</i>	

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Following the outbreak of hostilities in 1914 it took a considerable period of time to increase Britain's military strength and to establish an effective presence in France and Belgium. By 1916 Britain was ready to confront the Germans with a largely volunteer army of amateurs who were anxious to prove their worth in combat. But, as we know, of the 142 days of the Battle of the Somme none were as traumatic as the first day, the bloodiest 24 hours ever experienced by the British Army. The altogether modest gains achieved on 1 July 1916 cost nearly 60,000 casualties, including 19,240 killed and 35,493 wounded. Stretched across a battle front of some 18 miles/28km, the attack north of the Albert–Bapaume road was brought almost immediately to a standstill and it was only south of the road that slightly better results were achieved. It was without doubt an attack that was punctuated with contradictions and false assumptions, not least those that surfaced between Haig, the British Commander-in-Chief, and Rawlinson; but, apart from that, there was, and still is, a huge scale of human tragedy that manifested itself in personal and family grief. Even today, the laborious slog of the remaining four-and-a-half months of the battle is sometimes ignored by authors and historians alike and this guide book will, hopefully, go some way to addressing that imbalance.

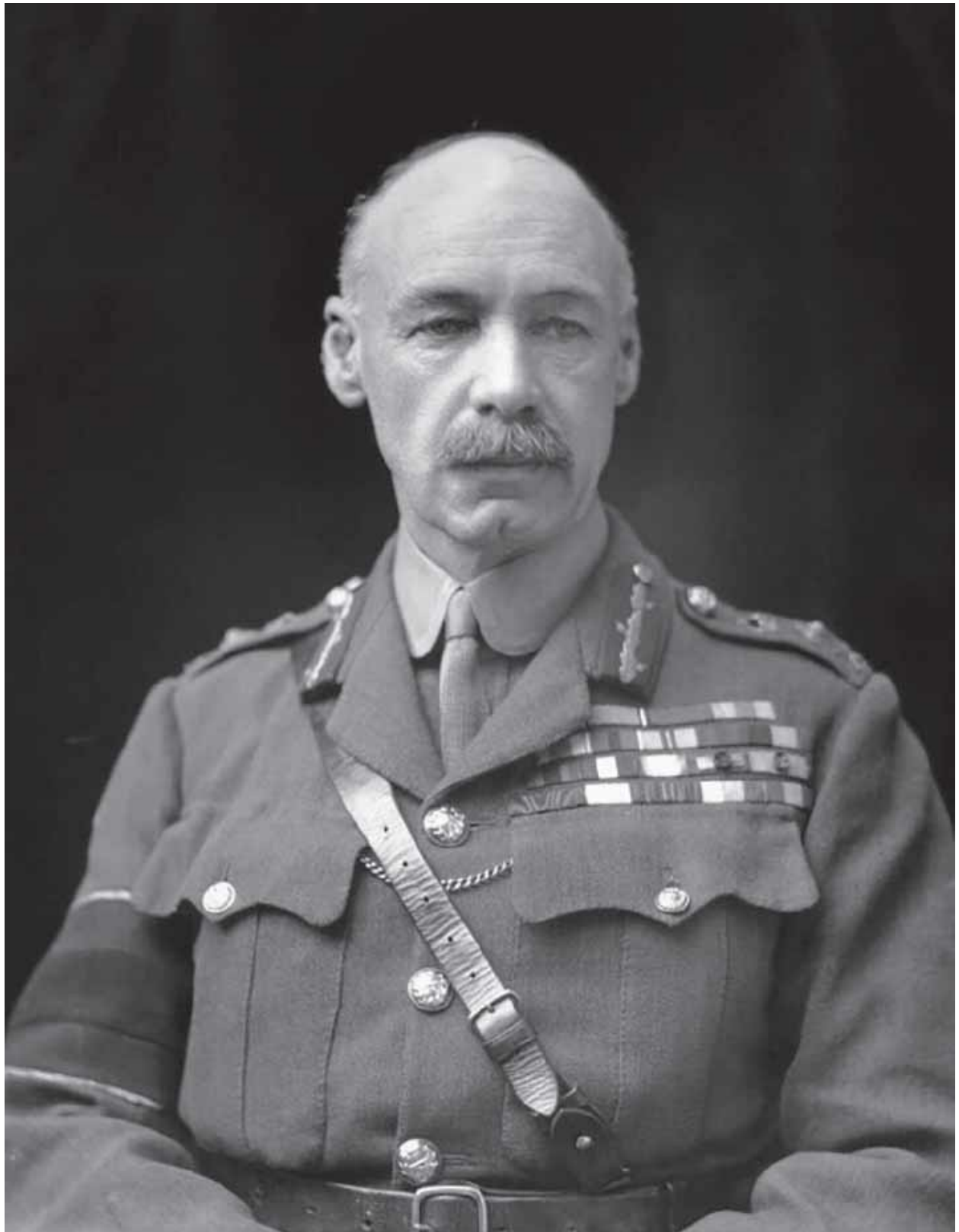


General Sir Douglas Haig.

From 2 to 13 July as Hubert Gough's Reserve Army began to assume responsibility for the battle north of the Albert-Bapaume road, the main thrust of operations was placed upon Henry Rawlinson's Fourth Army with the British attempting to exploit the modest successes to the south of the road. During this period Mametz Wood, Contalmaison and Trônes Wood were secured prior to the assault of 14 July, known as the Dawn Attack. This attack resulted in the British capturing ground between Longueval and Bazentin-le-Petit, However opportunities to exploit the gains were thrown away; for example, Delville Wood, to the east of Longueval, which was not finally in British hands until 27 August, and High Wood, which resisted all attempts to take it until 15 September.

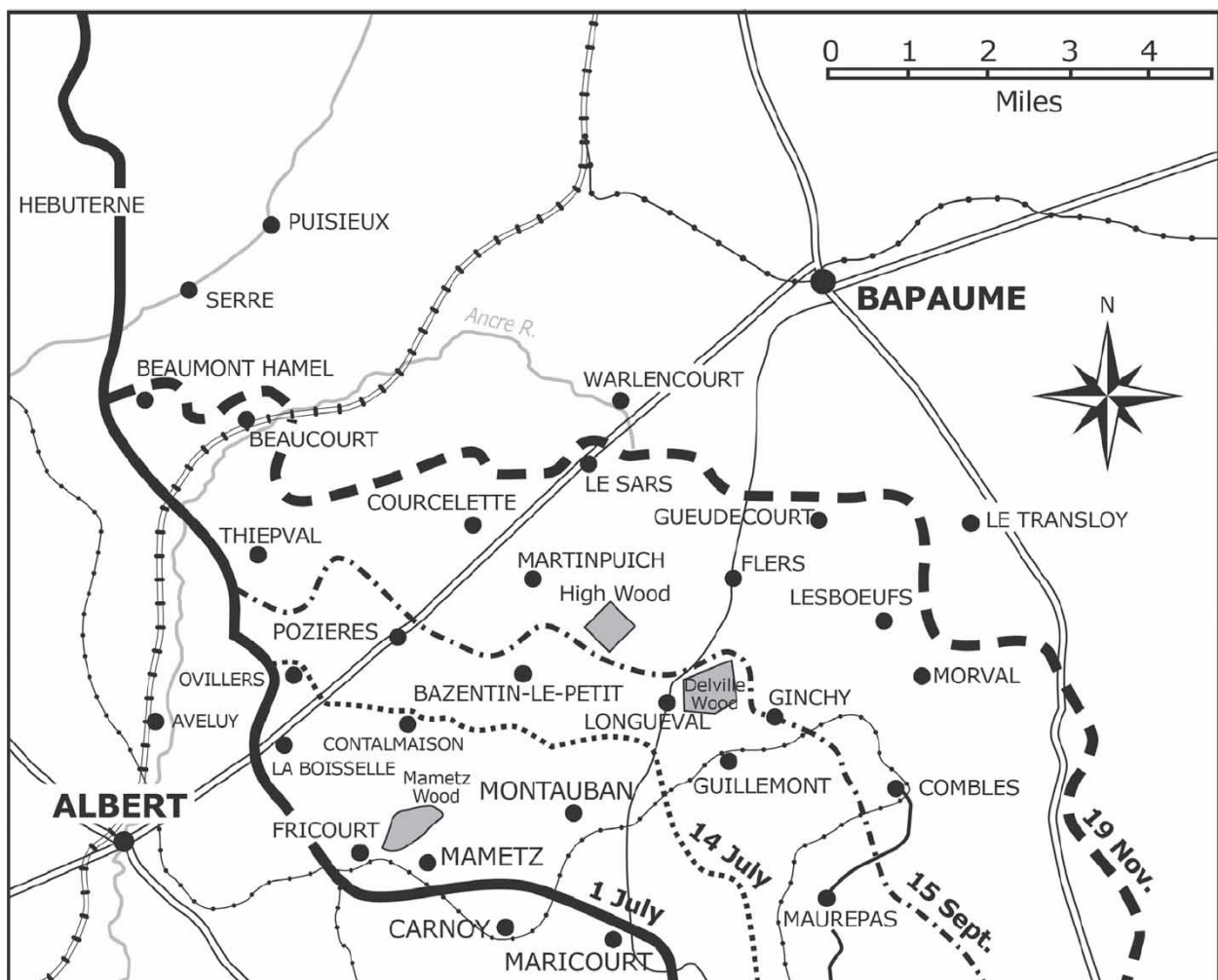


Lieutenant General Hubert Gough.



Lieutenant General Sir Henry Rawlinson.

Sir Douglas Haig, as the Commander-in-Chief of British and Commonwealth Forces, is on record as regarding the operations of late July and August as part of the ‘wearing out’ phase of the battle before another assault in September would, he hoped, prove to be decisive. Although Rawlinson’s Fourth Army continued to play the leading role during this period and seized Guillemont and Ginchy, the Reserve Army’s operations were growing in importance as the Australians of the ANZAC Corps were involved in the bitter fighting for Pozières from 23 July until 5 August. Despite gaining the high ground on the crest of the ridge east of the village, it was merely a curtain raiser for the operations faced by the Reserve Army in overcoming the German lines northwest of the Albert–Bapaume road.



A map depicting the Battle of the Somme, 1916 with the limit of the 1 July advance on the left and the subsequent three phases of the campaign.

For most of that summer the Royal Flying Corps basked in an air superiority they were not to enjoy again, and certainly during the first two weeks of the battle Trenchard's intention of keeping the German aviators too preoccupied in defence to either interfere with the work of corps squadrons or intrude significantly over British lines was achieved. However, during the second phase of the battle the German air force began showing signs of recovery, Hauptmann Oswald Boelcke was brought in to organize the formation of *Jagdstaffeln* with the new D-type Albatros and Halberstadt aircraft, the first batch of which were delivered on 6 September 1916. Boelcke flew his first combat mission on 17 September, two days after Sir Douglas Haig renewed his assault on the German third line.

The assault on the German third line on 15 September marked the debut of the tank on the battlefield and coincided with French assaults to the south. The Fourth Army's objectives on 15 September were Flers, Morval, Lesboeufs and Gueudecourt, a battle that saw the New Zealand Division in action for the first time since Gallipoli. Even though Flers was captured by XV Corps with the aid of four tanks along with High Wood and Courcellette, it was still not enough for the decisive blow sought by Haig and Rawlinson. On the bright side there was a flash of brilliance in the Battle of Morval with the preliminary bombardment and creeping barrage particularly effective in the XIV sector. Morval and Lesboeufs were captured on 25 September and on the following day Combles and Gueudecourt were taken.



Hauptmann Oswald Boelcke in 1916 with the Pour le Mérite around his neck.

At the same time the Reserve Army launched their attack on the Thiepval Ridge and the German garrison at Mouquet Farm surrendered to the 11th Division. Maxse's 18th Division took the majority of Thiepval but the Schwaben Redoubt remained in German hands until 14 October. The second half of September is now considered by a number of historians to be the point at which Haig should have called a halt to the Somme offensive; over optimism and poor intelligence from Haig's Chief of Intelligence, Brigadier General Charteris, went a long way to convincing the commander-in-chief that one more effort would break the German Army. This criticism of Haig, particularly with regard to the number of casualties sustained, has, to some extent, obscured his later achievements. However, current thinking largely agrees that the Somme offensive was a necessary and painful process in wearing down a skilful and highly professional German Army and although there were occasions when the BEF demonstrated a glimmer of what was to come, the army was not yet the balanced force that it became in the last year of the war.



Tank C19 Clan Leslie in Chimpanzee Valley during the Battle of Flers-Courcelette.

Thus, as the Fourth Army crawled its way towards Le Transloy, Le Sars was finally captured on 7 October but the Butte de Warlencourt remained stubbornly in German hands despite the myriad of battalions thrown into the fight. The battles around the Butte de Warlencourt coincided with the onset of bad weather and the battlefield became a sticky morass. In what became the final flourish, the Reserve Army delivered a well-planned assault astride the Ancre on 13 November. This final phase of the battle saw Beaumont-Hamel, St-Pierre-Divion and Beaucourt captured, but Serre, which had been an objective on 1 July, remained tantalisingly behind the German line when the battle petered out on 19 November 1916. The final tally of the Battle of the Somme was a strip of land some 20 miles/32km wide by 6 miles/9km deep, which had been wrested from the Germans at the cost of 419,654 British and Commonwealth, 204,253 French and between 437,000 and 680,000 German casualties.

It is a fact that Crown Prince Ruprecht of Bavaria and his chief-of-staff, Hermann von Kuhl, both noted the decline in strength of the German Army on the Somme and had their doubts whether a similar offensive could be withstood in 1917. Captain von Hentig, a staff officer with the Guard Reserve Division, described the Somme as ‘the muddy grave of the German field army’. Nevertheless, it is still unlikely that the German Army could have been defeated in 1916. Historian Peter Simkins is of the opinion that the Somme offensive ‘might therefore be best judged by examining the story of 9 April 1917, rather than the bloody assaults of 1916’ when the Canadian Corps took Vimy Ridge and the British XVII Corps advanced over 3 miles/5km during the Battle of Arras at a comparatively light cost in casualties. The battle of Arras is covered in our two-volume guide *The Battles of Arras North and South*.

The weather that finally brought an end to the Battle of the Somme was followed by snow and a thaw, turning conditions underfoot into a veritable swamp. In describing these conditions the official history compared them to those experienced in the Ypres Salient during the Third Battle of Ypres:

Here, in a wilderness of mud, holding water-logged trenches or shell hole post, accessible only by night, the infantry abode in conditions

which might be likened to those of earthworms rather than of human kind ... Mud, for the men in the line, was no mere organic nuisance and obstacle. It took on an aggressive, wolf-like guise, and like a wolf could pull down and swallow the lonely warrior in the darkness.

VISITING THE AREA



The Hotel de La Paix in Albert, which provides simple meals in the hotel restaurant.




Visitors to the area can either stay in one of the larger conurbations, such as Albert or Amiens, or take advantage of the profusion of bed and breakfast and self-catering establishments, which can be found on the Internet. If you are intending to base yourself in Albert, the **Royal Picardie Hotel** is good, as




is the **Hotel de La Paix**. For occasional meals the authors recommend the **Bar Aux 3 Pigeons** on Rue Dumont which sells an excellent beer and good food. However, if you find yourself in Albert on a Sunday evening, the only restaurant open for business at the time of writing is **Le Corner's Pub** on Rue Birmingham. Alternatively, the cathedral city of Amiens offers the more luxurious **Hotel Marmotte** and the **Mercure Amiens Cathédrale**. There is a wide choice of bed and breakfast accommodation around the area, most of which is situated in the heart of the battlefield amongst the rolling hills of Picardy. Whilst an Internet search will reveal many of these, we can recommend **Chavasse Farm** and **Les Alouettes** in Hardecourt-aux-Bois which boasts bed and breakfast as well as self-catering. Campers will find **Camping Bellevue** at Authille open from March to October each year, a site which benefits from an excellent nearby restaurant and has facilities for camper vans and mobile homes.

Using this Guidebook

The Somme is characterized by its rolling hills and valleys and whilst walkers should have little difficulty, bikers will need a decent hybrid or off-road machine equipped with suitable tyres as some of the tracks we describe can become muddy after periods of wet weather. In compiling the guide, we have taken the liberty of using a number of abbreviations in the text. With German units we have simply trimmed Infantry Regiment and Reserve Infantry Regiment to IR and RIR. Thus, Infantry Regiment No. 73 becomes IR73, Reserve Infantry Regiment No. 165 becomes RIR165 and Fusilier Regiment 90 becomes FR90. British battalions and units have also been abbreviated, for example – the 1st King's Royal Rifle Corps becoming 1/KRRC. Where we refer to casualties the number quoted is usually taken from the battalion's war diary and includes officers and men who were killed, wounded or missing after the engagement. To assist you in your choice of route we have provided a summary of all nine routes in the guidebook together with an indication as to their suitability for walkers, cyclists or car tourists. Approximate distances are in km – the first figure in the table – and miles whilst the circular alpha/numeric references in the text of each route

correspond directly with those on the relevant map. We hope you enjoy exploring the Somme battlefields as much as we have done.

Number	Route	Distance			
1	Mametz Wood and Bazentin Ridge	11km / 7.4 miles	✓	✓	
2	High Wood	8km / 5 miles	✓	✓	
3	Pozières	6km / 3.7 miles	✓	✓	
4	Guillemont and Ginchy	8km / 5 miles	✓	✓	
5	Flers	9km / 5.8 miles	✓	✓	
6	Delville Wood	6km / 3.5 miles			

Number	Route	Distance			
7	Le Sars and the Butte de Warlencourt	8km / 5 miles	✓	✓	
8	Beaucourt	11km / 7 miles	✓	✓	
9	Car Tour	58km / 36 miles		✓	✓



Route 1

MAMETZ WOOD AND BAZENTIN RIDGE

A circular tour beginning at: the church at Bazentin-le-Petit

Distance: 11km/7.4 miles

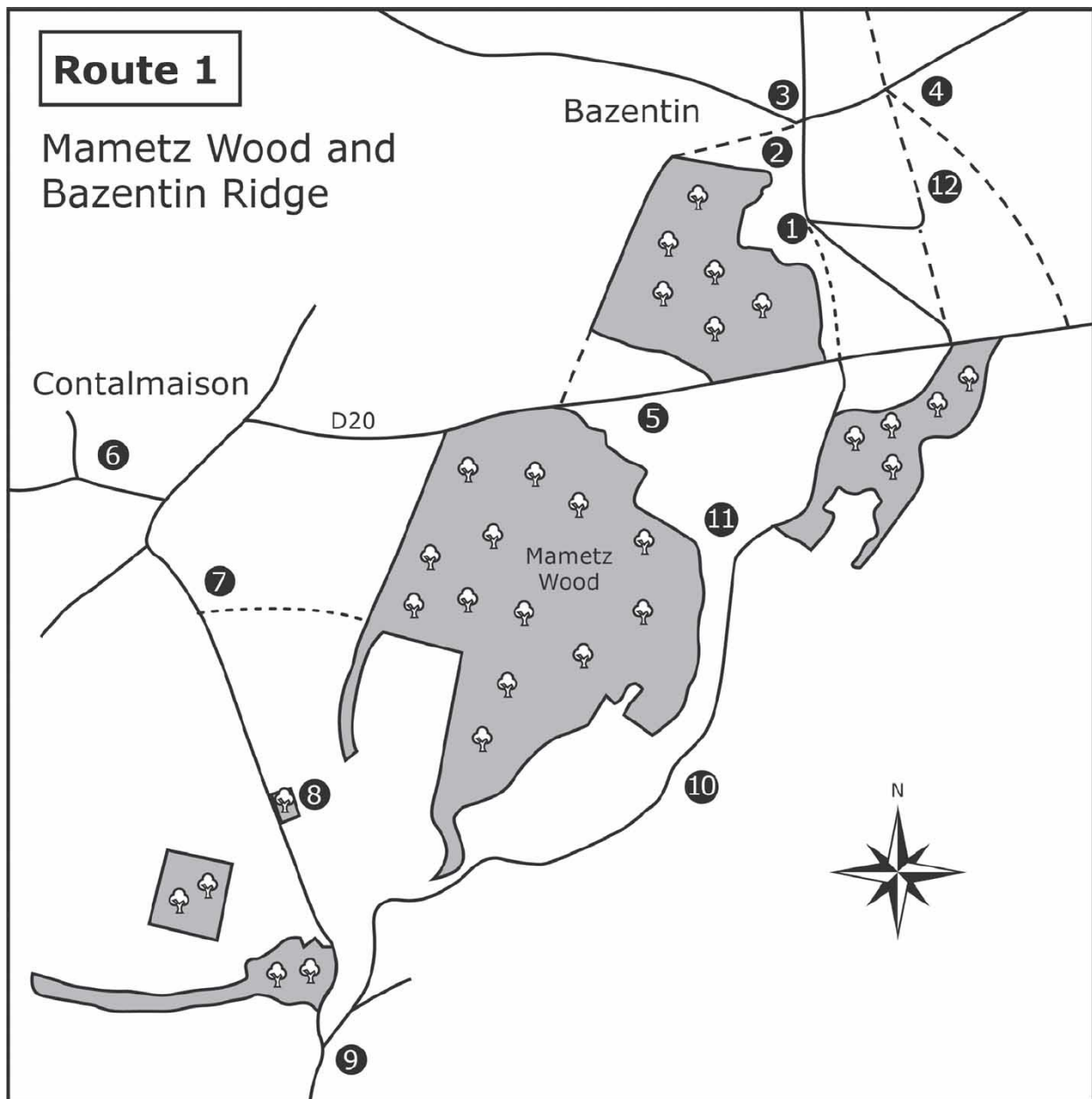
Grade: Easy

Suitable for:  

Maps: Bray-sur-Somme 2408

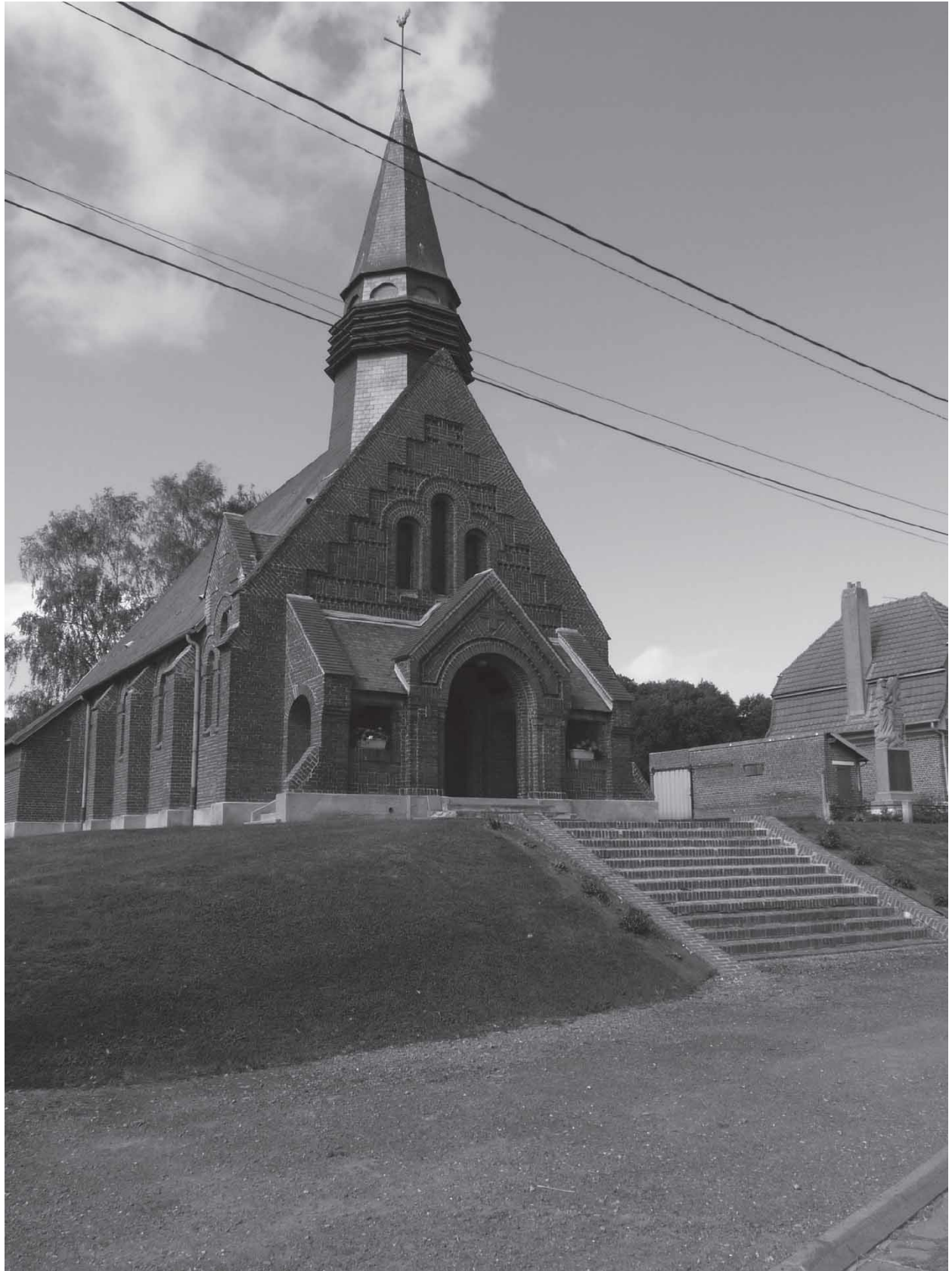
General description and context: The village of Bazentin was called Bazentin-le-Petit by the British in 1916 but today it is simply marked as Bazentin on French IGN maps, whilst the village of Bazentin-le-Grand has been reduced to a collection of farm buildings. Both villages, and the woods named after them, were captured in the attacks of 14 July and were adopted by Ipswich in Suffolk after the war. The route begins in Bazentin-le-Petit and, after visiting **Bazentin-le-Petit Military Cemetery** and the **Nine Brave Men Memorial**, swings around to the **Wallace Memorial** crucifix before passing to the right of Bazentin-le-Petit Wood – captured by 110 Brigade on 14 July – to join the D20 about 90m to the left of the track leading to the **Harry Fellows** headstone. Back on the D20, the route passes the small collection of copses and the site of the former **Contalmaison Villa** before turning left into Contalmaison. From the village we visit the Communal Cemetery where the 12/Manchester's Memorial is situated and on to the Quadrilateral and **Bottom Wood**, made famous by Siegfried Sassoon's exploits in Wood

Trench. From there we turn north past **Queen's Nullah** to the **Red Dragon Memorial** and **Mametz Wood** which was captured at great cost by the 38th (Welsh) Division. At **Flatiron Copse Cemetery** pause for a moment as it was from this area that the left flank of the successful Dawn Attack of 14 July was launched. We continue into Bazentin-le-Petit and visit **Bazaetin-le-Petit Communal Cemetery and Extension** where Robert Graves was taken after he had been wounded. From the cemetery it is a short distance to the church and your vehicle.



Directions to start: The small village of Bazentin is situated north of the D20 between Longueval and Contalmaison. Once in the village park near to the church.

Route Description: With the church ❶ on your left proceed uphill along the D73 for approximately 160m. Here you will see a CWGC signpost directing you to **Bazentin-le-Petit Military Cemetery** ❷ along a grass pathway on the left. Note the screw pickets that are still used for fencing along here and at other places in the village. An advanced dressing station during the Somme offensives, the cemetery was used from July 1916 until May 1917. Today the cemetery contains 182 burials, of which 15 are unidentified. There are some apparent spaces in the rows, which are the result of German graves which were later removed to Fricourt. The Cross of Sacrifice is set in a triangular section in one corner of the cemetery. There are fifty-five Australians buried here of whom 39-year-old **Captain Harold Teague** (G.11), 11/Battalion, was killed on Valentine's Day 1917. Teague, from Bendigo, Victoria, is remembered with the usual CWGC headstone and a smaller headstone beside it. A wooden cross may have once been placed on the pin that can be seen on the smaller headstone.



The church at Bazentin is close to the Lamark Memorial.



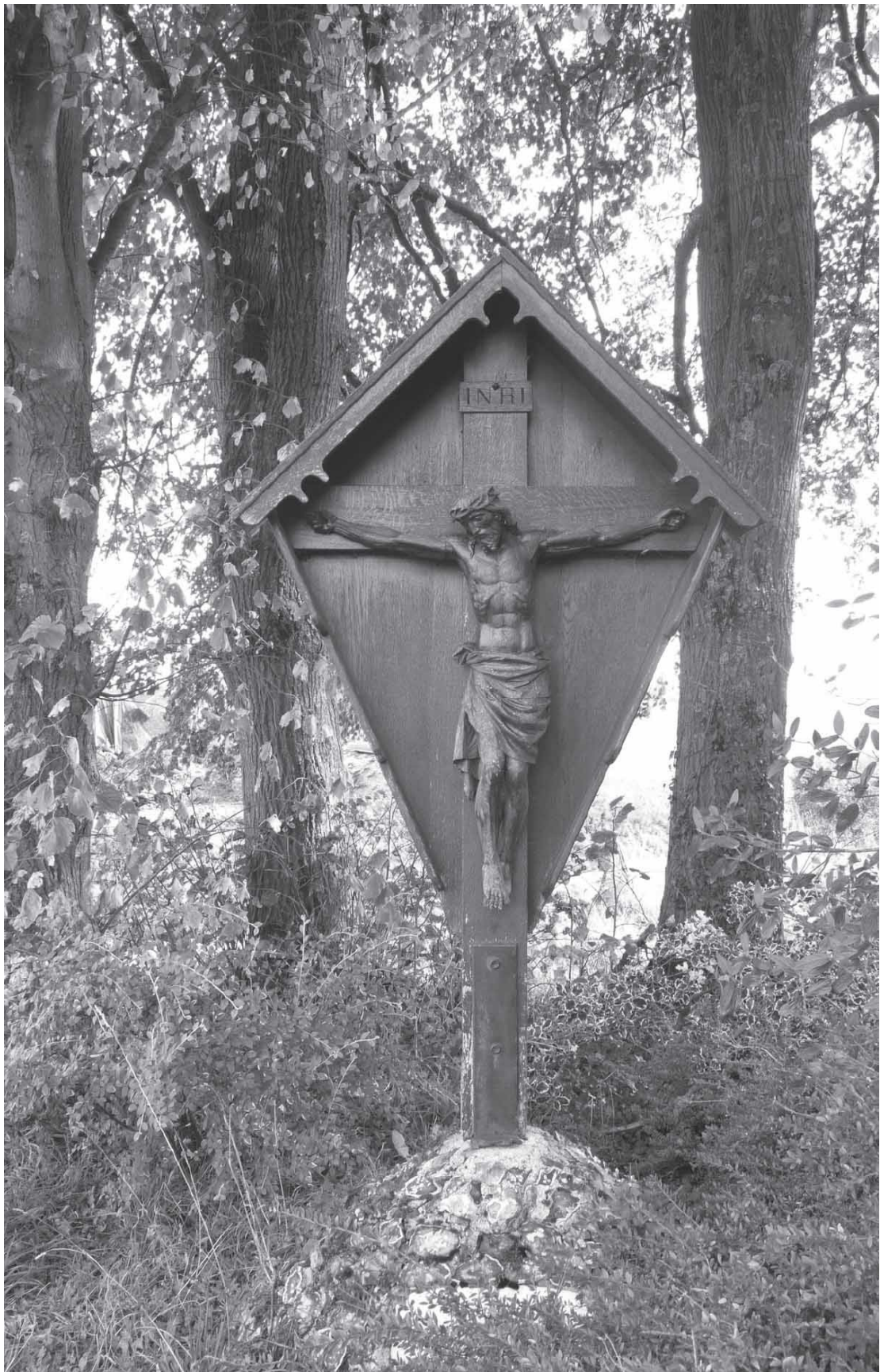
Bazentin-le-Petit Military Cemetery.



The Nine Brave Men Memorial.

After leaving the cemetery return to the main road and turn left to reach the crossroads, stopping by the **Nine Brave Men Memorial**. This was constructed using bricks reclaimed from the ruins of the village and built by **Major Butterworth**, commanding 82/Field Company, Royal Engineers. The men ③ commemorated here were all from Number 3 Section and killed on 29 July 1916 whilst working under the orders of 57 Brigade. From a party of forty, nineteen were wounded and of the nine killed only one has a grave: Sapper John Higgins (Bécourt Military Cemetery), whilst the other, Sapper Charles Ellisson, is thought to be buried in Caterpillar Valley Cemetery. The remainder are commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial. The memorial was renovated in 1989 by the 82/Junior Leaders Regiment, Royal Engineers but is, at the time of writing, once again in a poor state of repair. About 300m along the road to the right is a crucifix, standing on the right side of the road

almost hidden by vegetation. The restored crucifix commemorates **4**
Captain Houston Wallace, 10/Worcesters, who was killed on 22 July 1916. Wallace's name is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial. If you choose to visit Wallace's Crucifix, retrace your steps to the crossroads and keeping the RE Memorial on the right, continue along the track to the left which runs along the north eastern edge of Bazentin-le-Petit Wood. In 1916 this track was the scene of numerous attacks as 110 (Leicestershire) Brigade, 37th Division, advanced towards the former **Contalmaison Villa**. The point where the track meets the wood was where a German light railway entered before swinging southwest to follow the line of the wood and continue its route south into Mametz Wood. Just 10m in front of the point where former railway line entered the wood was where 26-year-old **Captain Frederick Emmet**, 9/Leicesters, and his men attempted to storm the German trench on the far side of the track; Emmet and thirty-six of his men were killed, their bodies were never found and their names are to be found on the Thiepval Memorial. But, despite the severe losses sustained by 110 Brigade, from the evening of 14 July most of the wood had been captured.



The memorial to Captain Houston Wallace was restored in 1994 by the Western Front Association.

When the track joins the D20 Mametz Wood is straight in front of you and you have a choice of whether to turn left to visit the grave of **Harry Fellows** ⑤ or turn right and continue towards Contalmaison and visit the grave later. The track leading to Harry Fellows' grave is approximately 100m to your left where a track on the right of the road leads into Mametz Wood through a set of double metal gates. The grave is some 15m along the track and is marked by a headstone similar in shape to that seen in CWGC cemeteries and records that the ashes of Harry Fellows, formally of 12/Northumberland Fusiliers, were buried here in 1987.



Captain Frederick Emmet.

If you have visited Harry Fellows' grave, retrace your steps to the main road and turn left, keeping Bazentin Woods on your right and Mametz Wood on your left. Head towards the radio transmitter mast ahead of you, and although it is less than a mile into Contalmaison, this is a main road and walkers should keep to the wide verge and be aware of speeding traffic. Just before the western edge of Mametz Wood comes into view, glance across to your right to see four small copses (Bois de la Choque on the IGN map), these were called **Lower Wood**, **Pearl Wood**, **Middle Wood** and **Villa Wood** on contemporary trench maps. The former Contalmaison Villa was a few yards northwest of Villa Wood.



Looking back towards Bazentin Woods from the D20.

The road continues into Contalmaison and bends round to the left, head downhill to reach a junction after 320m. At the junction turn right for 90m to visit ❹ **Contalmaison Chateau Cemetery**, which is accessed via some steps and a short grass path. The village was reached on 1 July by small parties of the 34th Division and was stormed by the 23rd Division on 7 July but lost during the same afternoon. It was not finally captured until the 8 and 9/Yorkshire Regiment cleared it three days later. However, it was lost again in March 1918, and recaptured by the 38th (Welsh) Division on 24 August 1918. The cemetery was begun by fighting units on the evening of 14 July, and used from September 1916 to March 1917 by Field Ambulances. A few burials were made in Plot 1, Rows B and C, in August and September 1918. Graves were added after the Armistice by concentrations from the battlefields of the Somme and the Ancre. There are now nearly 300 casualties commemorated in what has been called one of the most attractive cemeteries on the Somme, and, of these, over forty men remain unidentified. Foremost in the minds of many battlefield visitors is the grave of 31-year-old **Private William Short** (II.B.16) of C Company, 8/ Yorkshire Regiment, whose posthumous Victoria Cross was gazetted on 8 September 1916, for his actions in Munster Alley Trench on 7 August 1916.

After leaving the cemetery retrace your steps to the road junction and turn right to the church. There are three memorials to the fighting of 1 July situated outside the church, all of which are described in our companion volume, *The First Day of the Somme*. Continue past the church and, taking the first road on the left, continue to the site of **Bell's Redoubt**. Second Lieutenant Donald Bell, 9/Yorkshires, was killed five days after he knocked out a machine-gun position in Horseshoe Trench on 5 July 1916 – later renamed Bell's Redoubt. He was awarded the Victoria Cross for this action.

We are now heading towards Mametz. Continue uphill and stop at ❺ **Contalmaison Communal Cemetery**. The Peyroux family memorial is in the trees to the left, a local family who owned the former **Château du Contalmaison** and who can trace their ancestors back to the fifteenth century. At the eastern end of the cemetery, overlooking the former site of

Acid Drop Copse, is the memorial to the 12/Manchesters (17th Division), the battalion losing sixteen officers and over half of the NCOs and men killed, wounded or missing during their attack on **Quadrilateral Support Trench** on 7 July. The original memorial was a 6ft-tall wooden cross. The cross had been made by Ted Thompson, an old soldier from the 12/Manchesters, and was originally sited at Mametz Wood and unveiled by Major Browell in August 1927. Browell was one of the officers who had sailed with the battalion in July 1915 to France. The site at the cemetery was purchased in 1929, and the memorial was replaced by the permanent one that can be seen today. In the cemetery itself the family headstone of **Joseph Clement** can be seen on the right, an ex-soldier who died for France on 1 November 1916. As you leave the cemetery, look straight ahead amongst the trees to see **Peake Wood Cemetery**, where Manfred von Richthofen was originally interred before being removed and buried in Germany.



The Peyroux family memorial at Contalmaison Communal Cemetery.



The memorial to the 12/Manchesters overlooks the former site of Acid Drop

Copse.

Leave the cemetery and turn left to continue downhill. About 180m from the tiny **Quadrangle Wood** on your right, you will pass over the line of ⑧ **Quadrilateral Trench**, snaking its way towards Mametz Wood, across to your left before it becomes **Wood Trench**. An excellent view of the western side of Mametz Wood can be seen from this point with the wide sweep of the front captured on 11/12 July. Continue downhill and as the road begins to bend round to the right, you will see the much larger expanse of **Bottom Wood** on the opposite side of the road, which today has been reduced to the rectangular shape you can now see.

Preparations for the 38th (Welsh) Division's attack on Mametz Wood included the necessity of occupying Quadrangle Trench. Consequently, on 4 July the 1/RWF moved up from Bottom Wood and managed to capture part of Quadrilateral Trench. Present with the battalion was **Lieutenant Siegfried Sassoon**, who, frustrated by the lack of progress, went up to the junction of Quadrilateral Trench and Wood Trench where he met 19-year-old **Second Lieutenant Vivian Newton** (Fernby in Sassoon's *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer*). It was at this point that **Lance Corporal Gibson** (Kendle in *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer*) was killed by a sniper, an action that infuriated Sassoon:



Siegfried Sassoon.

I slung my bag of bombs across my shoulders and set off at a downhill double. While I was running I pulled the safety pin out of a Mills' bomb; my right hand being loaded, I did the same for my left, I mention this because I was obliged to extract the second safety pin with my teeth ... Just before I arrived at the top I slowed up and threw

my two bombs. Then I rushed at the bank vaguely expecting some sort of scuffle with my imagined enemy ... I found myself looking down into a well-conducted trench with a great many Germans in it. Fortunately for me they were already retreating. It had not occurred to them they were being attacked by a single fool.

Sassoon's solo foray along Wood Trench with a bag of grenades to locate the sniper who had killed Kendle is the stuff of *Boy's Own* comics but his apparent failure to consolidate the capture of Wood Trench or send a message back to battalion Headquarters resulted not in a recommendation for bravery but a smart ticking off by his battalion commander, who himself had been admonished by Brigadier General Julian Steele. Vivian Newton died of wounds in September 1916 and is buried at St Sever Cemetery, Rouen.

At the next junction stop, the road continues into Mametz but our route ⁹ doubles back on itself and a CWGC signpost points the way to the **38th Division Memorial** (38 Ain Rhaniad Cymreig) and is one of the few Welsh language signposts in France. After 155m the track forks to the right and runs alongside a narrow wooded area, this is **Queen's Nullah** which the 2/Queens occupied on 1 July 1916 and is where **Major General E.C. Ingouville-Williams**, commanding the 34th Division, was killed by a shell whilst walking back to his car on 22 July. He was the most senior of six general officers killed on the Somme in 1916. Guy Chapman, an officer with the 34th Division, reported that some of the Tyneside Scottish, hooted with derision when it was reported that Ingouville-Williams was in fact souvenir hunting! A small memorial marking the approximate place of his death is no longer in existence.

Captain Llewelyn Wyn Griffith was based here with the staff of 115 Brigade during their attack on Mametz Wood. Wyn Griffith, attached to 15/Royal Welch Fusiliers, was the author of *Up To Mametz and Beyond*, which is possibly one of the finest accounts of the Great War on record. Retrace your steps to the main track and turn right.



The 38th Division Memorial is one of the few sites in France signposted in the Welsh language.

At the next fork bear left along the line of the former **Willow Trench** running along the base of the escarpment; trench maps also indicate a German railway line connecting Bottom Wood with the railway line from Martinpuich and Contalmaison. Our road continues up Happy Valley, with the dense mass of Mametz Wood on the left, to take a sharp right-hand turning before arriving at the ⑩ **Red Dragon Memorial**.

Designed by David Petersen, the memorial was erected in 1986 mainly through the efforts of the Cardiff Western Front Association. Situated on a piece of rising ground, the sculpture is reached via a set of metal steps leading from a small car park, and commemorates the bloody struggle of the Welsh New Army brigades that attacked Mametz Wood during the period 7–

12 July. The inscription in Welsh translates as: ‘Let us respect their endeavours. Let our memories live on’. Behind the memorial is the bench seat placed by **Major (Rtd) Huw Rodge** and is the perfect place to survey the notorious **Hammerhead sector** of the wood – so called because of its shape. During the clearance of the area in 1984, evidence of the light railway between the memorial and the Hammerhead was uncovered and was probably situated along the line of the present-day pathway that runs from the memorial into the wood.



The Red Dragon Memorial is situated opposite the Hammerhead sector of Mametz Wood.

The attack on Mametz Wood opened on 7 July with an attack by 115 Brigade, 38th (Welsh) Division, advancing northwest from the line of Marlborough Wood to the western end of Caterpillar Wood. The 17th Division attacked from the west with 50 and 51 Brigades advancing under the cover of darkness and 52 Brigade attacking Quadrilateral Support Trench. It was in this attack that the 12/Manchesters suffered very heavy casualties. Both attacks were unsuccessful owing to heavy machine-gun fire from **Acid Drop Copse**, the **Hammerhead sector** of Mametz Wood (attacked by the 16/Welsh and 10/South Wales Borderers) and **Sabot** and **Flatiron Copses** further to the north. At the end of the day neither division had reached the wood, let alone captured it.

Three days later, on 10 July, both divisions were ordered to attack again but this time the main thrust was by the Welsh on the southern face of the wood in a frontal assault. At 3.30am the artillery announced the beginning of the attack and an hour later the Welsh began to advance from White Trench. In what was described in the divisional history as one of the most magnificent sights of the war, wave after wave of men were seen advancing across open ground towards the wood. Leading the attack on the left was the 16/Welch Fusiliers, who suffered enormous casualties and lost their commanding officer, **Lieutenant Colonel Ronald Carden**, at the edge of the wood. On their right were the 13/Welch Fusiliers, commanded by **Lieutenant Colonel Oswald Flower**, who came under heavy machine-gun fire from the Hammerhead and only managed to enter the edge of the wood on their third attempt after being reinforced by the 15/Welch Fusiliers. Flower was also killed in the attack. In the centre the 14/Welch Fusiliers were suffering badly as they finally made it into the wood. But, in spite of the high cost, by lunchtime parts of the wood were in Welsh hands and by 6.30pm the 17/Royal Welch Fusiliers, 115 Brigade, were near to the northern edge of the wood and the 10/South Wales Borderers had taken the Hammerhead and forced the Germans to withdraw. At 7am Wyn Griffith received a message to join Brigadier General Horatio Evans in the wood. His initial observations

were one of horror:

Men of my old battalion were lying dead on the ground in great profusion. They wore a yellow badge on their sleeves, and without this distinguishing mark, it would have been impossible to identify the remains of many of them. I felt that I had run away ... Equipment, ammunition, rolls of barbed wire, tins of food, gas helmets and rifles were lying about everywhere. There were more corpses than men, but there were worse sights than corpses. Limbs and mutilated trunks, here and there a detached head, forming splashes of red amongst the green leaves, and, as in advertisement of the horror of our way of life and death, and of our crucifixion of youth, one tree held in its branches a leg, with its torn flesh hanging down over a spray of leaf.



Captain Llewelyn Wyn Griffith.

Meanwhile, the 17th Division had bombed their way along **Strip Trench** into **Wood Support Trench** and touch was made with the 38th Division in Mametz Wood and the 23rd Division in Contalmaison. During the night, the remaining battalions of 115 Brigade were brought up and 113 and 114 Brigades were withdrawn, the next day 115 Brigade was ordered to clear the Wood and the same evening the Welsh were relieved. The cost to the division had been high, some 4,000 men were killed or wounded and although they captured the wood, they came under severe criticism for having taken five days to do so. It was a dishonour that was to remain with the division until their successful attack on Pilkim Ridge in July 1917.

The track into Mametz Wood lies almost directly opposite the memorial and the authors strongly suggest you remain on the track where a number of private memorials and flags can be seen, but please do not touch any ordnance that you may see lying in the undergrowth. As you walk along the path, consider for a moment the condition of the wood a few days after the Welsh attack. **Lieutenant David Kelly**, the Intelligence Officer with 110 (Leicestershire) Brigade, recalled walking through Mametz Wood on 13 July to see Brigadier General Cecil Rawlings, commanding 62 Brigade (21st Division):

The wood was everywhere smashed by shellfire and littered with dead – a German sniper hung over a branch horribly resembling a scarecrow, but half the trees had their branches shot away, leaving fantastic jagged stumps like a Dulac picture of some goblin forest ... Along the east edge ran a trench, from the side of which in places protruded the arms and legs of carelessly buried men, and as our men (110 Brigade) moved up that night to attack, dozens of them shook hands with these ghastly relics. All the old rides through the wood were blocked by fallen trees and great shell holes, and overall hung the overwhelming smell of corpses, turned up earth and lachrymatory gas.

Retrace your steps and turn left to continue towards Flaitiron Copse. From

this point the route north was known by the troops as Death Valley, particularly as the track became one of the main supply and reinforcement routes for the next stage of the battle, a route that became a magnet for German artillery. Continue for 350m with Mametz Wood on your left until you arrive at ⑪ **Flatiron Copse Cemetery** on the left. The cemetery was named after a small piece of woodland opposite the cemetery but today it is quite difficult to distinguish the gaps which existed in 1916 between **Flatiron Copse**, **Sabot Copse** and **Bazentin-le-Grand Wood** as the woodland has almost merged into one continuous strip. Flatiron Copse was taken by men of the 3rd and 7th Divisions on 14 July after they had completely cleared Mametz Wood and an advanced dressing station was established amongst the trees in the copse. The cemetery was begun later in the month and after the Armistice more than 1,100 graves were brought in from the neighbouring battlefields and from smaller cemeteries, which you will find towards the rear of the cemetery. Today there are 1,572 casualties buried or commemorated in this cemetery, of which 420 are unidentified. There are special memorials to thirty-six casualties known or believed to be buried amongst them, and nine, who were buried in the former Mametz Wood Cemetery, whose graves were destroyed by shellfire. **Corporal Edward Dwyer** (III.J.3), 1/ East Surreys, was 20 when he was killed near Guillemont in September 1916, and a year earlier he was one of four men who were awarded the **Victoria Cross** at Hill 60, near Ypres, in April 1915. The cemetery may well be unique in that there are three sets of brothers buried here, who in each case died on the same day and are buried side by side. **Privates Ernest** (I.B.35) and **Herbert Philby** (I.D.36), both of the 1/Middlesex Regiment, were killed on 21 August 1916 when their battalion suffered twenty-three gas casualties in Mametz Wood. **Lance Corporal Henry Hardwidge** (VIII.F.5) and **Corporal Thomas Hardwidge** (VIII.F.6), both of the 15/Welsh Regiment, were killed on 11 July 1916 and **Second Lieutenants Arthur Tregaskis** (VI.G.1) and **Leonard Tregaskis** (VI.G.2) were in the 16/Welsh Regiment when they were killed on 7 July 1916. One of the tragic stories unveiled on the last day of the High Wood story was that of former Wellington College schoolboy 25-year-old **Major John Trinder** (VIII.1.2), 18/Londons, who was killed on 15 September whilst organizing German prisoners after the surrender had taken

place. Sadly, he was hit in the head by one of the still-active snipers whilst taking some his former enemies to safety. Finally, 45-year-old **Lieutenant Colonel James Mortimer** (IV.J.5) was killed on 15 September at Martinpuich whilst in command of the 5/East Yorks. James Mortimer was the eldest son of a distinguished Yorkshire antiquary who was the founder of the Driffield Museum. He joined the 2/Battalion of the East Yorkshire Regiment in 1888, serving in South Africa. On 1 April 1908 he transferred to the Yorkshire Regiment and subsequently went to France with the 5/Battalion in April 1915 where he was promoted to lieutenant colonel and took command of the battalion.



Flatiron Copse Cemetery.



Second Lieutenants Leonard (left) and Arthur Tregaskis.

The cemetery is the approximate centre of the start line from where the brigades of the 3rd, 37th and 7th Divisions attacked the German second-line positions and advanced northwards on 14 July in the famous Dawn Attack. If you stand at the cemetery entrance facing Bazentin-le-Petit, the left flank of 20 and 22 Brigades (7th Division) began almost from the line of the north facing wall of the cemetery to the track north of **Marlborough Wood** – Bois Leclerc on IGN maps. 110 (Leicestershire) Brigade (37th Division) was further over to the left between the line of the D20 and the western edge of Bazentinle-Petit Wood and 8 and 9 Brigades (3rd Division) were on the far right almost opposite Bazentin-le-Grand. The so-called Dawn Attack opened at 3.25am and was a notable success, Bazentin-le-Grand and Bazentin-le-Petit were secured within a matter of hours, with Longueval following shortly afterwards. **Lieutenant David Kelly**, who later wrote *Thirty Nine Months with the 'Tigers'*, remembered the Leicesters' attack and its outcome:



Major John Trinder.

Before dawn the 6th and 7th Battalions had carried the German front line – a trench running between the two woods – and Bazentin Wood

beyond that, and owing to their right flank being exposed, they cleared also the village of Bazentin-le-Petit, but the cost was appalling ... Seven machine guns were captured in the trench alone, but only after they had done their deadly work, especially on the 7th Battalion, which lost fourteen officers killed.

The Leicesters' attack had swung to the right, hence their presence in Bazentin-le-Petit, but overall the brigade has lost 2,000 officers and men killed or wounded from a total establishment of about 3,500. A large proportion of the casualties were fatal, particularly amongst the officers and included 42-year-old **Lieutenant Colonel Jepson Mignon**, commanding the 8/Battalion. He is remembered on the Thiepval Memorial.



Bazentin-le-Petit Communal Cemetery and Extension.

Leave the cemetery and turn left at the junction with the D20 and go straight across onto a farm track and, with Bazentin-le-Petit Wood on your left, continue uphill to the junction where the **Lamark Memorial** is to your left. The memorial stands on the former site of Lamark House, which was destroyed in the battle of 14 July and was used as a German field hospital. Turn right for 45m and then immediately left to follow signs for **Bazentin-le-Petit Communal Cemetery and Extension**. The road soon becomes a track and, after a sharp left-hand turn, the quarry, where a dressing station was established, and the communal cemetery with its extension can be seen on the right. It is possible to park here but visitors should consider walking from the church, a distance of less than 300m. The **Communal Cemetery** ⑫ contains two burials, which is strange considering there is a military extension attached to the cemetery. **RSM W. Pearce**, 10/Loyal North Lancashires, who was killed on 11 August, and 20-year-old **Lieutenant Leslie Griffin**, D Company, 10/Gloucesters, who was killed on 18 August just north of High Wood. A popular anecdote tells us that the two men were re-buried by French civilians after the war, but whilst this may have been the case with RSM Pearce, it was not so for Griffin. War Office records dated November 1916 state categorically that Griffin was buried in the communal cemetery. The **Communal Cemetery Extension** was begun immediately after the capture of the village and used until December 1916 as a front-line cemetery. It was enlarged after the Armistice when fifty graves were brought in from the battlefields of Bazentin and Contalmaison. It now contains 185 burials, 53 of which are unidentified and another 59 special memorials dedicated to those men whose graves were destroyed by shellfire. One of the main features of the cemetery is the number of men from the 1/Northamptons who were fighting between Bazentin and High Wood in August 1916. The forty-two other ranks are all commemorated with special memorials around the perimeter walls whilst the graves of the five officers appear to have survived the shelling. A number of men buried here probably died whilst at the field ambulance established in the quarry. Amongst the more fortunate was **Captain Robert Graves**, 2/Royal Welch Fusiliers, who had been badly wounded whilst his battalion was near High Wood on 20 July. Presumably the communal cemetery was being used as an overflow for the field

ambulance, as in his book *Goodbye To All That* he writes that he was brought to **Bazentin Communal Cemetery** with injuries to his left thigh with a shell fragment that had passed through his lung. In the cemetery he was slightly wounded again when shellfire smashed a gravestone:



Captain Robert Graves.

The wound over the eye was made by a little chip of marble, possibly from one of the Bazentin cemetery headstones ... My memory of what had happened then is vague. Apparently Doctor Dunn came up through the barrage with a stretcher party, dressed my wound and got me down to the old German dressing station at the north end of Mametz Wood.

Expected to die from his wounds, he was officially declared dead and it wasn't until several days later that he wrote to his mother to announce he had survived.

If you stand with your back to the cemetery entrance and look across to the right you will see the ground where **Private James Miller**, 7/King's Own Royal Lancaster, was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross on 30/31 July 1916 after being mortally wounded whilst taking a message across the open ground you can see approximately 200m from where you are standing. He is buried at Dartmoor Cemetery, Becordel.

From the rear of the small copse at the back of the cemetery you should be able to make out the site of the **Bazentin Windmill**, which is indicated by the small stand of trees on the crest of the hill. The windmill was used by artillery observers and signallers, including **Private Frank Richards**, 2/Royal Welch Fusiliers, who wrote in *Old Soldiers Never Die* that the structure was situated about 300m south of High Wood and was subject to some heavy German artillery fire:

The Mill was on some rising ground which made a very prominent land-mark. We had a good view of everything from here, but we also found that when exchanging messages with the wood, the enemy would have an equally good view of us, especially when we were flag-wagging ... Shortly after the enemy began shelling us and by 10.00pm they had put up one of the worst barrages I was ever under. Twelve-inch, eight-inch, five-point-nines and whizzbang shells were bursting all around us continually and this lasted during the whole of the day.

Retrace your steps and return to the church and your vehicle.



Route 2

HIGH WOOD

A circular tour of High Wood beginning at: Longueval

Distance: 8km/5 miles

Grade: Easy

Suitable for:  

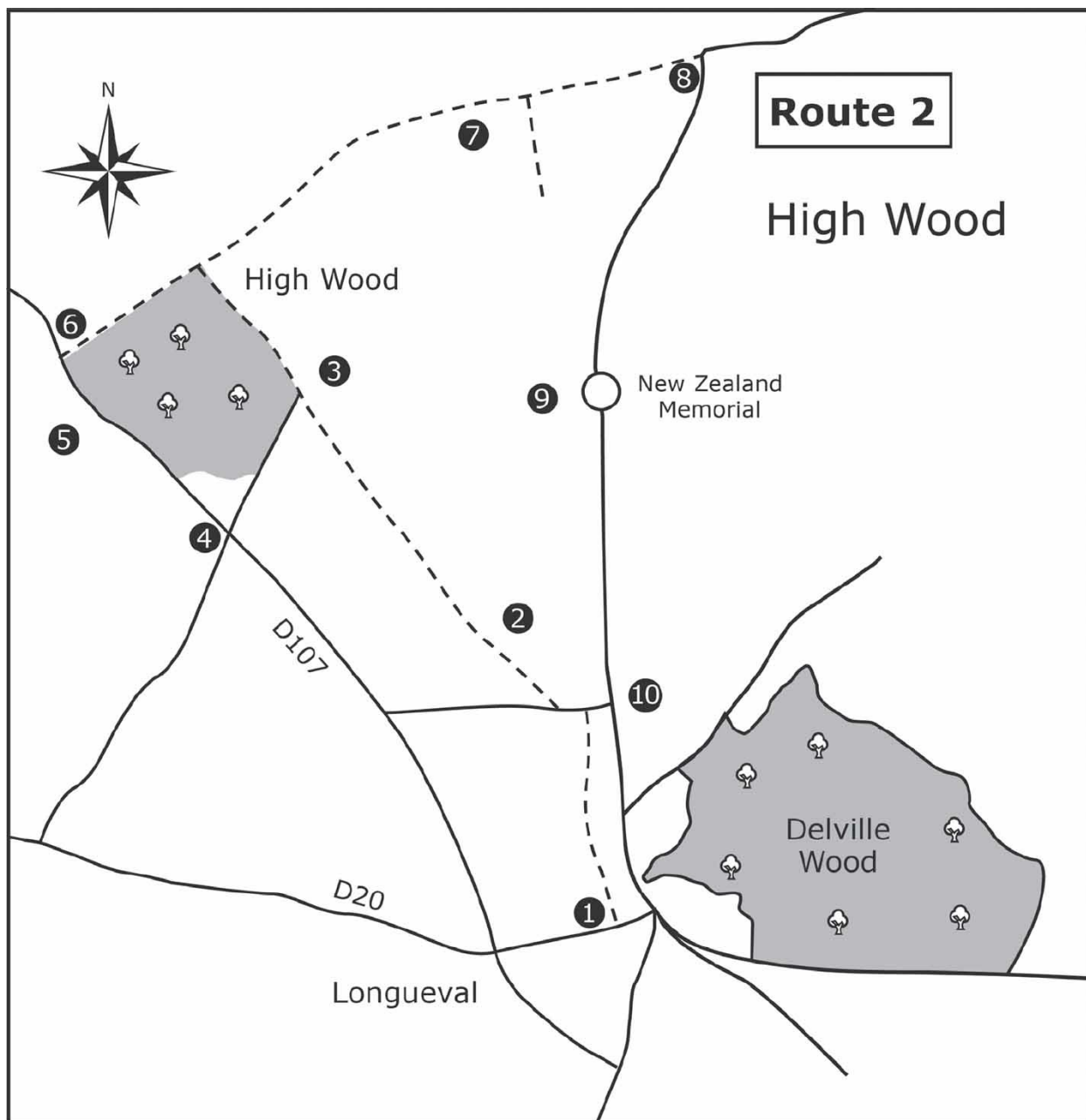
Maps: Bray-sur-Somme 2498 E and Bapaume 2407E

General description and context: We begin in Longueval and continue up to High Wood via Wood Lane. The battle for High Wood involved a series of actions from 14 July–15 September 1916 and involved sixty-four battalions from forty-seven regiments. The wood was the key to a large portion of the German defences and the grisly heaps of human debris which encumbered the maze of trenches in front of the wood were testament to the determination of the British High Command to secure the wood and to a similar steadfastness on the part of the defenders to contest every inch of ground. By September 1916 very little remained but a miserable collection of charred and splintered tree stumps made hideous by putrefaction, lingering gas fumes and the reek of high explosive. The horrific scene facing the 47th Division as they cleared the wood on 15 September was described by the divisional historian:

We never saw anything quite like High Wood ... it was a wood only in name, ragged stumps sticking out of churned-up earth, poisoned with fumes of high explosives, the whole a mass of corruption. Imagine Hampstead Heath made of cocoa-powder, and the natural surface folds

further complicated by countless shell-holes, each deep enough to hold a man, and everywhere meandering crevices where men live below the surface of the ground, and you will get some idea of the terrain of the attack.

The attack of 14 July, that launched the successful **Battle of Bazentin**, provided the impetus to attack High Wood in the evening. The **2/Queens** and the **1/South Staffordshires** reached the southwestern edge of the wood in conjunction with the **20/Deccan Horse** and the **7/Dragon Guards**, who advanced on the right of the wood. Had the attack taken place earlier when a staff officer had walked up to the wood without being fired upon, things may have been entirely different. However, given time to reinforce the wood, the Germans offered a stubborn resistance to the British attempts to capture the wood. Thus, as the Queens and South Staffordshires advanced through the wood, they met increasing opposition, particularly from a strong German line known as the **Switch Line**. This line stretched from approximately 700m north of Pozières, cutting through the northeastern sector of the wood, to a point south of Flers. The trench provided the Germans with the capability of 'switching' troops to the area in which they were most needed.





An aerial view of High Wood showing the London Cemetery and Extension in the foreground and the former position of the Starfish Redoubt, which was to the left of the small copse on the right.

The attack by the **1/Cameron**s and the **20/Royal Fusiliers** (Public Schools' Battalion) took place in the early morning of 20 July, with the **2/Gordon Highlanders** and **8/Devons** attacking Wood Lane. None of the attacking battalions met with any degree of success. The **2/Royal Welch Fusiliers** (Robert Graves' battalion) were in reserve and called up in the late afternoon to reinforce the remainder of 19 Brigade. In spite of their entry into the wood being described as a 'most beautiful bit of parade ground drill' and fighting with a determination that encouraged the remnants of the other battalions to overwhelm the strongpoint in the western part of the wood, their efforts were to no avail. The inevitable German bombardment was followed up by an infantry attack and put the Switch Line and the western part of the wood back into German hands. The 2/Royal Welch Fusiliers had suffered 249 casualties in the process. After 20 July attacks the Germans reoccupied most of High Wood until only the southern corner remained in British hands. They also dug a new defensive position, known as **Intermediate Trench**, ahead of the Switch Line to the west of the wood. A week later the next attack was launched in the evening of 30 July at 6.10pm and **Intermediate Trench** was successfully taken, although in the east of the wood and at Wood Lane there was little success.

However, in early August there were some minor advances, a section of

Intermediate Trench was taken along with some of the Switch Line and, in order to deal with the particularly troublesome machine-gun post on the east side of the wood, a tunnel was started in early August with the intention of laying a mine under the post. But, before that, yet another offensive on High Wood was planned, conceived as part of a joint offensive with the French to take place on 18 August. Preceded by a 26-hour artillery barrage, the infantry attacked at 2.45pm. The **4/Kings Liverpool** and **4/Suffolks'** attack on Wood Lane was unsuccessful, as was that of the **2/Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders** in the wood. However, the **1/Loyal North Lancs** gained and held some trenches in the northwest of the wood. Another small step was made on 24 August when a smoke screen and covering fire helped men of 100 Brigade take trenches near Wood Lane.

On 3 September, a small offensive commenced with the blowing of the mine beneath the machine-gun post in the east of the wood. Since early August, the **178/Tunnelling Company** had dug down 8m, and then constructed a gallery 94m long where they placed 3,000lb of ammonal below the machine-gun position. The mine was blown 30 seconds before the infantry attack, and the **1/Black Watch** rushed forward and took possession of the crater. Meanwhile, the **1/Cameronians** and **8/Berkshires** reached Wood Lane, but were driven out after a German counterattack drove out the Black Watch and re-established the machine-gun position. On 9 September a second mine was blown 30 seconds before the infantry attack. Once again, however, although the crater was briefly held, the Germans soon overran it again. The double crater, formed by the mines blown on 3 and 9 September, are still visible today, although it is now water-filled. On a more successful note, Wood Lane was finally captured.

The attack of 15 September was led by four tanks and the principal attacking force was the 47th (London) Division, and this, and the attack on Flers, was the first occasion that tanks appeared in battle on the Western Front. On the right was the **New Zealand Division**, and on the left the 50th Division and despite Major General Barter disagreeing with the original deployment of the tanks, which as it turned out was correct, all four of the tanks had problems and were late in getting to their start points for the attack. Because of their slow speed, they needed to be well ahead of the infantry to

be effective, but in the event, when the infantry advanced at 6.20am, they soon left the tanks behind. None of the four tanks made much progress, although in one case their gun did harass the enemy. Two tanks ditched, one was set on fire and the last (*Clan Ruthven*) got stuck on a tree stump.

The infantry attack on the wood was made by the **18/Londons** (London Irish), **17/Londons** (Poplar & Stepney Rifles) and two companies of the **15/Londons** (Civil Service Rifles). Two more battalions, the **19** and **20/Londons**, were sent up in support after progress was deemed to be too slow, particularly as on either side of High Wood troops were caught by machine-gun fire from the wood. In the wood itself, the **8/Londons** (Post Office Rifles) followed up the attack and suffered huge losses from withering machine-gun fire, but did however manage to reach the German trenches. The **6/Londons** followed on at 8.20am. By mid-morning there were five battalions desperately fighting for possession of High Wood, and after an artillery barrage on the west and northwest part of the wood, and waiting for trench mortars to bombard the eastern portion, the Germans started to surrender.

From the wood we then travel northeast along a track which takes us under the electricity lines to the former **Starfish Redoubt**. Finally, about 1km from the outskirts of Flers, we take a right turn onto a metalled road and follow the route of Tank D8 to the New Zealand Memorial. From here Longueval is just over 1km downhill.

Directions to start: Longueval is a village southeast of the Bois des Fourcaux (High Wood) at the junction of the D20 and the D197. On entering the village, park in the Place Lucian Butte near the village war memorial and new community centre.

Route description: From your vehicle the **Piper's Memorial** should be clearly visible. Unveiled in July 2002 by Lieutenant General Sir Peter Graham and Major General Corran Purdon, it is dedicated to all pipers who fell in the Great War, regardless of race or unit. Sculpted by Andy De Comyn, it depicts a piper in full battle dress climbing up and over the parapet of a trench encouraging the men on with the sound of his pipes. On the wall

behind are the badges of all the British and Commonwealth regiments that had a pipe band during the First World War. Longueval was one of the objectives of the Dawn Attack on 14 July and amongst them was **Lieutenant John Bates**, the medical officer of the 8/Black Watch. Writing home, he described his part in the attack:



The Piper's Memorial in Longueval.

Our battalion led the attack at dawn on Longueval on Friday last, and we have hung on there ever since in spite of the incessant artillery bombardment and 2 strong counterattacks. I went up with the Colonel in the attack and we were heavily shelled on the way up. Got through the German barbed wire all right and found the village practically flattened by our artillery and several fires raging.

With the Piper on your right hand along the D20 towards Bazentinle-Petit and after 200m take the track ❶ on the right, which soon degrades into a farm

track. Continue to the junction with a metalled road. **Delville Wood** is to your right and the church spire of Longueval church is behind you, to your right is a calvary that we will see again on the return leg of the journey. Turn left at the junction and follow the single-track road which rises gently uphill. After 200m take the sunken lane ② on the right which continues straight ahead, parallel with the D107, towards **High Wood**, following the estimated line of **Wood Lane Trench**, which was garrisoned by elements of III/IR 26. Stop at this point and look across the fields towards Bazentin-le-Grand and the D20.



The turning in Longueval which soon degrades into a farm track.

It was from this direction that the horses and men of the Secunderabad Brigade headed in your direction, the **7/Dragon Guards** crossing the lane some 300m further along towards High Wood and the **20/Deccan Horse** continuing south of the junction towards Delville Wood. The D197 is just over 1km from **Crucifix Corner** on the D20 where two regiments began their charge towards the German positions in High Wood and Delville Wood,

having previously moved into position from **Sabot Copse**. At 6.50pm on 14 July the brigade moved forward across the fields towards Longueval and High Wood in an action that was described as one of co-operation with the infantry of the 7th and 9th Divisions, making the only cavalry charge during the Battle of the Somme. The crew of an aircraft of 3 Squadron RFC saw the infantry and cavalry advance towards III/IR 26, who were concealed in crops east of the wood and dived at the German troops, strafing them from a height of 91m. Riddled by ground fire, the observer dropped a sketch of the German dispositions onto the cavalry before the aircraft departed. Reserves of the German 2nd Guard Division were incapable of assisting the defenders, as they had been caught by British machine-gun fire as they moved up towards Bazentin-le-Petit and the German machine-gunners in Longueval were silenced by the cavalry machine guns. The 7/Dragoon Guards were to attack the enemy's positions on the east side of High Wood and the 20/Deccan Horse, commanded by **Lieutenant Colonel Edward Tennant**, would raid Delville Wood after prolonging the Dragoon Guards' right flank. According to Terry Norman's map in his book *The Hell of High Wood*, the 20/Deccan Horse thundered across the D107 towards the sunken lane in which you are now standing, whilst the 7/Dragoon Guards were further to the left. However, the evidence supplied by his map – that both regiments retired as they reached the sunken lane – appears to differ with the respective war diaries. These documents state categorically that the advanced units of the Dragoon Guards reached the gently swelling ground to the east of the sunken lane whilst the Deccan Horse penetrated almost to the site of the present-day New Zealand Memorial.

Second Lieutenant Frank Beadle, serving with the Royal Field Artillery, thought the charge of B and C Squadron of the 7/Dragoon Guards was an unbelievable sight: 'They galloped up with their lances and with pennants flying, up the slope to High Wood ... I've never seen anything like it! They simply galloped on through all that machine gun fire with men and horses dropping on the ground.' Despite Beadle's description, what is clear is that this action did not result in the carnage of human sinew and horseflesh that many accounts would have us believe. The popular view is one of wholesale butchery, but the facts tell a different story. Records show that only 7 men

from the 2 cavalry regiments were killed, 3 from the Dragoon Guards and 4 from the Deccan Horse, whilst a total of 112 horses were killed or wounded. The forward units secured a temporary hold on a vital piece of ground and only retired to the approximate line of the present-day D107 at 9.30pm owing to a lack of artillery support from Major French's **N Battery, RHA**, and the advancing infantry. The predicament of N Battery was one that continually plagued mounted artillery units during the war, unable to be certain of the position of the fast-moving cavalry, and remember it was practically dark by this time, adding to the conundrum of providing the much-needed covering fire.



A contemporary photograph of the Deccan Horse on Bazentin Ridge.

As we approach the wood along the track, it soon sinks below the level of the surrounding fields, before, after some 800m, the sides of the track open out, stop here. This is a good opportunity to turn around to look behind you down the track. The church spire of Longueval can be seen just above the trees, to the left is the village of Flers; to the right is **Caterpillar Valley Cemetery** on the D20 and further across is Mametz Wood. In the fields to

your right was where **Second Lieutenant Pope** and B Squadron of the Dragoon Guards – only one squadron of each of the Secunderabad's regiments was armed with the lance – charged a group of German machine-gunners that was sheltering amongst the corn. According to **Captain Francis Scott**, commanding C Squadron, 'about fifteen of the enemy went down before the lances. Another thirty-two, no doubt demoralised by this unaccustomed eruption of spearmen, immediately put up their hands and surrendered.' This is also the area where Pope was awarded the Military Cross for riding three times into the corn to bring in wounded men. However, the subsequent infantry advances over the following weeks proved to be of little consequence, leaving one to wonder what might have been if the cavalry advance had been supported and the ground they had seized was consolidated. Consider the scene near Wood Lane on 22 July, eight days after the cavalry charge, when the 1/Royal West Kents attacked at 9.52pm. The regimental historian described their advance as a tragic failure:

At 10.00pm, when the barrage lifted, they rushed at the enemy, but both Wood Lane and the sunken road were strongly held by the Germans, who had suffered little from our artillery. A devastating machine gun fire was poured into our men from the strong point in the wood and from a position just behind the wood. Nearly all the officers, including the company commanders of A, B and C Companies were hit at once. The men made repeated efforts to get forward ... but as a whole our men, do what they might, could not get forward. The units on our left and right being equally unsuccessful, the attack was given up and the remnants ordered back to our original front line just as dawn was breaking.

Continue towards High Wood, turn left at the junction of tracks ③ keeping the wood on your right. Under no circumstances should you enter the wood which is the same size and shape that the British soldier would have seen in 1916. The wood is private property and still contains countless numbers of soldier's remains from both sides of the conflict. Before the 14 September attack the wood was behind the German Second Line, and crowned a ridge

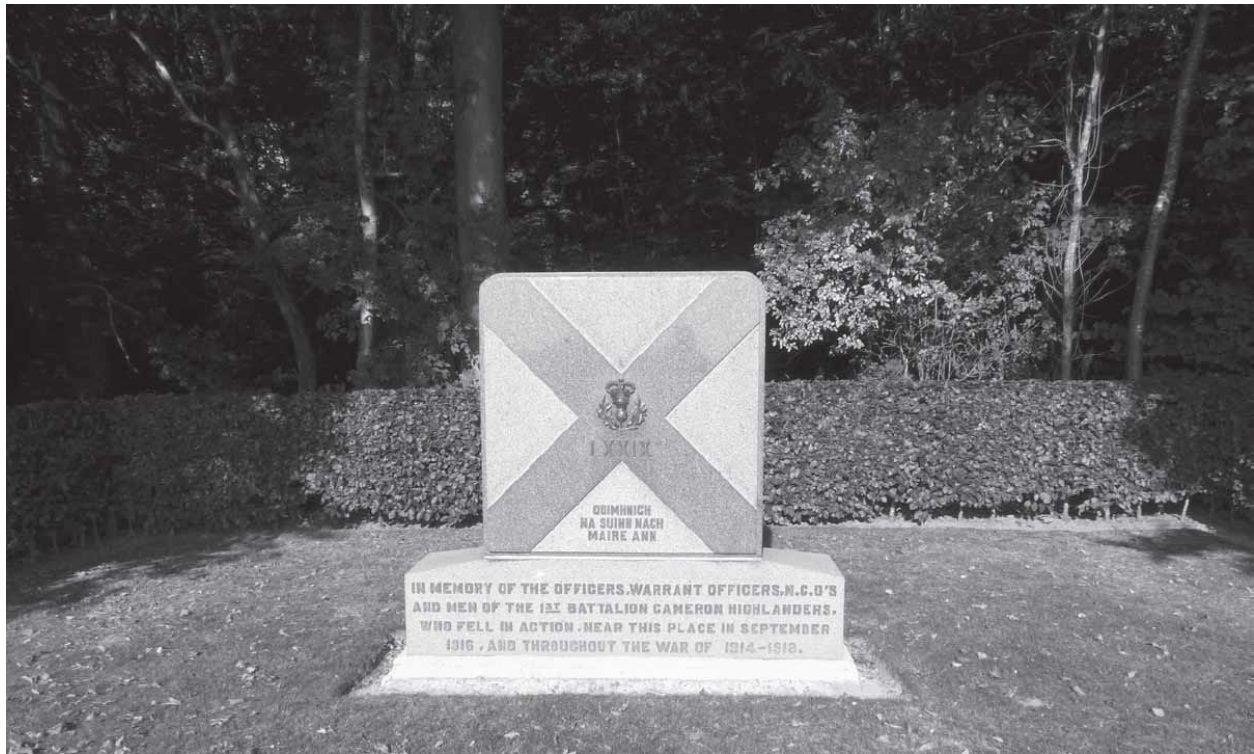
overlooking the ground around for a considerable distance.



The route along Wood Lane with the eastern corner of High Wood in the distance.

Continue for some 90m to find the **1/Cameron Highlanders and 1/Black Watch Memorial**. The wording at the base of the memorial is the same on both sides, except that the front commemorates the Cameron Highlanders and the rear commemorates the Black Watch. In the centre of the cross on either side is the insignia and below that the motto. The Camerons took part in a number of the engagements around High Wood from July to September and in one attack at this corner of the wood they lost over 240 men. At the rear of the memorial – alas on private property – are the two mine craters dating from early September, dug by men of the **178/Tunnelling Company**, Royal Engineers under the German machine-gun position which had been causing

havoc amongst the troops attacking Wood Lane. The craters are unique in that they are the only ones on the Somme to be filled with water.



The 1/Cameron Highlanders and 1/Black Watch Memorial.

Leave the memorial and continue along the track for another 100m to the approximate site of Worcester Trench where the Lieutenant Robinson's tank, D22, emerged from the wood and mistakenly opened fire on British troops. Moving on to the junction with the main road stop and look along the track opposite you ④ which descends to Crucifix Corner on the D20. Ahead were the two communication trenches – **Elgin Avenue** and **High Alley** – which followed the line of the track and provided the 'one-way system' to and from High Wood, Elgin Avenue being the 'up' route and High Alley the 'down'. Control posts were in position in High Alley to detain men returning from the trenches who were not runners or those without a signed label from a medical officer. Just imagine the cases of shell shock that these posts would have witnessed as men, who had been rendered unconscious, half-buried or thrown into the air by exploding shells, were returned to the trenches that they had just escaped from.

Turn right at the junction and within a few metres you will find the **47th (London Division) Memorial** on the right where the battalions of the London Division, which successfully took High Wood on 15 September, are commemorated. The division suffered some 4,500 casualties killed, wounded or missing but took High Wood accompanied by 4 tanks. Despite the suggestion from tank officers and the divisional commander, Major General Charles Barter, that the tanks should move around the edges of the wood to avoid the tree stumps and other obstacles, they were overruled. Consequently D22 (Lieutenant Robinson) and D21 (Lieutenant Sharpe) entered the wood to the right of the 47th Division Memorial where D21 fell into a British trench and broke a track, rendering it useless, and D22 became stuck in Worcester Trench. C23 (Lieutenant Henderson) entered the wood to the left of the 47th Division Memorial and also ditched but continued firing its main armament and machine guns. C23 had the dubious distinction of being the last to leave the wood, as it was not removed until after the Second World War. D13 (Lieutenant Sampson) entered the wood to the left of D21 and passed over the first British trench but was hit near the Switch Line and set on fire. It was not a good debut for the tanks in High Wood, but in Flers, some 3km to the east, it was a different story. An eyewitness that watched a tank moving up towards High Wood for the 15 September battle was the cinematographer Geoffrey Malins:



The 47th (London Division) Memorial.

For the life of me I could not take my eyes off it. The thing, I really don't know how else to describe it, ambled forward, with slow, jerky, uncertain movements. The sight of it was weird enough in all conscience. At one moment its nose disappeared, then with a slide and an upward glide it climbed to the other side of a deep shell crater which lay in its path. I stood amazed and watched its antics ... Big, and ugly, and awkward as it was, clumsy as its movements appeared to be, the thing seemed imbued with life, and possessed of the most uncanny sort of intelligence and understanding.

But heads had to fall for the apparent slow progress of the 47th Division and Charles Barter was sacrificed for what was described as a 'wanton waste of life', a charge Barter was to protest against for the remainder of his life.

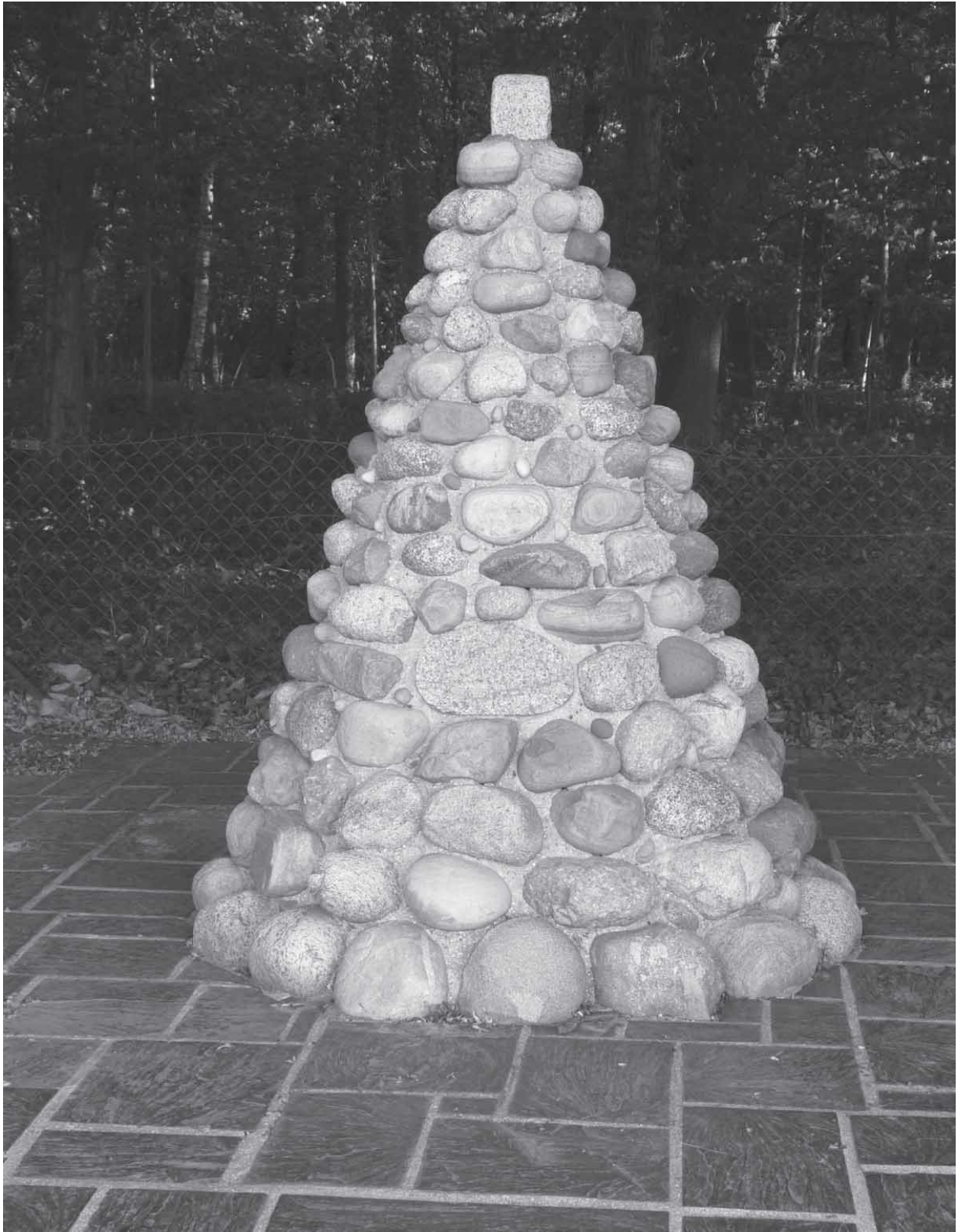
An exhausted **Major Charles Fair**, 19/Londons, who had assumed

command of the battalion, wrote home after the battle informing his father of the death in action of his commanding officer, **Lieutenant Colonel Hamilton**, and many of his comrades:

Everyone seems enormously proud of what the brigade and our battalion has accomplished. At any rate we did what many others had failed to do and took a place which has cost many thousands of casualties and which is the last of the really high ground which the Germans occupied in this part of the world. We had a pretty rough time and lost many of our best.

Unveiled in September 1925, the memorial was rebuilt in 1996 owing to problems with its foundations and bearing only a slight resemblance to the original. Visitors may wish to take in the spectacular views and the four church spires (from left to right) of Longueval, Montauban, Bazentin and Martinpuich, which are visible from this point.

A few metres further along the road, on the same side as the London Divisional Memorial, is a small memorial to the men of the **20/Royal Fusiliers** (Public Schools' Battalion). It is easy to miss but the tree and plaque were placed here in 1988 by Don Price, an old soldier of the battalion. In his autobiography, Robert Graves suggested that men from other battalions had not performed well in this battle, one of these was the 20/Royal Fusiliers, which in fact suffered higher losses than the Royal Welch, with 397 casualties.



The Glasgow Highlanders Memorial.

Continue with the wood on your right for about 200m to find the **Glasgow Highlanders Memorial** on the right. This is a private memorial erected in 1972 to the 1/9 Highland Light Infantry (Glasgow Highlanders) by Alex Aitken, whose father served in the battalion. In the fighting around High Wood 192 members of the battalion were killed and the conical shaped cairn consists of 192 stones, each one representing one of the casualties. If you walk a few metres into the wood you will find a private memorial to **Lance Corporal Richard Coupe**, 21/Manchesters, who was killed on 15 July 1916. Back on the road you can see the Cross of Sacrifice of **London Cemetery and Extension** ⑤ further along on the left.

The original London Cemetery at High Wood was begun when forty-seven men of the 47th Division were buried in a large shell hole on 18 and 21 September 1916. Other burials were added later, mainly of officers and men of the 47th Division who died on 15 September. At the Armistice the cemetery contained 101 graves and was then enlarged when remains were brought in from the surrounding battlefields. The cemetery is the third largest cemetery on the Somme with 3,873 First World War burials, of which a staggering 3,114 remain unidentified. There are also 165 Second World War burials, of which 16 are unidentified, 66 of whom were killed in 1940. A brick shelter and a tall hedge separates the original London Cemetery at the side of the road from the extension. Some 3,000 burials were completed between 1934 and 1939 and came from all parts of the battlefield, including the Aisne; these are located in Plots 1 to 10. In 1945 the cemetery was used again when bodies from both world wars were brought in with the Second World War burials located behind the Cross of Sacrifice.



The entrance to the London Cemetery and Extension with High Wood in the background.



Private George Ball.



Corporal Sydney Beale.

One of the men buried in the original cemetery was 27-year-old **Captain David Henderson** (1A.A.14), 1/19 Londons, who was killed on 15 September 1916 and buried just inside the entrance. He was the son of Arthur Henderson, one of the founders of the Labour Party and later leader of the party and Nobel Prize winner. Killed on the same day was **Lieutenant Raymond Asquith** (see [Route 4](#)), the son of the Liberal Prime Minister Herbert Asquith. Both men were political leaders in the House of Commons and both lost sons on the same day. Sharing the headstone with Henderson is 23-year-old **Captain Alexander Gauld** of the same battalion. An Emmanuel College, Cambridge student who joined up before his graduation, his name can be found on the college war memorial. Also in the 1/19 was **RSM Arthur Ridout** (1A.A.11), originally from Dorset he was the most senior NCO to be killed in his battalion on 15 September. In the cemetery extension is 18-year-old **Private George Ball** (5.B.11), a Birmingham lad with 3 brothers and 6 sisters, who was killed at Pozières on 16 July and was one of 275 officers and men of the 11/Royal Warwickshires who were listed as killed, wounded or missing. One of his brothers, Private Alfred Ball, was wounded by a sniper at Englebelmer on 29 November with the 7/South Staffordshires and died of wounds in England. **Corporal Sydney Beale** (6.D.13), 6/Ox and Bucks, was thought to have been killed in High Wood on 17 September but his body was not found until 1938. Identified by his silver watch, he and several of his comrades were discovered in the remains of a dug-out. **Captain Lancelot Jennings** (2.C.2) was the senior science teacher at Waitaki Boy's School in New Zealand before he was commissioned into the 2/Otago Regiment. He was killed on 15 September during the New Zealand Division's attack on Flers. He was 28 years old. To the left of the cemetery entrance is an information panel explaining the significance of the Glasgow Highlanders Memorial. Erected at the instigation of Keith Landies, a long-time member of the Western Front Association, the panel explains the significance of the 192 Glasgow Highlanders who died on 15 July 1916.



Captain Lancelot Jennings.

Leave the cemetery and continue for 300m to a junction of tracks by the corner of the wood. Straight ahead is the church spire of Martinpuich. Take the track on the right, following the line of the wood ⑥ and continue downhill for about 200m to the approximate point where the Switch Line exited from the wood. Carry on towards the water tower and the church spire of Flers and at the next junction of tracks bear left and continue for about another 300m and stop. Look to your right, just before the next junction of tracks was ⑦ the **Starfish Redoubt**, a fortified German position in which five trenches of the **Starfish Line** converged. The hastily planned attack on the Starfish Line, some 600m beyond High Wood, had its origins in the 47th Division's attack in the wood earlier in the day. The smooth running of the attack of 15 September had not gone to plan and although Barter's Division were doing their utmost to capture the wood, by mid-morning there were no less than five battalions engaged in trying to clear it. Due to the failure to clear the wood on schedule, the 50th Division on the left flank of the 47th Division and the New Zealand Division on the right were also not achieving their operational objectives, thus, it became essential to capture the **Starfish Line**. At about 6pm on 15 September, two battalions of 142 Brigade were assigned the job of taking the Starfish Line. The 21/Londons (1/Surrey Rifles), who were attacking from their reserve positions near Bazentin-le-Petit mill, and 24/Londons (The Queen's), who attacked from High Wood's northwestern side, both battalions were under command of **Lieutenant Colonel Henry Kennedy**, the commanding officer of the 21/Londons. Subsequently the battalion, along with one company of the 24th, attacked the Starfish Line and captured the **Starfish Redoubt** itself, but their attempt to get on further to the **Cough Drop** did not succeed. The Cough Drop was eventually taken by the 6/Londons but, as with the 21/Londons, a huge casualty list accompanied their success. The remaining companies of the 24/Londons, having first to navigate the chaos of High Wood, met heavy fire and did not reach their objective, digging themselves in about 100m from the Starfish Line. **Major Lord Gorell** of the 19/London Battery watched the 21/Londons leave their trenches and remarked that the 'Surrey Rifles have

gone over as if they were on parade.’ **Rifleman Don Cree**, 8/Londons, who was isolated in no-man’s-land and after an abortive attack on the Starfish Line, was also a witness to the advance: ‘We were amazed to see coming over the ridge a battalion in platoon formation. As they neared us, they extended first into little bunches of sections and then into something like lines. They nearly all had their rifles slung over their right shoulders. Shells dropped amongst them and they must have lost hundreds.’ Another officer who witnessed the attack wrote: ‘I am convinced had any senior officer of the 47th Division been on the spot, the disastrous attack of the 1/21st and 1/24th down a forward slope in broad daylight and in plain sight of something like one hundred German Forward Observation Officers, would never have been ordered.’

The attack, like many that were orchestrated at the last minute, had limited artillery support and the assaulting troops of 21/Londons suffered dreadfully because of it, having only 2 officers and 60 other ranks left unwounded out of 17 officers and 550 other ranks. Miraculously, having led the assault, Kennedy survived.

Continue past the site of the Starfish Redoubt and go straight on at the junction, ignoring the track on the right. At this point the eastern sector of the **Starfish Line** was about 100m to the right of the track you are on and, as you approach the T-Junction ahead, it swung up to meet the track before heading southeast towards Flers.

At the ⑧ T-Junction stop. As you look up the track towards the New Zealand Memorial imagine Tank D8, commanded by **Second Lieutenant Brown**, coming down the track towards you. D8 was one of four tanks assigned to the New Zealand Division and tasked to act alone on the extreme left flank of the divisional sector. As the tank reached the junction you are standing on, it continued straight across onto another track which is no longer in existence. There is little doubt that Brown’s tank did valuable work and even reduced the onslaught that was being directed at the units of the 47th Division. The three remaining tanks, **Second Lieutenant Darby’s** D10, **Second Lieutenant Pearsall’s** D11 and **Captain Nixon’s** D12, were in action east of the New Zealand Division Monument with only D8 and D11 surviving the battle.

Turn right along the track which runs uphill through a line of trees towards the electricity pylons and ⑨ the **New Zealand Memorial**. As you climb towards the crest, the track becomes metalled and the tall obelisk of the memorial comes into sight. Just before the memorial, where the track on the right joins the road you are on, the **Switch Line** ran across the road from the direction of High Wood to join **Tatler Trench**, south of Flers.

The memorial was unveiled in October 1922 by Sir Francis Bell and stands surrounded by a low wall, near to site of the Switch Trench, which was first objective for the New Zealanders on 15 September. As with similar New Zealand memorials, it takes the form of a column on a raised stepped base and at the base of each side there is a panel. The New Zealand Division entered the Battle of the Somme on 11 September when they took over the line between Delville Wood and High Wood. This was the first major 'Kiwi' action on the Western Front and they would soon find a difference in fighting the Germans as opposed to the Turks in Gallipoli. Four days later at 6.20am they left their assembly trenches near the rear wall of Caterpillar Valley Cemetery on the D20 and advanced, only for the 2/Otago and 2/Auckland Battalions to get caught in the final rounds of the British artillery barrage. Pressing on, they passed **Coffee Lane Trench** and stormed **Crest Trench** where a withering machine-gun fire was responsible for a number of casualties, and it is likely that **Captain Lancelot Jennings** was killed in this area. It was here that **Sergeant Donald Brown** along with **Private Jesse Rogers** charged the first of three machine-gun posts resulting in the award of the Victoria Cross for Brown. Strangely, Rogers received no award and was killed after receiving his commission in July 1917. He is buried in Trois Arbres Cemetery, France.



The New Zealand Memorial.



Sergeant Donald Brown VC.

Having passed over Crest Trench and the Switch Line the New Zealanders dug in some 50m beyond the site of the present-day memorial. Their whole advance to the Switch Line had taken a mere 30 minutes in duration, the divisional historian recording that apart from the slow progress of the 47th Division in High Wood, which led to the German machine guns catching them in the flank, the division showed little mercy to the occupants of Switch Trench:

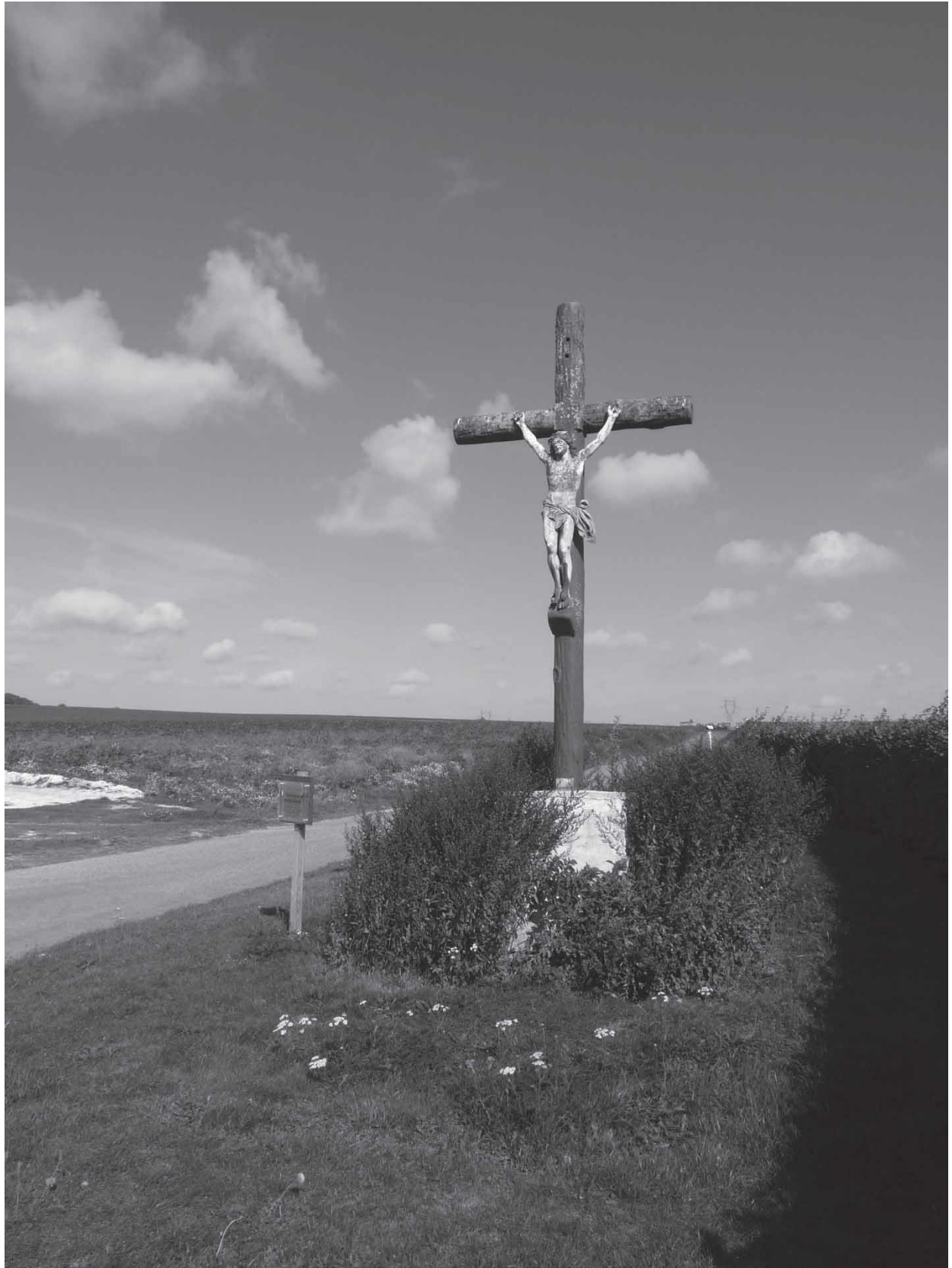
Then, on the greater part of the front, throwing down their weapons, they held up their hands, and with calculated presumption called for mercy. Mercy, however, was shown only to the Red Cross men and the wounded. Where further resistance was made, the enemy in the trench itself were disposed of after a little point-blank shooting and a short struggle with bombs.

After a short pause to consolidate their positions the barrage began again at 7.20am with the 4/New Zealand Rifles continuing the advance to the next objective. By 11am the **2/New Zealand Rifles** were digging in to the northwest of the village of Flers. On their left the **3/New Zealand Rifles** had been held up by uncut barbed wire but at about 10.30am two tanks (D11 and D12) finally arrived and dealt with both wire and the defenders from the Bavarian IR5. The New Zealand Division would fight on for the next twenty-three days, advancing 3km and capturing 8km of the Bavarian front line. More than 2,000 New Zealanders lost their lives in the autumn of 1916 and roughly 6,000 were wounded. Many of the dead have no known graves and more than 1,200 are commemorated on the wall inside **Caterpillar Valley Cemetery**. It was from this cemetery that New Zealand's Unknown Warrior was exhumed in November 2004 from Plot 14, Row A, Grave 27 and entrusted to New Zealand in a ceremony held at the memorial north of Longueval. The remains were later laid to rest within the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior, at the National War Memorial, Wellington, New Zealand.

Leave the memorial and continue downhill towards Longueval and

Delville Wood, noting the church spire of **Ginchy** just visible to the left of Delville Wood. Stop at the calvary ⑩ on your left, and glance along the track to the right to see the beginning of Wood Lane leading to High Wood. Although the exact place of his death is unclear, 25-year-old **Major William 'Billy' Congreve**, Rifle Brigade, was killed by a sniper's bullet on 20 July 1916 in the fields to the left of the calvary. Already the holder of the DSO and MC, Congreve was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross which was gazetted in October 1916. His father, **Lieutenant General Walter Congreve**, who was commanding XIII Corps at the time of his son's death, also won the Victoria Cross during the Boer War at Colenso. Billy Congreve was married to Pamela Maude and is buried in Corbie Communal Cemetery Extension.

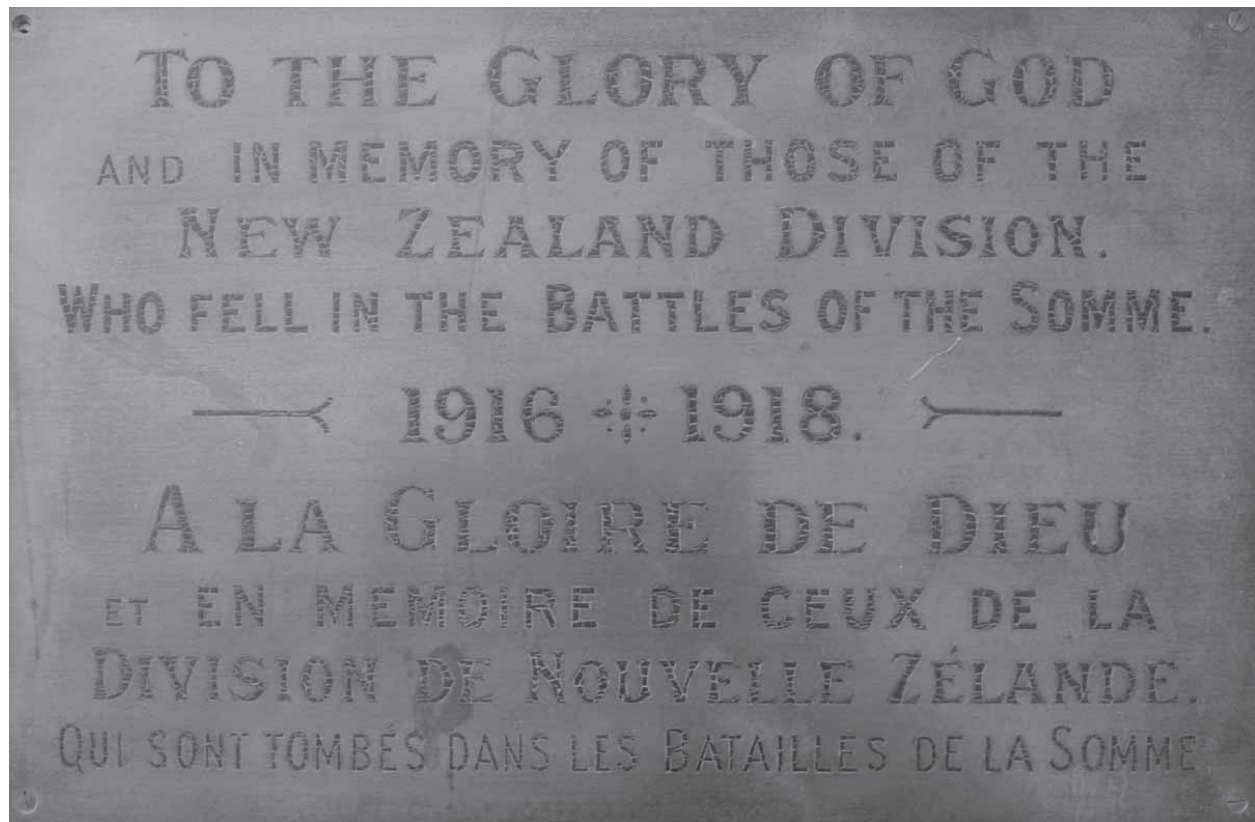
If you are cycling, slow down as about 100m on the left, before the turning to Flers, was the assembly point for the tanks that were supporting the New Zealand Division's attack. Continue straight ahead into Longueval passing the *Mairie* on the left, to where you parked your vehicle. Should the *Mairie* be open, it is worth taking the time to visit and see the memorials to the New Zealand Division and the wooden and brass memorial which was previously hung in the local church.



The calvary near to the spot where Major Billy Congreve was killed.



Major Billy Congreve.



The brass plaque commemorating the New Zealand Division that originally hung in Longueval church and is now to be found in the Mairie.



Route 3

POZIÈRES

A circular tour beginning at: the 1st Australian Division Memorial

Distance: 6km/3.7 miles

Grade: Easy

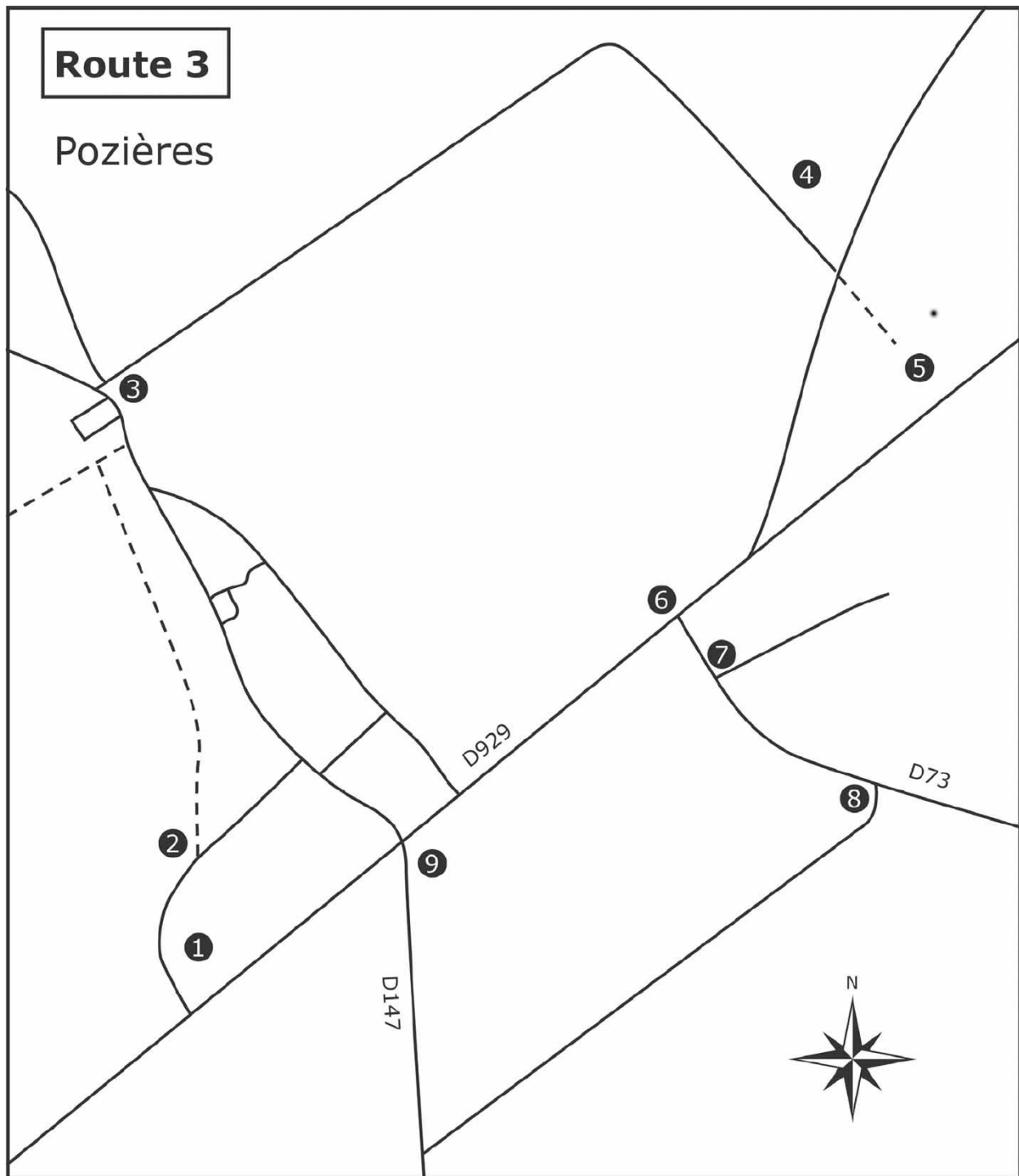
Suitable for:  

Maps: Bray-sur-Somme 2408 E and Bapaume 2407 O

General description and context: The village is situated on the Pozières Ridge between Albert and Bapaume and was one of several villages incorporated into the German Second Line. As the highest point on the Somme 1916 battlefield it was a vital objective for the British 8th Division to capture on 1 July 1916. Sadly, the attack failed on that day and it was not until 25 July that the main part of Pozières was eventually taken by the **1st Australian Division** after a period of intense fighting. With Pozières secured the British could threaten Thiepval from the rear, furthermore a relatively small advance from Pozières could make a large section of the German Second Line untenable.

Australian forces had only arrived from Gallipoli and the Middle East in March 1916 and the first Australian division to fight on the Western Front was the 5th Division which fought alongside the British 61st Division at **Fromelles** on 19 and 20 July. The attack was a dismal failure and further damaged Australian opinion of British generalship. In the case of Pozières, **Major General Harold Walker** resisted the demand made by Hubert Gough to attack almost immediately before preparations were complete, unlike

Major General James Legge commanding the Australian 2nd Division, who succumbed to Gough's demands. The Australian 1st Division took over the line from the British 34th Division on 20 July and launched their attack on Pozières from the south with the British **48th (Midland) Division** attacking the village to the left of the D929. The crest of the ridge was taken by the **2nd Australian Division** on 2 August after an abortive effort on 29 July. These two divisions, together with the **4th Australian Division**, which also captured the nearby **Mouquet Farm**, suffered casualties in excess of 60 per cent of their total number, winning five Victoria Crosses in the process and establishing a strong relationship between Australia and Pozières that still exists today.



Our route begins at the 1st Australian Division Memorial and moves north past the communal cemetery along a track running parallel with Western or K Trench. Ignoring the road to **Mouquet Farm**, the route travels east towards the German Second Line, which it crosses just left of the 'Elbow'. The two

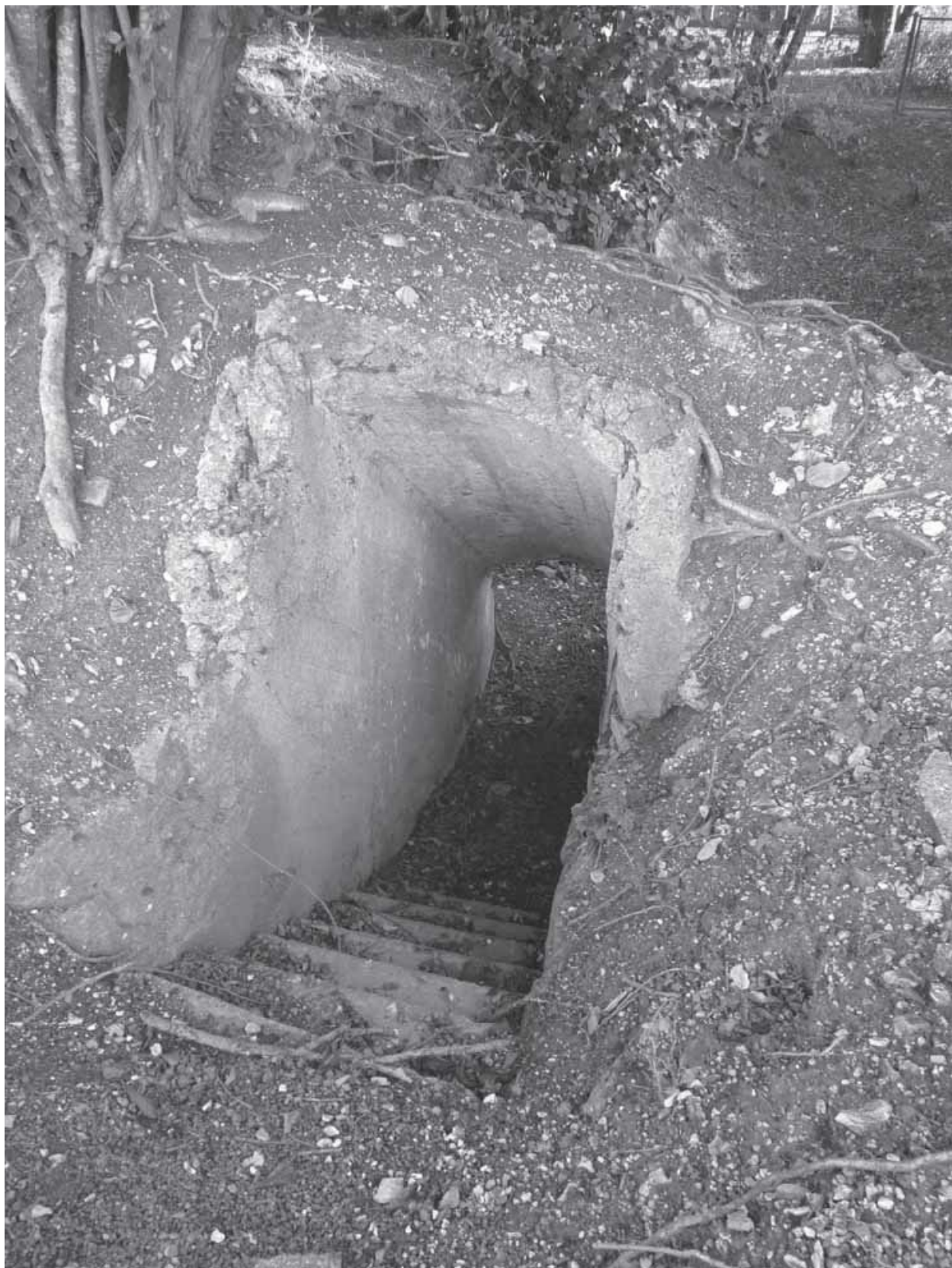
lines of trenches that marked the German Second Line were known as OG1 and OG2 and for ease of reference will be referred to as such. As the route swings to the southeast the approximate site of Captain Albert Jacka's heroic stand is passed. From the Route de Courcelette a short foray across the fields takes you to the Animal War Memorial Garden and the site of the Windmill and Tank Memorial, marked by the red and white transmitter mast. You will also see the cross commemorating **Captain Ivor Margetts**, 12/Battalion. The route then takes you across the D929 and onto the D73 Bazentin Road to visit the memorial and site of the **Munster Alley Trench** on Chemin George Sinton Kaye Butterworth and onto the ground used by the 1st Australian Division during their successful advance and attack on Pozières on 25 July. After we have turned right at the junction with the D147 and crossed the main road into Rue de l'Église at Pozières, it is 140m to the church and village war memorial. From here (follow the signs for the 1st Australian Memorial) it is a short distance back to your vehicle.

Directions to start: Pozières is situated on the D929 between Albert and Le Sars and is best approached from Albert. Park your vehicle at the western end of the village in the car park by the 1st Australian Division Memorial.

Route description: Opposite the car park are the remnants of the **Gibraltar Blockhouse** and an observation platform from where the views are excellent ❶. The **Thiepval Memorial** can be seen crowning the ridge in the distance and further to the right is the line of trees marking the furthest point of advance made by the Ulstermen of the 36th Division on 1 July 1916. Closer to where you are standing is **Pozières British Cemetery** (see [Route 9](#)) and Ovillers-la-Boiselle, which can be seen further along the road to Albert.

The Gibraltar Blockhouse was named *Panzerturm* – armoured turret – by the Germans and built 3m above ground with two floors below ground. Owing to its prominence in the rubble of what was left of the village after it was captured, the Australians called the blockhouse 'Gibraltar', presumably as a likeness to the rock of Gibraltar. The structure was captured on 23 July by fifteen men of the 2/Battalion who took three officers and twenty-three men prisoner. Today an information board provides details of how to utilize

the mobile application on your iPad or phone and follow a brief walking tour around the village.



Part of the Gibraltar Blockhouse.



The orientation table at the Gibraltar Blockhouse.

The **1st Australian Division Memorial** is close by and consists of a large stone obelisk surrounded by a lawn and hedge and stands on the site of **Western or K Trench**. There are three information boards providing details of the Australian Division and its actions as well as a **Ross Bastiaan Memorial Plaque**, which was unveiled by the Australian Minister for Veteran's Affairs in August 1993.

From the memorial continue along the road towards the church and take the first track ② on the left which passes the rear of a number of private houses and runs parallel with Western or K Trench on the left. After 200m **Schawald Graben Trench** crossed the track in front of you before heading through an orchard and the junction with OG1 north of the 'Elbow'. Also to your left is the wide expanse of **Mash Valley**, the graveyard of so many men of 23 Brigade on 1 July and the area where the men of the 48th Division attacked in conjunction with the 1st Australian Division. Continue to the junction of tracks where in front of you was the line of a German light railway line that ran from Owillers-la-Boiselle and crossed the D979, splitting

into two lines before running through OG1 and OG2.



The 1st Australian Division Memorial.



The beginning of the track which runs parallel with Western or K Trench.

Turn right and after 50m turn left when you reach the road – Rue de Boulleville – passing the communal cemetery on the left. Just near this point, in the fields to the right, was the site of the action that resulted in the award of a posthumous Victoria Cross to **Private Thomas Cooke** of the 8/Battalion. He is commemorated at Villers-Bretonneux.

The road you are on continues northwest to Mouquet Farm and at the junction where the road bears round to the left, take the ③ heading towards the crest of the ridge with the two flags marking the Pozières Windmill and the transmitter mast.



Private Thomas Cooke VC.

We are now travelling towards the German Second Line and running parallel with the D929. The ground to the right was crossed by the 7/Battalion in their abortive attack on OG1 on the night of 24/25 July. The jumping off line for the attack was between the road and light railway line, which ran along the approximate line of **Tramway Trench**. One company lost its bearings completely and took no part in the attack whilst the other made little progress and was driven back before it reached OG1. The next assault came on 28 July with 7 Brigade, 2nd Australian Division north of the D929, and they reached OG2 but were driven back by a strong enemy counterattack and it was not until 4 August that 7 Brigade finally took the German trenches north of the D929 and 5 Brigade captured the OG Lines to the south of the D929.

The track continues in a straight line to cross OG1 after some 500m and where it bends sharply to the right along the line of OG2. If you follow the track to the junction with the Route de Courcellette you are in the approximate position ④ of **Second Lieutenant Albert Jacka's** stand that took place on the night of 7 August. (He was not promoted to lieutenant until 18 August 1916.) Jacka was an officer in the 14/Battalion and had already been awarded the Victoria Cross in Gallipoli as a sergeant. Soon after 4.15am when the 14/Battalion had taken over the line a German counterattack broke through the outposts of the 14 and 48/Battalions in the OG Line near Pozières Windmill. **Sergeant Edgar Rule** was in the support line, some 450m behind the front line and felt the odds were stacked against them:



The road to Mouquet Farm continues to the left, whilst our track is on the right.

Why these two thousand Huns failed to capture and hold the ridge beats me. Their guns had practically wiped out the men in the front line – B Company almost ceased to exist – and had done a lot of damage to the support line. The 48th Battalion was on our right, and they suffered as we did. The full weight of the attack came at the junction of the two battalions, and it swamped the line, but after the Germans had the line in their hands, they did not know what to do with it, and ran around aimlessly.



The approximate position of Jacka's stand.

Jacka was in a deep dug-out with some of his platoon and the first he knew

about the attack was when a bomb rolled down the steps, killing two men. Leaping up to the entrance firing his revolver, Jacka killed the German sentry and saw the first wave of German infantry had passed the dug-out. He confided in Edgar Rule many years later about the sequence of events that followed:

There were four Huns in a shell hole, all I could see was their heads, shoulders and rifles. As I went towards them they began firing point-blank at me. They hit me three times and each time the terrific impact of the bullets swung me off my feet. When I got up to them, they flung down their rifles and put up their hands. I shot three through the head and put a bayonet through the fourth. I had to do it, they would have killed me the moment I turned my back.



Second Lieutenant Albert Jacka.

Jacka decided to charge through the enemy with the small number of men he had at his disposal, and hardly had they been lined up when he saw a column of 48/Battalion men coming towards him being escorted to the rear as

prisoners of war. Attacking the guards, about half of which threw down their weapons whilst the other half opened fire, the 48/Battalion prisoners needed no further invitation to join the fight and it soon became a melee into which Jacka and his men pitched themselves, clearly expecting not to survive the encounter. Edgar Rule writes that it was one of the queerest sights he had ever seen: 'Huns and Aussies were scattered in ones and twos all alongside the ridge. It was such a mix up that it was hard to tell who were Huns and who were Aussies. Each Aussie seemed to be having a war all on his own and the issue was not long in doubt.' Jacka was personally credited with killing between twelve and twenty Germans during the engagement and the counterattack had been thwarted, mainly by Jacka and his men, and halted in front of the 14 and 48/Battalion line. This action probably deserved an immediate award of the Victoria Cross and would have in any other circumstance, but Albert Jacka had probably rubbed too many senior officers up the wrong way and, never one to be afraid of voicing his opinion, he was only awarded a Military Cross. Military historian Gordon Corrigan suggests that the award was downgraded because the sentries in Australian line were either asleep or absent and Jacka bore some responsibility for allowing the attack to happen in the first place. However, whatever the situation, the badly wounded Jacka was fortunate not to have been killed and he would not return to his battalion until November 1916.

At the junction you can walk across the field to ⑤, the site of the former **Windmill** and the **Tank Memorial** having first visited the **Animal War Memorial Garden** and the white cross commemorating **Captain Ivor Margetts**, a 12/Battalion officer who was killed on 24 July 1916. Struck down by shrapnel as his battalion fought its way across the main street in Pozières, he lies somewhere in the village, educated guesses place the spot at about 100m along the Bazentin Road from Pozières. Two days after he was killed the original cross was destroyed by shellfire and his body was never found. He is commemorated on the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial.



Edgar Rule, photographed at his wedding to Muriel Tuck at Cobram, Victoria, in 1919, after he had been commissioned.

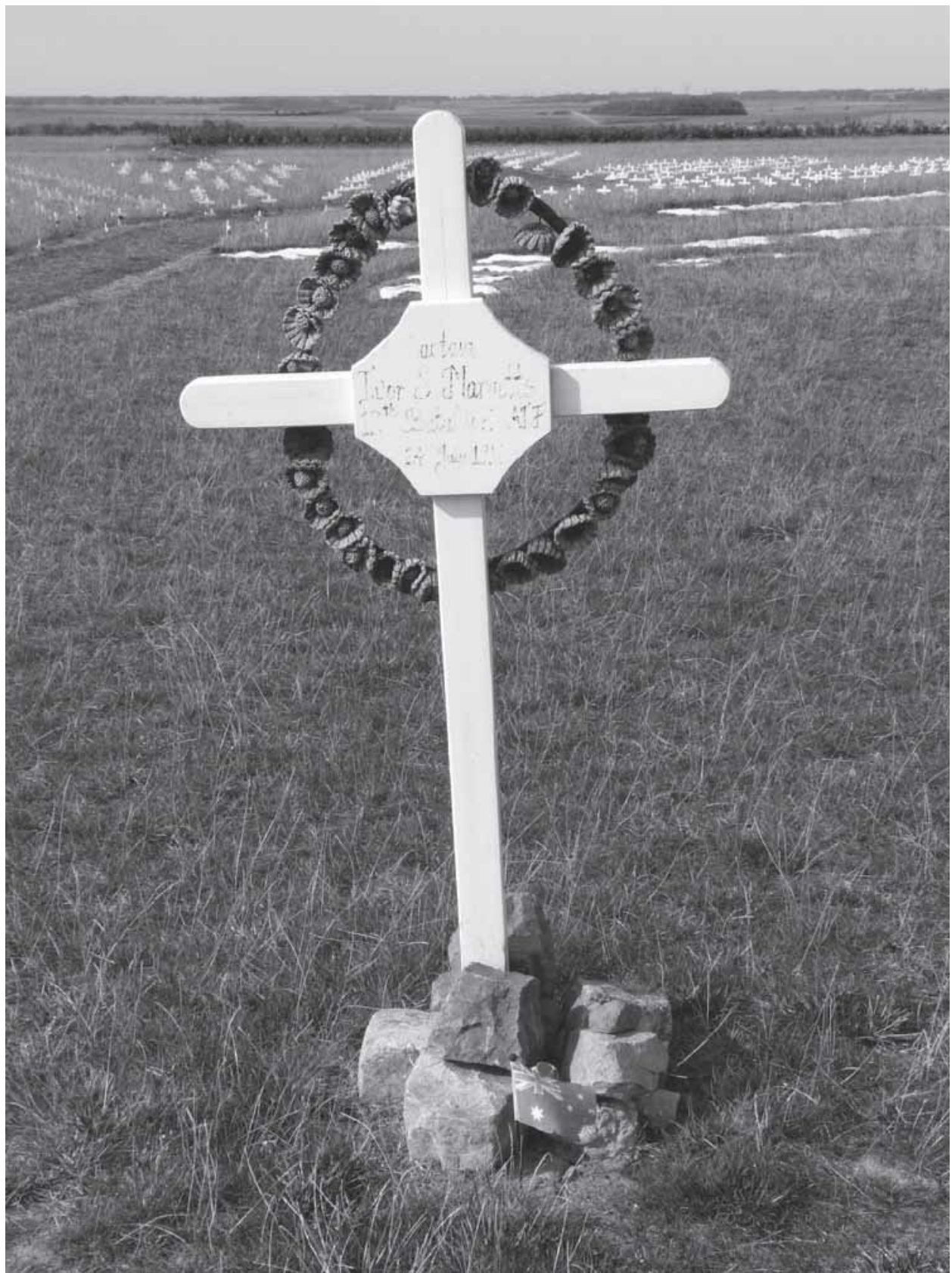
The Pozières Windmill was built on the highest ground above the village and by July 1916 was already badly damaged. By the time the 2nd Australian Division took the ridge it was a pile of rubble and was finally taken on 5 August by the 28/Battalion. The Windmill site was established as an Australian memorial in the 1930s at the suggestion of Australia's official war historian, Charles Bean, who wrote, 'The Windmill site ... marks a ridge more densely sown with Australian sacrifice than any other place on earth'.



The Tank Memorial.



Captain Ivor Margetts.



Although commemorated on the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial, Margetts' burial site is thought to be somewhere near his memorial cross.

Across the road – take great care here please – the Tank Memorial is the only First World War memorial to the Tank Corps on the Western Front and is bordered by 6-pounder gun barrels linked together with tank driving chains. The memorial was unveiled by Lieutenant General Sir Thomas Morland in July 1922.

Retrace your steps to Route de Courcellette, turn left towards Pozières and continue to the junction with the D929 where you turn right. Take care here to cross the road using the zebra crossing as the road is often busy, and once on the far side of the road it is about 150m to the D73 Bazentin Road ⑥ which you will see on your left. Turn left here and approximately 80m along this road you will see a memorial on the corner of Chemin George Sinton Kaye Butterworth, dedicated to the memory of 31-year-old **Lieutenant Butterworth**, 13/Durham Light Infantry, who was killed on 5 August. The memorial ⑦ does seem a long way from **Munster Alley Trench** where he was killed, but if you travel along Chemin George Sinton Kaye Butterworth, passing over the OG Lines, for about 600m, Munster Alley Trench was on your right. This was also the line of the Australian 5 Brigade attack on the OG Lines on 7 August. Butterworth, an Oxford graduate and composer, was great friends with Ralph Vaughan Williams and published two sets of songs in 1912 from A.E. Houseman's *A Shropshire Lad* culminating with the rhapsody *A Shropshire Lad* in 1913 and *The Banks of Green Willow* a year later. He has no known grave and is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial under the name Kaye Butterworth.



The memorial on the site of the Pozières Windmill.



The memorial commemorating Lieutenant George Butterworth on the corner of Chemin George Sainton Kaye Butterworth.



Lieutenant George Butterworth.

Retrace your steps to the memorial and turn left, continuing along the road to turn right ⑧ after 160m along a track which is marked by a farm and a large grain silo. As you head along this track, glance to the left to catch sight of **Sunken Road Cemetery**. The track you are on runs parallel with the light railway line that ran south of the D929 and was crossed by the **1** and

3/Battalions from the Australian 1st Division during their attack on Pozières on 25 July. **Sergeant Paul Maze**, a French liaison officer attached to Gough's headquarters, was with the second wave of Australians as they attacked the village:

As the sun came up over the ridge we were dazzled by its brilliant rays. Where were we? We were much further into the village than we first thought. In front of us earth was rapidly being shovelled out of a trench, no movement in the open ground seemed possible. The shelling had increased, the ground was so thickly littered with broken bricks that the battle might have been fought with them. Field dressings were strewn all over the place. Some German dead were still clasping their hand grenades. Near us an Australian and a German, killed at the moment they had come to grips, hung together on the parapet like marionettes embracing each other.



Sunken Road Cemetery.

After 400m **Pozières Trench** crosses the track on its way over the D929 and the Gibraltar Blockhouse. At the junction turn right, noting that the fields to your left still bear the scars from the fighting of 100 years ago. This road was part of the line of the **Australian 2** and **4/Battalion** attack of 25 July.

Continue to the junction ⑨ with the D929 and, using the zebra crossing, go straight ahead into **Rue de l'Église**, following signs for the 1st Australian Division Memorial. At the village war memorial stop. The road straight in front of you was used by the **8/Battalion** on 25 July to advance towards the communal cemetery and their rendezvous with the **4/Battalion**, which was bombing up K Trench but, as you can imagine, there was little left of the village by that time. Turn left past the rebuilt church and where the road bears round to the left the 1st Australian Division Memorial and your vehicle come into view.



The Pozières village war memorial.



Route 4

GUILLEMONT AND GINCHY

A circular tour beginning at: the church at Guillemont

Distance: 8km/5 miles

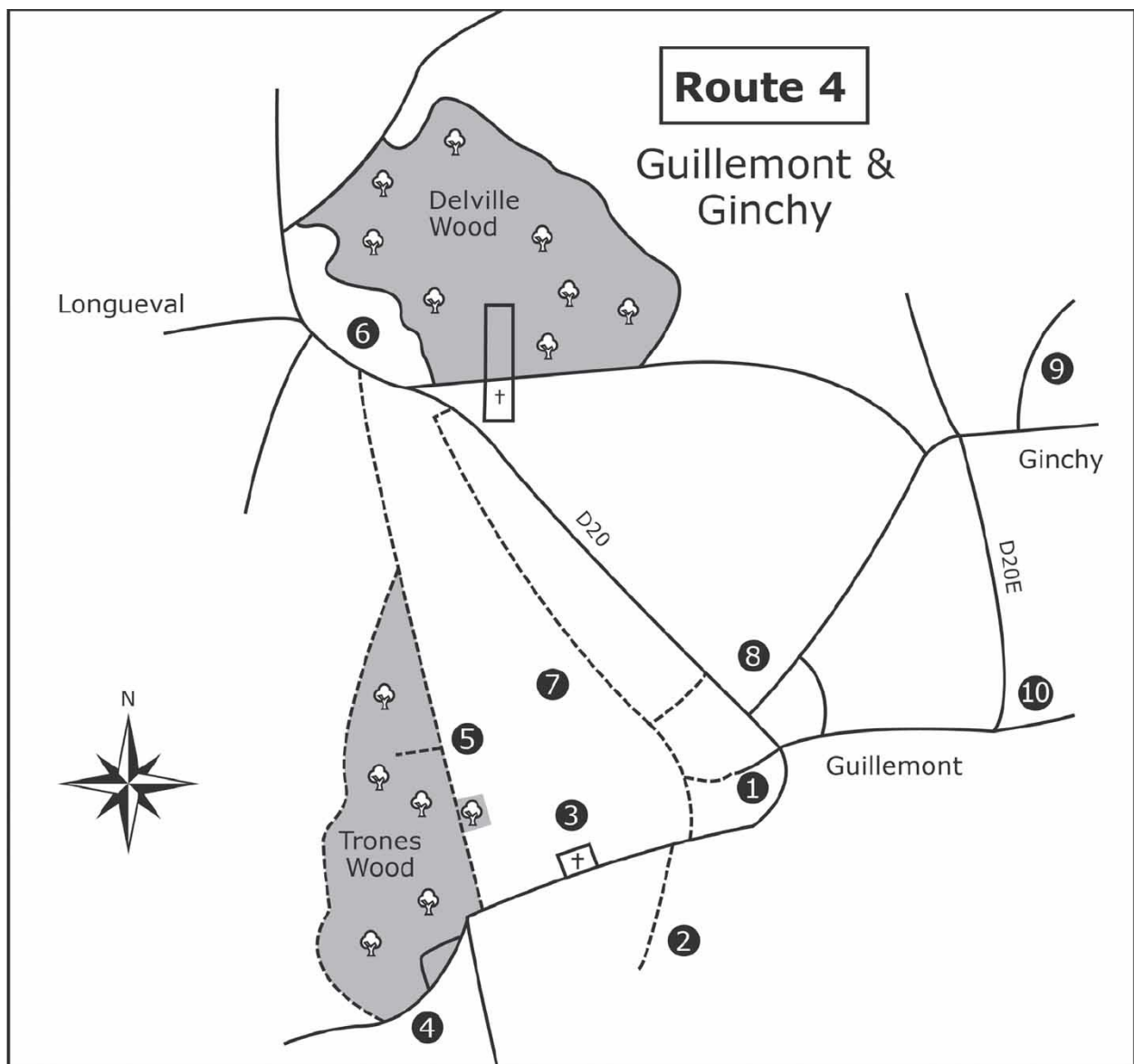
Grade: Easy

Suitable for:  

Maps: Bray-sur-Somme 2408E

General description and context: Our route begins outside the church in Guillemont which is worth a visit should it be open. Battlefield tourists will be fascinated by the story of **Rue Ernst Jünger** and the effect it still has on the population of the village today. From the destruction of Guillemont during the war we head towards **Guillemont Road Cemetery** where several notable individuals are buried. Leaving the cemetery we visit the **18th (Eastern) Division Memorial** before moving alongside the eastern edge of Trônes Wood. What is not always understood about the 14 July attack on Trônes Wood is the apparent demands that were put upon **Brigadier General Thomas Shoubridge**. At midnight Shoubridge was informed that 54 Brigade was required to have the wood under his control before dawn and the success of the 9th Division attack on Longueval depended upon it. Trônes Wood would have to be captured in its entirety before the attack on the German Second Line began from Longueval to Bazentinle-Petit ([see Route 1](#)). It appears that Shoubridge was told that the men involved in the famous Dawn Attack were already beginning to assemble. No pressure then! Our route then heads along the eastern edge of Trônes Wood, where Maxwell's men fought

to contain the wood, towards Longueval, briefly visiting the Footballers' Battalions Memorial, before it turns south to visit the **George Marsden-Smedley Memorial**. Back in Guillemont, we pass by the memorial to the **Jersey Contingent** before heading out towards Ginchy where we visit the site of the **Ginchy Telegraph** and the spot where **Raymond Asquith** was killed. The memorial to the **20th (Light) Division** is visited as is the memorial to Frenchman **Capitaine Fockeday** and his men by the communal cemetery in Guillemont. Finally, it's back to Rue Ernst Jünger and your vehicle.

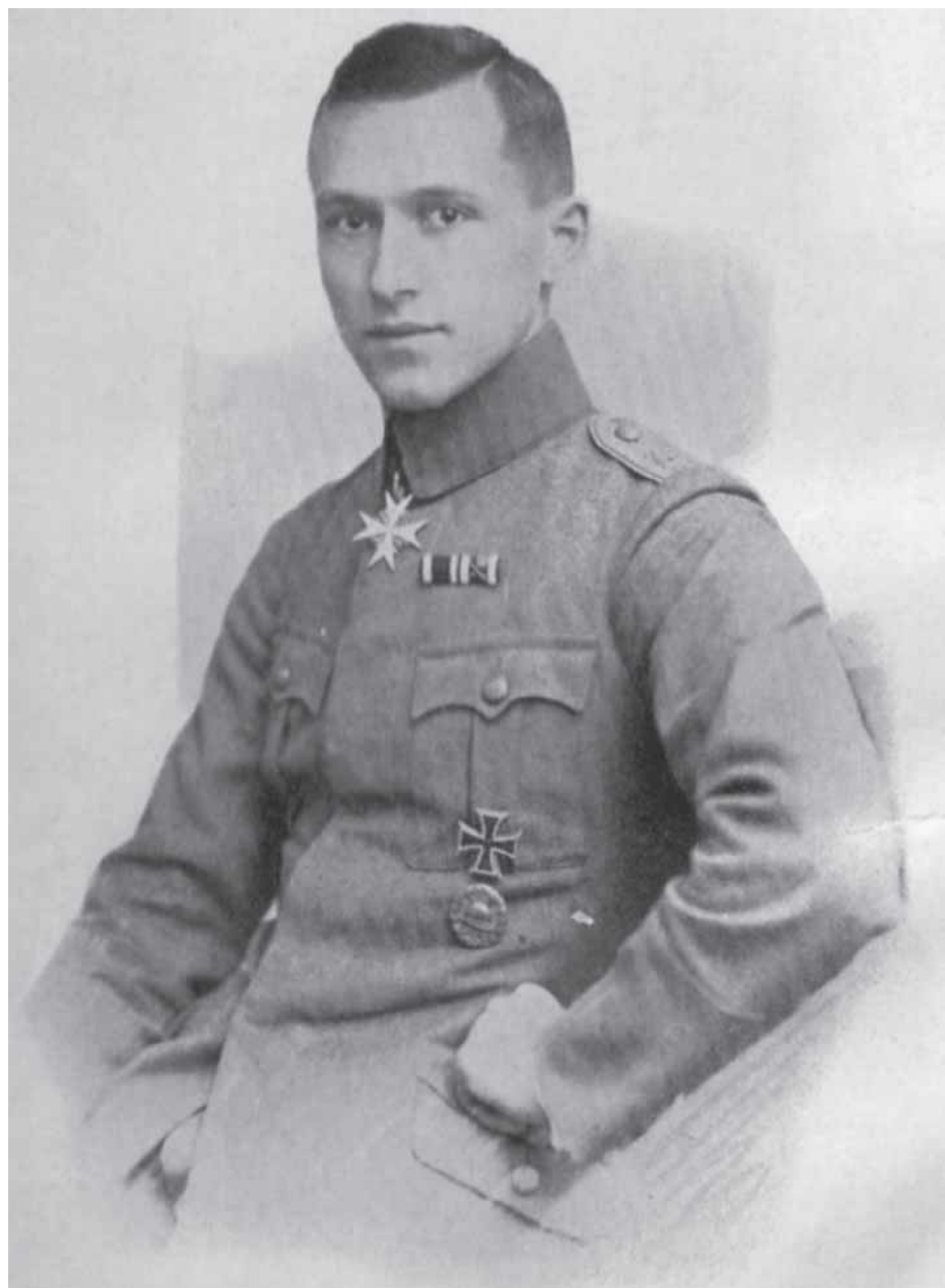


Directions to start: Guillemont is best approached via Longueval on the D20, whilst visitors approaching from the south will find the D64 from Montauban more convenient. Parking outside the church is difficult and it is probably better to park in the nearby Rue Ernst Jünger ❶.

Route description: Some nine Victoria Crosses were won in the area described in **Route 4** which gives an indication of the ferocity of fighting that occurred around Guillemont and Ginchy between July and September 1916. On the outside of the church, which stands on the main road through the village, is the memorial cross dedicated to the **16th (Irish) Division**, an identical monument to that which stands at Wytschaete in Belgium. One of the more well-known casualties was **Lieutenant Thomas ‘Tom’ Kettle** of the 9/Dublin Fusiliers, who was killed on 9 September at Ginchy. In front of the church, to the right, stands the village war memorial, and one of the names listed here is Maurice Waterlot – perhaps part of the family which owned Waterlot Farm, situated northwest of the village. The name Waterlot also appears on maps of the area today, les Vingt Waterlot is marked to the east of the village. To the left of the church entrance is a plaque commemorating the award of three Victoria Crosses on 3 September to **Lieutenant John Holland**, Leinster Regiment, **Private Thomas Hughes**, Connaught Rangers, and **Sergeant David Jones**, King’s Liverpool Regiment. All three men won their crosses on 3 September, two survived the war but Sergeant Jones was killed five weeks later on the Transloy Heights. Inside the church are a number of plaques dedicated to the 16th (Irish) Division and an identical Victoria Cross plaque to the one outside. A photograph of **Ernst Jünger**, who fought at Guillemont, is prominently displayed and visitors may be curious as to why a French road is named after a German soldier and whose photograph is displayed in the church. The story goes that it was the village mayor who instigated the change to the road name, a change that caused, and still does, a degree of ill feeling amongst the residents. Ernst Jünger devotes a chapter to Guillemont and Combles in his book *Storm of Steel* and describes his positions in the village as being surrounded by the stench of death:



The 16th (Irish) Division Memorial outside Guillemont church.



Ernst Jünger.

The village of Guillemont seems to have disappeared without trace; just a whitish stain on the cratered field indicated where one of the limestone houses had been pulverized. In front of us lay the station, crumpled like a child's toy, further to the rear the woods of Delville, ripped to splinters. No sooner had day broken than a low flying RAF [sic] plane whirled towards us, vulture like, began drawing its circles overhead, whilst we fled into our holes and huddled together.

Jünger was wounded in the leg a few days before the British took Guillemont and was evacuated to a German casualty clearing station at Fins; he died in 1998.

Guillemont was attacked twice by the British on 30 July and 8 August 1916 before the village was finally taken on 3 September. Shortly after the attack in August 1916, **Captain Francis Hitchcock**, of C Company, 2/Leinsters, was ordered with his battalion to relieve a front-line position and replace the men facing the southwest fringes of Guillemont. It was from all accounts a pretty grisly place:

We found Jameson and his platoon under deplorable conditions; all around them were enemy dead and the little ditch of a trench full of mud, with pieces of equipment and half-buried corpses. Jameson was cheery, but complained of being short of rations. This post on the right of the company was at least 200 yards away from the main line. It had no CT or wire entanglements but was echeloned back facing Leuze Wood ... Shellfire was hellish all afternoon. Box barrages were put down all round and the earth was going up like volcanoes, completely smothering us.

The **20th (Light) Division** was involved in taking the village on 3 September; on the morning of the attack their line was just to the west of the village, running past the site of Guillemont Station. Assembly trenches were dug north of Guillemont Station to aid the attack, and at 6am an artillery bombardment commenced with the infantry attack beginning at noon. It was

from these trenches northeast of the station that **Lieutenant John Holland** advanced into Guillemont with his team of bombers to win his Victoria Cross. His citation in the *London Gazette* gives a little more detail:

He fearlessly led his bombers through our own artillery barrage and cleared a great part of the village in front. He started out with twenty-six bombers and finished with only five after capturing some 50 prisoners. By this gallant action he undoubtedly broke the spirit of the enemy, and thus saved us many casualties when the battalion made a further advance.

The eastern side of the village, which was the second objective, was taken by 1.30pm accompanied by fierce hand-to-hand fighting within the village of Guillemont itself. Although attacks to the north near Ginchy were not successful, the 20th Division troops pushed forwards again on 4 September, and reached their final objective. **Lieutenant Phillip Story**, 96/Field Company, a Royal Engineers company in the 20th Division, wrote home, describing the capture of the village:

I don't think we are really giving anything away in telling you, especially as it is about a week old, that we, as a division, took Guillemont. My brigade was on the right. We have all been very much congratulated on the result as we sappers played no small part in the affair ... Casualties, alas, pretty high, two officers wounded and some forty-one men in the company. We fairly pasted the Boche – some six hundred prisoners and a large number of killed and wounded. My orderly, alas, was badly wounded at my side by a whizz-bang, which sent me head over heels, but I am thankful to say I came through unscathed, beat dead beat to a turn.

The 20th Division were supported by troops from the **16th (Irish) Division**, who also took Ginchy on 9 September. After the war, Guillemont was adopted by Hornsey, and in September 1921 a deputation from Hornsey visited and gave a tractor, a threshing machine and a plough to help the villagers with their return to farming the devastated land.

With the church on the right, turn left into Rue de l'Église and continue round the right-hand bend, passing a calvary on the right, to a crossroads of tracks. Stop here. The track on the left led to **Maltzhorn Farm ②**, known to the Germans as Maltzkorn Farm . The farm was named after the family founder, Paulus Maltzkorn, who had been born in Cologne in 1774 and married Marie-Anne Colombier. The farm overlooked the southern end of Trônes Wood and, apart from being an important feature of the landscape, Maltzhorn Trench jutted out like a small salient from the German defences at the farm, vital to the success of the **Battle of Guillemont**, the farm was captured in a joint move by 89 Brigade and the French 153 Regiment of Infantry. The farm was never rebuilt after the war and only the calvary marks the position today.



Looking back towards the entrance at Guillemont Road Cemetery.

Ahead of you is **Trônes Wood** and the Cross of Sacrifice of **Guillemont Road Cemetery**, stop outside the cemetery. The cemetery ③ stands on the ground across which several attacks on the village of Guillemont were made

and consequently many of the dead were killed during the attacks on Guillemont. It was begun by fighting units (mainly of the Guards Division) and field ambulances after the Battle of Guillemont, and was closed in March 1917. It was greatly increased in size after the Armistice when graves were brought in from smaller battlefield cemeteries and the battlefields immediately surrounding the village. The cemetery now contains 2,263 burials of which a staggering 1,523 are unidentified. **Second Lieutenant William Stanhope Forbes** (I.A.1) was killed aged 23 serving with 1/DCLI on 3 September 1916. His father was the well-known painter Stanhope Forbes RA, the founding member of the influential Newlyn School of painters. Probably the most well-known grave here is that of **Lieutenant Raymond Asquith** (I.B.3), who died of wounds serving with the 3/Grenadier Guards on 15 September 1916. Raymond Asquith was the eldest son of Herbert Asquith, British Prime Minister from 1908 to December 1916. In 1902 he was elected a fellow of All Souls College, Oxford and was called to the Bar in 1904. He married in 1907 and on 17 December 1914 he was commissioned in the Queen's Westminster Rifles, transferring to the Grenadier Guards in August 1915. The grave to the left of Asquith is that of 39-year-old **Second Lieutenant Dormer Kierulff de Bretton Treffry** (I.B.2), 4th Battalion Coldstream Guards, who died of wounds on 15 September 1916. The son of Charles Udney Treffry of Fowey, Cornwall, he had only joined the Regiment on 2 February 1916. Another well-known figure was 19-year-old **Lieutenant Hon. Edward 'Bim' Tennant** (I.B.18), who was the son of Edward Priaux, 1st Baron Glenconner and Lady Glenconner (later Viscountess Grey of Falloden). On the outbreak of the war he was commissioned into the Grenadier Guards and joined the 4/Grenadier Guards just before the Battle of Loos in September 1915. He was appointed ADC to Major General Geoffrey Feilding, Commanding the Guard Division, but in early 1916 he was back with the battalion in time to take part in the attack of 22 October 1916. He was killed a week after his friend Raymond Asquith and it is said that his body was brought back from where he died to be close to Asquith. Typical of those men who were brought in from surrounding cemeteries were eight boys of the 9/Royal Fusiliers, killed in the attack on Hardecourt-aux-Bois on 28 August 1918. A total of 28 were killed

in the assault and according to the Fusiliers' historian, the action of the battalion was particularly creditable as it had 350 recruits in its ranks, whose ages varied from 18 to 19 and who had only been in France a week. You will find these boys as follows: **Privates Thomas Bell** (II.B.5), **Henry Claus** (III.B.1), **George Death** (II.H.18), **Charles Goode** (II.B.4), **Albert Puttock** (III.F.4), **Percy Saunders** (II.H.3) and **Archibald Turnbull** (III.B.2). The eighth man, **Lance Corporal George Durrant**, is buried at II.H.5. Before you leave, go to the back wall of the cemetery for a spectacular view of the battlefield from Trônes Wood on the left to the spire of Guillemont church on the right. To the north of the spire is the mass of Delville Wood. The large grain silo to your right was the site of **Guillemont Station** and the sizeable green building ahead is on the site of **Waterlot Farm**, which, as you are aware, was not a farm but a sugar refinery and destroyed during the war. On 14 July British troops of 54 Brigade managed to reach Waterlot Farm before being pushed back, it was eventually captured on 17 July 1916. The farm existed as a pronounced salient in the British lines and it was British progress past Ginchy and Guillemont that finally removed the danger of the Delville Wood–Waterlot Farm salient.



Raymond Asquith.



A drawing of Edward 'Bim' Tennant by John Singer Sargent.

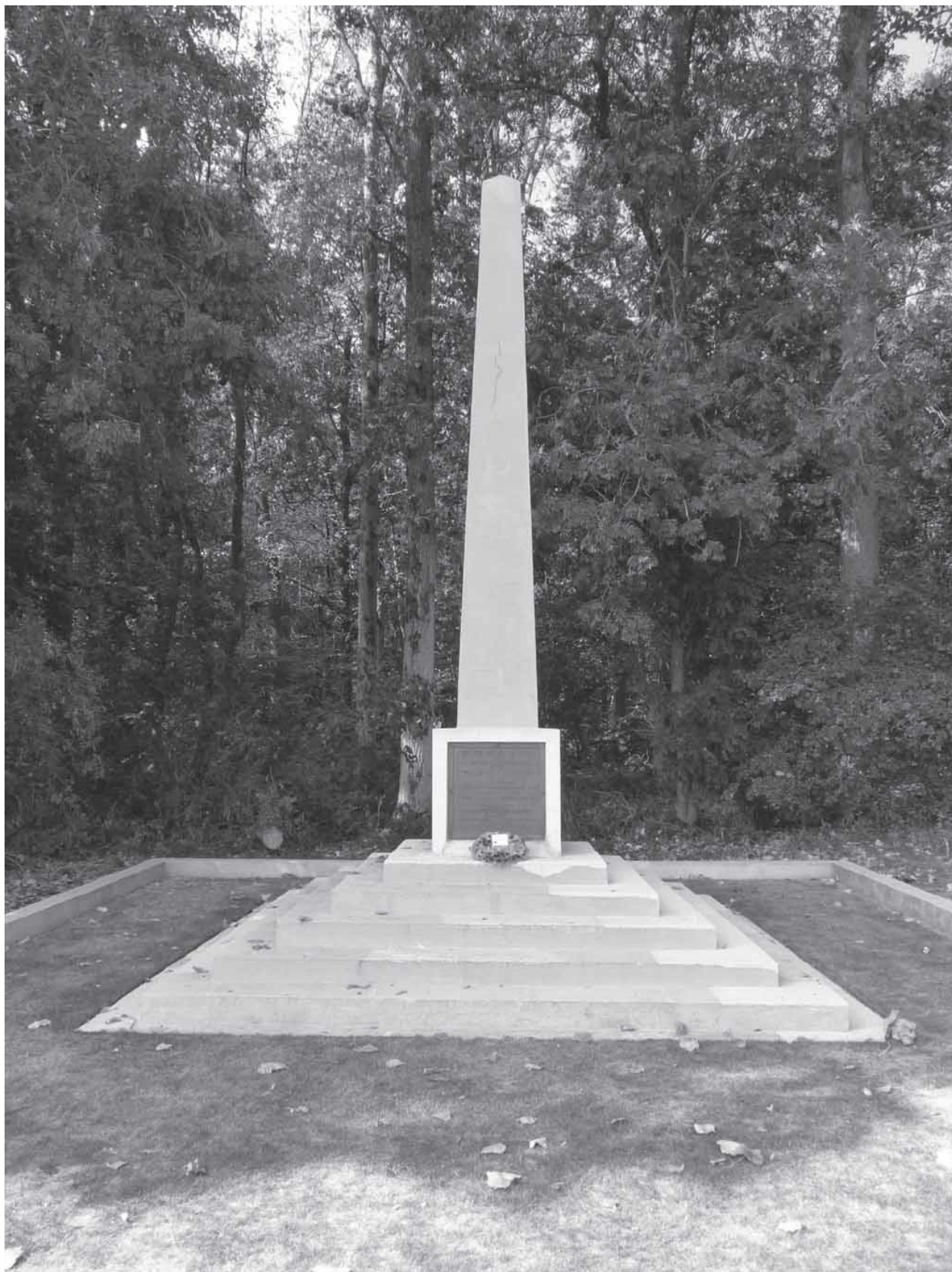


Looking across from the rear of Guillemont Road Cemetery to the site of Guillemont Station.

Leave the cemetery and continue along the D64, take care here as the road is quite busy. As the road bends to the left take the first minor road towards Hardecourt-aux-Bois, continue for 50m and stop. Look east towards the spire of Guillemont church, the ground in front of you is the location of **Captain Noel Chavasse's** first Victoria Cross action. Chavasse was the medical officer to the 1/10 King's Liverpool and won his cross on 9 August 1916 helping wounded men across the battlefield after a failed attack. He won a second posthumous Victoria Cross in July 1917 at Ypres and is the only man to be awarded the cross twice in the First World War. He is buried in **Brandhoek New Military Cemetery** near Ypres.

Looking south directly along the road you will see the tip of Hardecourt

church and just to the right you should be able to see a calvary, commemorating the former site of **Maltzhorn Farm**. In 1916 Hardecourt was in the French sector and where you are standing is approximately on the boundary of the two sectors. Round the bend of the southern edge of Trônes Wood (Bois des Troncs on modern day maps) you will see the memorial ④ to the **18th (Eastern) Division** on the right. Stop here. The current memorial replaced the plain wooden cross which was originally erected to commemorate those who fell in the 1918 fighting. On the left side of the obelisk are listed the division's battle honours and on the right are the units which made up the division. In the woods, just beyond the memorial, are one or two private tributes, attached to trees and wooden crosses at ground level. One such cross remembers the brothers Sergeant S.J. and Corporal P.W. Steers of the 7/Royal West Kents.



The 18th (Eastern) Division Memorial at Trônes Wood.

Having taken Bernafay Wood on 3 July, the British XIII Corps, commanded by Lieutenant General Sir William Congreve, was now faced by Trônes Wood, which was under observation from the German Second Position running from Longueval to Guillemont.

Trônes Wood lay between Bernafay Wood and Guillemont and dominated the southern approach to Longueval and Trônes Alley, a German communication trench between Bernafay and Trônes Wood. A light railway ran through the centre of the wood, passing through Guillemont Station on its way to Combles.

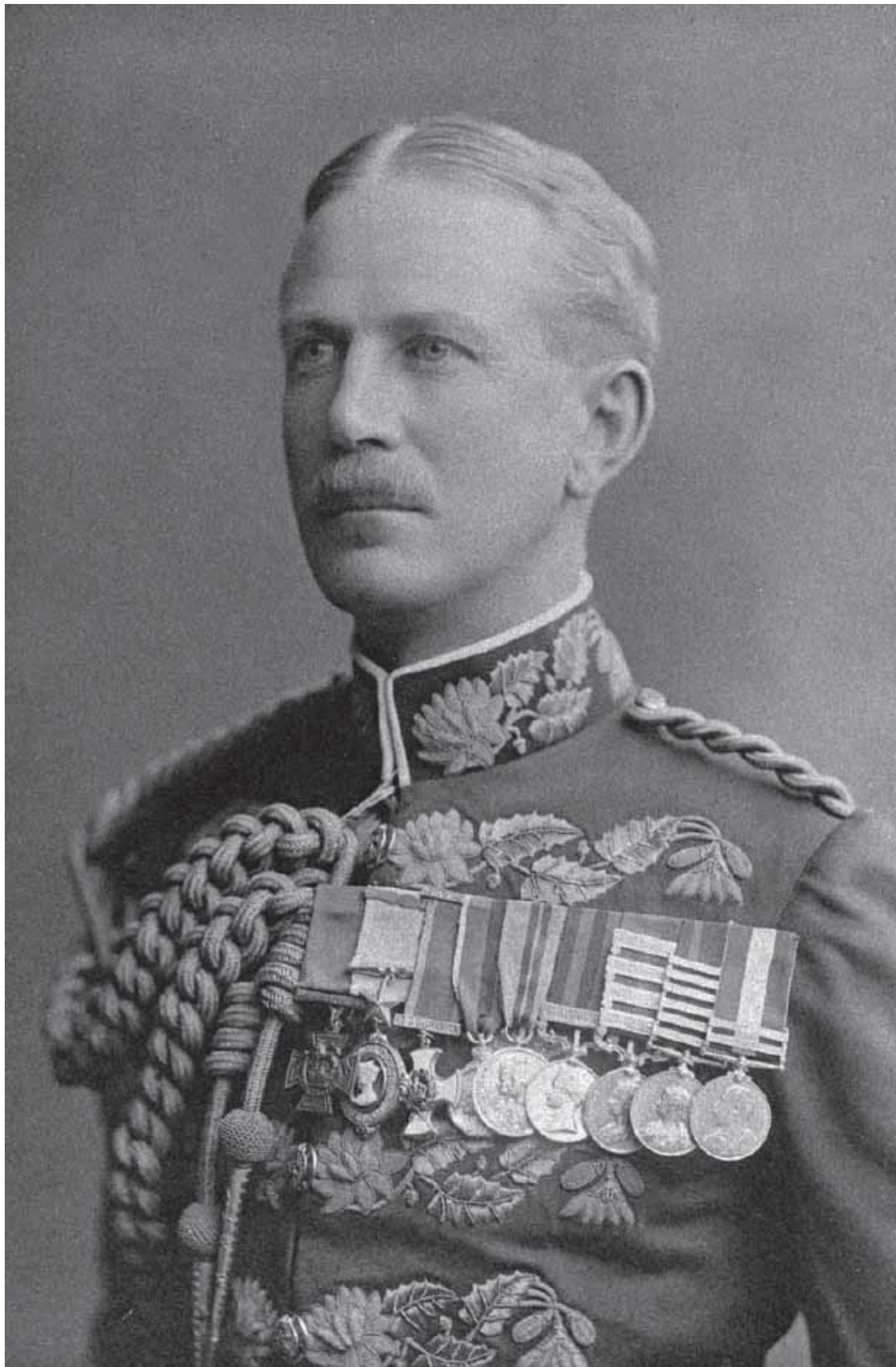
Return to the road and turn right and continue for about 200m before stopping. The bulk of Bernafay Wood can now be seen and it was from roughly this location that German machine-gunners caused terrible casualties to the 21 Brigade attack of 8 July. This was the first attack on the wood, an attack which was repeated several times until the successful British advance of 14 July by 54 Brigade, 18th Division. Retrace your steps until the road bends round to the right. Here you will see a track on the left which runs along the eastern side of Trônes Wood. Stop here.

The 14 July attack would probably have used the ground to the left of the track. Reaching the southern perimeter of the wood at 4.30am, the **6/Northampton**s advanced braving a storm of artillery and machine-gun fire. This was just minutes from the start of the Dawn Attack on the main German Second Line! All went well until they became disorientated at the small section of wood that juts out on the eastern side of the wood, believing this to be the northern apex of the wood. Just north of this is where the railway line emerged from the wood along the woodland ride and continued in a northeasterly direction to Guillemont Station, the site of which you can see on your right.

Meanwhile, **Lieutenant Colonel Frank Maxwell VC** had moved into the wood at 8am with the 12/Middlesex. Having won his Victoria Cross in the Second Boer War he was not a man accustomed to inactivity. Maxwell, it appears, was not enamoured by the term wood:

To talk of a 'wood' is to talk rot. It was the most dreadful tangle of dense trees and undergrowth imaginable. With deep yawning trenches

cross-crossing about it; every tree broken off at top or bottom and branches cut away, so that the floor of the wood was almost an impenetrable tangle of timber, trenches and undergrowth, all blown to pieces by British and German heavy guns for a week. Never was anything so perfectly dreadful to look at.



Lieutenant Colonel Francis Maxwell commanded the 12/Middlesex.



Sergeant William Boulter VC, taken after he was commissioned.

Maxwell advanced with his men shoulder to shoulder guided by compass. To maintain their nerve in the face of constant sniping he ordered them to fire continuously from the hip into the undergrowth and trees ahead of them. During the final sweep of the wood 23-year-old **Sergeant William Bolter**, 6/Northants, demonstrated enormous courage in putting a machine gun out of action, winning the Victoria Cross in the bargain. ⑤ The approximate spot where Boulter won his cross is just inside the wood to the north of the copse of trees that juts out from the eastern edge of the wood. The official citation appeared in the *London Gazette* in October 1916:

During the capture of Trônes Wood one company and a portion of another company was held up by a machine gun which was causing heavy casualties. Sergeant Boulter, with complete disregard of his personal safety and in spite of being severely wounded in the shoulder, advanced alone across the open in front of the gun and bombed the team from their position.

He was recommended for the Victoria Cross by his Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel George Ripley, a man much respected by William. Sadly, Ripley died of his wounds received at Thiepval on 26 September 1916, never knowing his recommendation had succeeded. Maxwell was killed whilst commanding 27 Brigade at Ypres, but William Boulter survived the war and died in 1955.

The defending Germans evacuated the northern confines of the wood, running across the open ground towards Waterlot Farm and Guillemont where they were gunned down by the victorious men of the Middlesex and Northants. The capture of the wood secured the right flank of the advance of the 9th Division towards Longueval. Maxwell's remarkable achievement in taking the wood was outlined in a letter to his wife in which he gives us an insight into a quite remarkable story:

I had meant only to organise and start the line, and then get back to my loathsome ditch, back near the edge of the wood, so as to be in

communication by runners with the brigade and world outside. I immediately found that without my being there the thing would collapse in a few minutes. Sounds vain, perhaps, but there is nothing of vanity about it, really. So off I went with the line, leading it, pulling it on, keeping its direction, keeping it from its hopeless desire to get into single file behind me, instead of a long line either side.

Continue up the gentle slope towards Longueval with Delville Wood on the right until you reach another track on the left. You are now at the approximate northern end of Trônes Wood, the track you are on marks the final British line reached by nightfall on 14 July 1916, having driven the Germans out of the wood towards Guillemont. Look to the east to see the roof of the factory buildings – Waterlot Farm. Look back from the apex of the wood along the track on the western edge of Trônes Wood and note the spire of Montauban church across the fields to your right and Bernafay Wood.

Continue along the track, which is now metalled, towards Longueval which eventually opens out into a road – Rue du Clos – with houses on either side. ⑥ Continue to the junction and turn right, ignoring the road on the right which leads along the southern edge of Delville Wood.



Looking back along the D20 towards Longueval and Delville Wood.

With the **Footballers' Battalions Memorial** on the left (see [Route 6](#)), take the D20 towards Guillemont and Combles. Continue for 500m along **Rue de Guillemont** until you reach the last house on the right. Stop here. Beyond the village you will see a large factory building which is the site of the former Waterlot Farm which you first saw from across the fields by Trônes Wood. You now have a choice of routes. Cyclists may wish to continue along the D20 but walkers may prefer to retrace the route for 90m and take the obvious cinder track on the left which runs between houses 22 and 24. Here the track quickly becomes a grass pathway, bear left at the junction and continue along **le Chemin Neuf** – often referred to as **Fleet Street** on trench maps – for approximately 700m to the private memorial **7** dedicated to 19-year-old **Second Lieutenant George Marsden-Smedley**, 3/Rifle Brigade. George Marsden-Smedley was born in 1897 and educated at Harrow where he was in the OTC, a monitor, captain of the football and

cricket elevens before going to Trinity College, Cambridge. On 18 August he led his platoon in the attack on Guillemont Station, which was almost opposite the memorial. Having been themselves heavily shelled all day, three companies went forward under a creeping barrage crossing no-man's-land with little loss until they met stiff resistance from the strongpoint around the station. Marsden-Smedley reportedly charged a machine gun which was holding up the company and he was shot by a German officer, falling on the parapet of the German trench. His body was never found and today he is commemorated on the **Thiepval Memorial**. Three of the subalterns killed with him are buried in Delville Wood Cemetery ([see Route 6](#)).



The Marsden-Smedley Memorial.

From the memorial, ignore the first track on the left and take the second

which should allow you to rejoin the D20. (Cyclists reaching this point, having remained on the Rue de la Gare, will merely retrace the walking route to reach the Marsden-Smedley Memorial.) At the junction with the D20 turn right onto the **Rue de la Gare** where the two routes now merge again.

Before you rejoin the D20 glance over to the right where the remains of the quarry were incorporated into the German Second Line trenches, the scene of heavy hand-to-hand fighting in a number of the early attempts to capture the village. On 3 September it was also the site of **Private Thomas Hughes'** charge on a German machine-gun position, a feat which won him the Victoria Cross. His account of the action is remarkably simple: 'We went over the top. After being hit in four different places I noticed a machine gun firing in the German lines. So I rushed up, shot both the chaps on the gun and brought it back. I remember no more until I found myself down in the dressing station.'

You are now back in Guillemont, from where **Lieutenant Phillip Story**, 96/Field Company, wrote home about the contribution his sappers made to the battle:

We, as a division [20th Division] took Guillemont. My brigade was on the right. We have all been very much congratulated on the result, as we sappers played no small part in the affair; Casualties, alas, pretty high, two officers wounded with some forty-one men in the Company. We fairly pasted the Boche – some six hundred prisoners and a large number of killed and wounded ... The company did very well and with a few exceptions worked itself to an absolute standstill; you can't do much more than that.

Continue on Rue de la Gare and stop at the memorial to the **Jersey Contingent, Royal Irish Rifles** ⑧ on the corner of Rue de Ginchy. The Jersey Contingent, known, as the Jersey Pals, served alongside the 7/Royal Irish Rifles, 16th Irish Division, on the Somme in 1916, it was unveiled on 3 September 2016 by William Bailhache, the Bailliff of Jersey. The obvious hole through the memorial is the result of a core being removed and brought back to Jersey to become part of a monument in Royal Square in St Helier.



The memorial to the Jersey Contingent of the Royal Irish Rifles.

Keeping the memorial on your left, continue along Rue de Ginchy – signposted Ginchy – passing the calvary on the left. You are now on the D20E and should see the spire of Ginchy church ahead and across to the left the brick-built water tower at the corner of Delville Wood. At approximately 350m along this road, as you head towards Ginchy, you will come to the point where the railway line crossed the road en route for Colombes. As the afternoon of 3 September wore on there were two German counter attacks from the direction of Ginchy along this road and these were repelled by the men of the 12/King's Liverpool Regiment, who had been sent up by Major General Douglas Smith, commanding the 20th Division, to reinforce 47 Brigade. Amongst these men was **Sergeant David Jones**, who commanded his detachment of machine-gunners from 3–6 September to earn his award of the Victoria Cross. The *Liverpool Echo* reported an account of the action:

The men were like sheep without a shepherd and things were all in a muddle. Sergeant Jones sprang forward and gave orders. His men quickly recovered their temporary dismay and under his directions resumed their rush on the enemy's position. The machine guns played hell with us, but the sergeant led us straight to the goal. We carried the position with a rush, though we were greatly outnumbered. The enemy fled in panic and we lost no time in making ourselves at home in the position ... We had neither food or water, and in the circumstances were about as depressing as they could be, but Jones never despaired. He was so cheerful that everybody felt ashamed to be anything else.

Continuing into Ginchy you will come to a staggered junction, turn right here onto the Rue de Morval and after 150m turn left onto the C5 to Lesboeufs. **Ginchy** was finally captured by the 16th (Irish) Division on 9 September and began with the usual artillery bombardment, the infantry waiting until the afternoon to advance presumably to deny the Germans the opportunity to counterattack before darkness fell. The British assault in the south was repulsed but on the northern flank the 16th Division took Ginchy defeating several German counterattacks in the process. The loss of Ginchy denied the Germans observation posts from which they could watch the battlefield and

in particular the salient of Delville Wood.



Sir Ian Colquhoun. He commanded a company of the 1/Scots Guards during the attack on Lesboeufs.

Continue along the C5 to Lesboeufs for another 250m and stop. Look across into the fields on the left to see the former position of the **Ginchy Telegraph**, the site of an old semaphore station on the highest ground east of the village. For the Guards' Division the offensive on 15 September was their first introduction to the Somme fighting. Advancing northeast from Ginchy to Lesboeufs, **Captain Sir Ian Colquhoun** was commanding a company of the 1/Scots Guards during the attack:

Anyone can see that there must be hopeless confusion when we start. Lay down in a shell hole at 4am and about 4.30am the tanks began to arrive behind us ... At 6.30am the entire British line advanced, the 1st Guards Brigade on our left, the 6th Division on our right. As we anticipated, the entire wave formation had disappeared before we had crossed our own front line, and we advanced in a great mass, Grenadiers, Coldstream, Irish and Scots Guards all extremely mixed up. Within 30 yards I found myself in front of the Grenadiers with a few of my men.

Colquhoun carried on, and with the 3/Grenadiers adjutant, **Captain Oliver Lyttleton**, two officers of the Irish Guards add a mixed bag of others from the 3/Grenadiers, he took up a position on the high ground overlooking Lesboeufs, eventually withdrawing when it became obvious they were not going to be reinforced. (See [Route 9](#) for further details of the Guards' attack.)

Lieutenant Raymond Asquith was mortally wounded near the road ⑨ whilst leading the first half of No. 4 Company, 3/Grenadiers. Sensing his wound was fatal, he lit a cigarette to prevent his men from realizing the extent of his injuries. He died whilst being carried on a stretcher to the dressing station.

Retrace your steps to the staggered crossroads in Ginchy. Those wishing to visit the church at this point turn right for 140m along the Grand Rue. Here you will find the bench dedicated to **Major Cedric Dickens** outside the church and memorial plaques to Major Cedric Dickens and **Lieutenant**

Charles Irwin on either side of the altar. Irwin is buried in Delville Wood Cemetery and instructions for those wishing to visit the Dickens' Memorial Cross can be found in **Route 9**.



The memorial to the 20th (Light) Division at the junction of the D20E with the D20.

Back at the staggered crossroads go straight across on the Chemin du Roy following the D20E towards Combles. Leaving Ginchy the countryside opens out across the fields towards Leuze and Bouleux Woods, whilst across to the right is Guillemont church. Stop halfway along the D20E and look into the fields on your left. This is the site of the Quadrilateral, a German strongpoint where the 6th Division attacked on 15 September before advancing to Morval. The D20E will take you to another staggered crossroads where, directly opposite you, is the memorial to the **20th (Light) Division** which took part in the capture of Guillemont ⑩. The memorial was unveiled on 4 June 1922 by Major General Sir Cameron Shute, who had commanded 59 Brigade of the 20th Division during the Guillemont actions. This was the final German line of resistance in the fight for Guillemont which ended at this

very spot on 3 September 1916 when the Irish came in from the north. The memorial you see replaced the original obelisk, which fell into disrepair, and is identical to the division's memorial in Langemark near Ypres. From the memorial there are fine views east towards Leuze Woods and south to Hardecourt.



The granite obelisk to the French 265 Regiment of Infantry.

Keeping the memorial on the left, head back along the D20 to Guillemont and just before the communal cemetery you will see a grey granite obelisk to the French 265 Regiment of Infantry, XI Corps, commemorating the action of **Capitaine Hippolyte Fockeday** and the 120 men who fell with him on 28 August 1914. Standing in the middle of four trees it was erected by old comrades and Souvenir Français. In the Communal Cemetery itself there is a large plot where the **Famille Waterlot** are buried; this may or not be connected with Waterlot Farm.



Entrances to German dug-outs on Rue Ernst Jünger.

As the road descends into Guillemont turn left after 170m into Rue de Combles. Continue uphill, past the water tower, for 230m and turn right into **Rue Ernst Jünger**. As you carry on along the road glance left into the orchard to see the covered entrances to what is said to be a German telephone

exchange used by Jünger and the men of the 10/Hanoverian Regiment whilst other sources state the dugout entrances lead to a German Divisional Headquarters. Whatever the dug-outs once housed, there are three rooms accessed by the two entrances you can see. From here it is a short distance to your vehicle.



Route 5

FLERS

A circular tour beginning in: Longueval

Distance: 9km/5.8 miles

Grade: Moderate

Suitable for:  

Maps: Bapaume 2407 E

General description and context: The Battle of Flers-Courcelette, which began on 15 September 1916, will forever be associated with the first appearance of the tank. History was made when thirty-six of these new ‘land cruisers’ formed up behind the front line ready to attack the barbed wire, trenches and machine-gun posts which, until this point, had been a costly barrier to any substantial advance. Seen as a prospective war winning machine capable of reducing the slaughter already experienced on the Western Front, its potential was not fully realised in 1916 and its debut on the battlefield was, to say the least, a chequered one. The crews for the tanks came from a variety of units and were amalgamated into the **Heavy Section of the Machine Gun Corps**. In this route we concentrate on the successful attacks of 15 September made by the 41st Division and the 14th (Light) Division, the attack made by the New Zealand Division, although referred to, is covered in **Route 2**. Our route begins in Longueval and travels to first to Flers, where the 41st Division captured the village with the aid of four tanks. We then visit **Bulls Road Cemetery** and the tiny **Flers Communal Cemetery** before regaining the road to pass through the Guards Divisional

area before entering the 14th (Light) Division area. Taking the track on the right by **Ginchy Communal Cemetery**, we continue towards Delville Wood, crossing the ground traversed by **Captain Harold Mortimore**, who was the first man to command a tank in battle. Once on the main Longueval–Ginchy road we pass the entrance to **Delville Wood South African Memorial** ([see Route 6](#)) on the right and then into Longueval where the route concludes.

Route 5

Flers

New Zealand Memorial

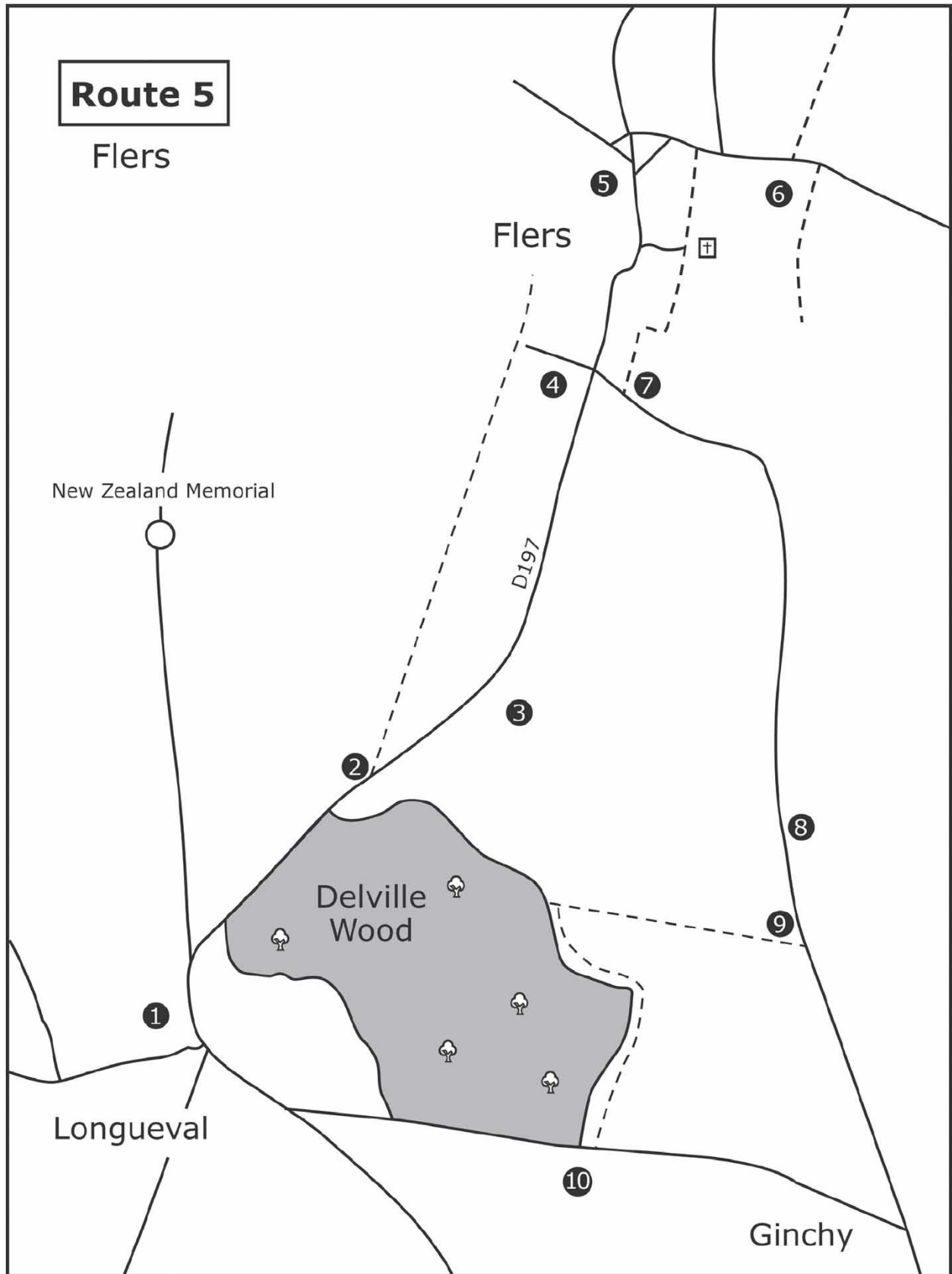
Flers

D197

Delville
Wood

Longueval

Ginchy



Directions to start: Longueval is a village west of Delville Wood at the junction of the D20 and the D197. On entering the village, park in the Place Lucian Butte, near the village war memorial and new community centre.

Route description: As you leave the village following signs for ❶ the New Zealand Memorial, a glance to your left reveals the dense mass of High Wood on the skyline and the tall obelisk of the New Zealand Memorial, both of which we visit in **Route 2**. In 240m the D197 continues to the right – Rue de Flers – and follows the northwestern edge of Delville Wood. This road, with the front line running some 360m north of Delville Wood, was the line of the 41st Division attack on Flers which was planned to begin at 6.20am and supported by ten tanks. The tanks left their start point at **Green Dump** in Caterpillar Valley on 14 September, taking some 9 hours to arrive at their assembly point north of Longueval on the Flers Road. However, not all of the tanks actually went into battle, D19 (Captain Sellick) and D2 (Lieutenant Bell) ditched in shell holes on the way up to Longueval, whilst D7 (Lieutenant Enoch) ditched in no-man's-land and D14 (Second Lieutenant Court) and D9 (Second Lieutenant Huffam) both crashed into a disused dug-out and were too late to take any part in the battle. The remaining tanks, D6 (Second Lieutenant Reginald Legge), D15 (Lieutenant Bagshaw) and D17 (Lieutenant Stuart Hastie), waited in the darkness behind the infantry.

Some 50m from the turn along the D197 to Flers you will pass the assembly point for D7, D15, D16 and D18 on the right and as the road bends round to the left you will see a track on your right roughly following the edge of Delville Wood. Stop here and walk up the track for a few paces. This is the approximate position of D17 *Dinnaken* as it waited for the infantry advance. Returning to the road continue uphill for another 400m to where D6 was parked on the verge in a shallow valley. Just ahead of the tanks were the infantry and if you stop as you reach the track on the left, you will be standing in what was the centre of the 41st Division attack. Take this obvious track. Straddling the track at the point where you turn left was ❷ 122 Brigade, consisting of the 15/Hampshires and the 18/King's Royal Rifle Corps (KRRC) to their left. To the right of the D197 was 124 Brigade with the 21/KRRC and the 10/Queen's Royal West Surreys on their right. Now

turn round and look down the road, the second wave of infantry was almost immediately behind with the 12/East Surreys and 11/Royal West Kents to your right and two battalions of Royal Fusiliers to the left. The New Zealand Division was attacking on the left of the 41st Division ([see Route 2](#)) and the 14th (Light) Division was on the right. **Sergeant Norman Carmichael** of 10 Platoon, C Company of the 21/KRRC recalled moving into position through Delville Wood and facing the Germans, who were in **Tea Support Trench**: ‘We found ourselves in what we supposed was the front line trench. Our platoon clambered over the parapet; one or two shook hands rather awkwardly with pals left behind, and we went forward into No-Man’s-Land where we lay down to wait for Zero.’



The point at which the route turns off the D197 to follow the track into Flers.

Even before Carmichael began his advance, the commanding officer of his battalion, 36-year-old **Lieutenant Colonel Charles Marten**, together with the Adjutant, Signalling and Trench Mortar Officer were killed by a German shell that landed in the HQ dug-out. Marten is buried in Serre Road Cemetery No. 2. Whilst 122 Brigade followed the line of the track you are on – called **Flood Street** by the troops – along with three tanks, D18 commanded by **Lieutenant Bond**, D16 commanded by **Lieutenant Arnold** and D15 commanded by **Lieutenant Bagshaw**; 124 Brigade continued to the right of the D197 towards Flers followed by Legge and Hastie's tanks, D6 and D17, which used the Flers road.

Continue along the track and stop where the track rises slightly about 50m before the large pylon. Follow the line of the power lines across to your right to the next pylon which stands on an embankment. Known today as the **Rideau de Filoires** ③, it became famous as the last resting place of D17 after it had advanced through Flers and finally ditched. **Second Lieutenant Head** and D3, who was supporting the 14th (Light) Division's attack on the right towards Gueudecourt, also ditched at the southern end of the Rideau de Filoires after being hit by a shell near **Tea Support Trench**. D17 later became the HQs of 64 and 110 Brigades during the attack on Gueudecourt on 25 September.



Lieutenant Colonel Charles Marten, 21/KRRC.

Back on the track continue for another 100m to where **Tea Support Trench** crossed the track from left to right and, a glance across to your right from here is where **Lieutenant Bagshaw** and D15 came to grief. Abandoning the burning tank, Bagshaw survived but lost two of his crew to German snipers. After another 100m or so you will cross the main German **Switch Line** running from west of High Wood, across the high ground of the New Zealand Division Memorial to Morval in the east. **Battery Sergeant Major Douglas Pegler**, a gunner NCO with 106/Brigade Royal Field Artillery, witnessed the advance of the 41st Division across the Switch Line and beyond:

We could see the infantry struggle up the hill towards Flers, our fellows advancing shell hole by shell hole and the Boche retiring just as slowly and steadily. Whatever Fritz's faults he is a great fighter. Here there is not a yard of ground unbroken by shell fire and there are half a dozen bodies to each shell hole.

Continue along the track heading towards the spire of Flers church and stop at the junction of tracks on the outskirts of Flers. The tanks of Arnold and Bond carried on straight ahead, moving along the west side of the village. Both Bond and Arnold survived and were awarded the Military Cross for their work in attacking the German defensive pocket northwest of Flers. Just before our route turns right, we cross the **Brown Line**, or **Flers Trench**, running from left to right and crossing the main road. After turning right ④ to rejoin the D197, stop at the junction with the main road. This is the route that Tank D17 took into Flers and where Hastie crushed the wire and placed his tank astride the trench, enfilading the German occupants, allowing the infantry to advance. Hastie recalled the moment he crossed Flers Trench:

It was up to me to carry on alone. Having crossed the front German line I could see the old road down into Flers, which was in a shocking condition, having been shelled by both sides. At the other end of the road, about a mile away, which was about the limit of my vision from

the tank, I could see the village of Flers, more or less clouded with smoke from the barrage which had come down on top of it.

Legge in D6 had already turned off the D197 and proceeded up the east side of Flers, supporting the men of 124 Brigade. He joined **Bulls Road** just west of the cemetery, having engaged the German battery that hit and destroyed **Second Lieutenant Blowers'** D5 that was supporting the 14th Division attack. More of this later. Almost immediately across the road is a French memorial to the 17th and 18th Infantry Regiments situated next to a calvary. This is one of two memorials in the area commemorating the fighting in September 1914.



À LA MÉMOIRE
DE CEUX TOMBÉS
AUX COMBATS
DE
FLEURY
GINCHY
LES BOEUF
LE 26 SEPT. 1914
ET
SUR TOUT LE
FRONT FRANÇAIS

The French memorial to the 17th and 18th Infantry Regiments.



A crucifix stands to the left of the French memorial.

Continue along the road into Flers following Hastie's route into the village and ignoring the turning on the right, pass through the bends in the road towards the church and stop. Note the village war memorial to the right of the church entrance and the memorial on the left dedicated to the players, staff and supporters of **Clapton Orient Football Club** who served with the 17/Middlesex. Founded in 1881 as the Glyn Cricket Club, the club began playing football at Orient in 1888, joining the London League in 1896. It was not until after the Second World War that they finally adopted the name Leyton Orient. The memorial, erected by Leyton Orient supporters and dedicated in July 2011, has an information panel that explains the Orient recruitment and lists three players killed in 1916. Another smaller memorial commemorates the bonds of friendship between France and New Zealand forged during the Battle of Flers-Courcelette in 1916. Just behind the memorials is a **Tree of Peace** planted in June 2018 by Pat and Mark Smith, descendants of Orient player George Scott.



The Flers village war memorial.



The memorial to the members of Clapton Orient who served with 17/Middlesex.

In 1916 the passage of D17 was watched from above by an RFC aircraft that flew back to the British lines, delivering the famous message: 'A tank is walking up the High Street of Flers with the British Army cheering behind.' The words, or versions of them, were then relayed around the world by the popular press. The infantry in the village included men from 122 Brigade, namely the 18/KRRC under **Captain Baskett**, 11/RWK under **Second Lieutenant Cooksey** (no relation to one of the authors) and a group from 8/East Surreys with **Lieutenant Staddon**. There were also a few men of 124 Brigade and some New Zealanders who had moved from their divisional sector on the left to help in clearing German dug-outs which had been plaguing their right flank.

Continuing along the road you will see the figure of a soldier standing on a plinth on the village green; this is the 41st Division Memorial ⑤ standing in the Place des Britanniques. Contrary to popular opinion, by the time Hastie and D17 got to this point he realised the supporting infantry were no longer behind him and were seeking shelter from the German bombardment which had just opened up and, were no doubt encouraging him to also withdraw. Hastie was awarded a Military Cross and survived the war, dying in 1980.

Keeping the memorial on the left, take the right fork – Place des Britanniques – and then bear right again along Rue de Gueudecourt. As the road leaves the village it descends before rising again to **Bulls Road Cemetery** ⑥. The cemetery takes its name from the road of the same name and contains 776 burials of which 296 are unidentified. There are special memorials to 15 casualties known or believed to be buried amongst them. The 154 original burials from the attack on Flers in 1916 form Plots I and II, the remainder being brought in after the war. The cemetery was begun on 19 September 1916 and was used by fighting units (mainly Australian) until March 1917. Brought in at the end of the war was 23-year-old **Gunner Cyril Coles** (III.E.6), a gunner with Lieutenant Bagshaw's D15. He was shot and killed after the tank was disabled crossing Tea Trench. His death on September 15 makes him one of the first tank men to be killed in action. The most senior soldier here is 39-Year-old **Major Heneage Stopford** (III.L.13) of B Battery, 187 Brigade Royal Field Artillery, who was killed by a shell on 15 September standing beside 23-year-old **Lieutenant John Carpenter**

(III.L.14), who now lies alongside his battery commander. **Private Francis Reginald Blake** (I.B.14), 2/Battalion AIF, was killed on 5 November 1916. A former schoolteacher of Cassilis, NSW, he embarked on 3 June 1916 with the 18th Reinforcements on HMAT *Kyarra*. Another Australian was 19-year-old **Gunner John Delo** (III.K.25), 11 Brigade, Australian Field Artillery, who was killed on 14 January 1917. A native of Kilkenny in South Australia, his parents named their house 'Flers' in order to remember him. **Second Lieutenant George Hough** (I.A.20), 16/Battalion, was born in Bolton, England, and had been a teacher in Western Australia. Commissioned from the ranks, he was 25 years old when he was killed in action on 6 December 1916. **Sergeant William Beales** (I.B.35), 4/Battalion, originally came from London and served in Gallipoli and Pozières before he was killed on 3 January 1917. He was 32 years old and had previous military experience with the navy before the war.



The 41st Division Memorial.



The British attack of September 1916 is still remembered in Flers.



Bulls Road Cemetery.

If you have time, take the grass track heading northeast, immediately opposite the entrance to the cemetery. Stop where the track bends round to the right, where **Pilgrim's Way** – now defunct – crossed the track in front of you. In 1916, the track you are standing on continued straight ahead towards Gueudecourt and Legge's tank – hit by a German battery – came to rest about 300m further on, in what is now fields. Although there is nothing to see today, this is the furthest point reached by a tank on the first day tanks were deployed in action, a historic moment in the history of tank warfare. Legge and three of his crew were killed and commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial. The wreck of Blower's D5, which was on the return journey from **Gird Trench** along **Watling Street**, was in the fields to the south of the cemetery.

From the cemetery retrace the route towards Flers for 280m. You are

looking for a track on the left that appears as the road begins to ascend and runs behind the back gardens of private houses until it reaches the cemetery. To the left are views across open fields towards wind turbines and the church spire of Lesboeufs, whilst across to the right the tip of Ginchy church spire can just be seen. Continue until you reach **Flers Communal Cemetery**, which is dominated by a substantial crucifix and contains a large memorial to the sixteen citizens of Flers who lost their lives during the war.



Gunner Cyril Coles.



Flers Communal Cemetery.



The memorial to the dead of Flers in the communal cemetery.



The Lejoindre and Pfister Memorial is on the site of Pint Trench.

Keeping the cemetery on the left, continue along the track and, at the bend, go straight ahead onto a grass track for 300m. Here the track bends to the right and, after 50m, to the left, taking you to a junction with the road ⑦. Turn left at the road, which begins to rise and bend sharply right. As it ascends to the crest of the ridge, marked by a line of pylons, you will see a stand of trees on the left. This is the second of the French private memorials and a stone cross is located on the site of **Pint Trench** commemorating two French soldiers, **Sergent Georges Lejoindre** and **Sergent Georges Pfister**, who were members of the 18th Territorial Infantry Regiment and killed in the fighting of September 1914. As you cross under the pylons the road becomes sunken and begins to descend towards Ginchy Communal Cemetery, here you will cross the western edge of the Guards Divisional boundary. On 15 September 1916, the Guards were attacking towards Lesboeufs from Ginchy. Advancing on the right of the road, the men of 2 and 3/Coldstream Guards were held up by German machine-gun fire from Pint Trench, running along the line of the road on the right ⑧. **Lieutenant Colonel John Campell**, commanding 3/Coldstreams, quickly realized the attack must be pressed home at all costs and the road needed to be cleared of the enemy. The regimental historian recorded the events that followed:

He had his hunting horn with him and one note was sufficient to rally the leading waves, dangerously thin by this time, and carry the whole line forward in one headlong and irresistible rush. Of waves there were none, the fourth wave strove to beat the remnants of the first in the race for the Flers–Ginchy road. Within a few minutes of that note, Coldstreamers and Irishmen had got to work with the bayonet. Large numbers of the Germans were taken prisoner, and no less than four machine guns were immediately captured.

Campell's conduct under fire was rewarded with the **Victoria Cross**, the fourth that had been awarded to a Coldstreamer since the war began, and he became known as the 'Tally-Ho Victoria Cross'. He was famously photographed as a brigadier addressing 137 Brigade after their successful crossing of the Riqueval Bridge in 1918. Surviving the war, he became ADC

to George V and died in 1944.

At Ginchy Communal Cemetery ⑨ you will see a track on the right which runs due west for 850m to a junction on the edge of Delville Wood. The ground to the left of the track was within the boundary of the 14th (Light) Division. On 14 September they had been ordered to advance towards Gueudecourt, a route which took them alongside the northeastern corner of Flers, but an hour before the infantry began their assault at 6.20am, two tanks were to go into action in what was known as the Preliminary Operation. Thus, **Captain Harold Mortimore**, commanding D1 and attacking from south of the Longueval–Ginchy road towards **Brewery Salient**, became the first man ever to take a tank into action. **Second Lieutenant Blowers** in D5, whom we have already met, had a more difficult advance and had to make his way through Delville Wood to attack Brewery Salient from the rear. Falling into a shell hole, he was too late to assist Mortimore in his attack on Brewery Salient, as was D3 commanded by **Second Lieutenant Head**, who stopped to assist Blowers getting out of the shell hole. As Mortimore crossed **Ale Alley Trench** his tank was hit by a shell and put out of action, but at least he had cleared Brewery Salient, allowing the 6/KOYLI to advance from **Pilsen Trench** on the Longueval– Ginchy road. Blowers we know continued, crossing the Flers– Ginchy road to trundle up **Gas Alley Trench** to where he was hit near Watling Street.



Lieutenant Colonel John Campell VC.



Captain Harold Mortimore, the first man ever to take a tank into action.

Continue along the track, crossing the former Ale Alley after approximately 200m and stop about 600m from the cemetery. D1 was hit about 100m in the fields to the left of the track after crossing Ale Alley, unfortunately Mortimore had strayed into the British barrage and the shell that disabled him was probably British, nevertheless his place in history was assured. At the fence surrounding Delville Wood turn left and follow the track to the water tower ⑩ at the junction with the Ginchy road, passing the site of Brewery Salient on the left. A glance left towards Ginchy reveals the starting point of D1 south of the road and **Pilsen Trench**, where the 6/KOYLI assembled prior to the attack.

At the junction with the road turn right and with Delville Wood on your right, continue past the entrance to the South African Memorial and **Delville Wood Cemetery** with the **Footballers' Battalions Memorial** on the left ([see Route 6](#)). At the next junction turn right and continue into Longueval to find your vehicle.



The water tower at the southeastern corner of Delville Wood.

Route 6

DELVILLE WOOD

A tour beginning at: the Visitor's Centre and concluding at the Footballers' Battalions Memorial

Distance: 6km/3.5 miles

Grade: Easy

Suitable for: ♿

Maps: Bray-sur-Somme 2408 E

General description and context: Delville Wood is the property of South Africa and is where the South African Brigade, attached to the **9th Scottish Division**, fought its first battle on the Western Front. The brigade went into the wood with 3,032 other ranks and 121 officers and only 29 officers and 751 other ranks answered their name at roll call on 21 July. Although five other divisions fought in the wood, often called Devil's Wood by the troops, the South Africans are more closely associated with the fighting in the wood and thus it is seen as a fitting choice for the **South African National Memorial**. Delville Wood was the second objective for the attack of the 9th Division on 14 July 1916, the first being Longueval, the village to the immediate west of the wood. The capture of Longueval would require the occupation of Delville Wood on the northeastern edge of the town. If Delville Wood was not captured, German artillery observers could overlook the village and German infantry would have an ideal jumping off point for attacks on Longueval.

Positioned on the right flank of the Dawn Attack, the attack on Longueval

met with initial success, and by mid-morning British troops had reached the village square. Despite German reinforcements directing artillery and machine-gun fire into the advancing men of **26 Brigade**, by the afternoon, the western and southwestern parts of the village had been occupied. But there the attack began to unfold. The **27 Brigade**, intended for the attack on Delville Wood, had been used to reinforce the attack in Longueval and consequently, at 1pm, spearheaded by the **2/South African Regiment**, the South African Brigade was ordered to attack the Wood. Herbert O'Neill, the author of *History of the Royal Fusiliers*, described the wood thus: 'In shape Delville Wood resembled a dog's head with the nose and muzzle pointing due east, thus forming a salient; the whole wood, formed a dangerous salient in the British line, which ran almost due south from the south eastern corner to Maltzhorn Farm (near Guillemont) and almost due west from the north western outskirts to Pozières.' The attack met little resistance and by 6.15pm the South Africans had captured the wood south of Princes Street and began to dig in around the fringes. The German counterattack, launched in the afternoon of 18 July, resulted in the recapture of much of Longueval with the by now rain-drenched South Africans holding on to a small part of the wood on the southeastern edge. A British attack in the early morning of 19 July restored control of the southern sector of the wood.

Early on 20 July the 9th Division were replaced with the **3rd Division** and the South Africans were relieved. The 3rd Division attack, delivered on the night of 22/23 July, was an abject failure and poorly co-ordinated. Relieved by the **2nd Division** on 25 July, their attack on 27 July was far more successful with substantial progress being made at relatively little cost. On their right, 15 Brigade of the **5th Division** also made good progress with both divisions advancing on either side of the Germans occupying the northern sector of Longueval. On 7 August the 2nd Division was relieved by the **17th Division**, whose two attacks were both costly failures resulting in over 1,600 casualties. The **14th (Light) Division** took over on the night of 12 August and sustained over 3,600 casualties during their 19 days in the wood. Finally, on 3 September, in what had become known as the **Battle of Guillemont**, Delville Wood was finally secured by the **24th Division**. Our route begins at the Visitor's Centre on Route de Ginchy and walks around the western

perimeter.

Directions to start: Delville Wood is situated to the east of Longueval and is best accessed from the **Route de Ginchy** running between Longueval and Ginchy. Plenty of parking and toilets are available at the Visitor's Centre.

Route description: There is no map for the Delville Wood walk as the 140-acre wood is contained inside a fence and the battlefield visitor can wander at will along the wide rides that are discernible by the white stone markers, each bearing the name of well-known streets in London or Edinburgh. The wide, grass-covered rides that exist today, complete with their white stone markers, are typically called Bond Street, Princes Street and Buchanan Street to name but a few. The rides in 1916 were much narrower than they are today and existed principally to allow access for maintenance and rides for horseman. You will find similar rides in other woods on the Somme, High Wood and Trônes Wood being two such examples. Finally, you should be aware that whilst the wood is completely open to the public, it is also a burial ground for the myriad of men from both sides who never received a proper burial.



The Visitor's Centre has a large information board with a useful plan of the wood.

Our walk takes in some the most interesting elements of the fighting and finishes at the South African National Memorial. Walk along Route de Ginchy from the Visitor's Centre to the wooden gates opposite **Delville Wood Cemetery** and continue up the wide, grassy expanse of the wood, flanked by oak trees grown from acorns brought from the Cape Colony, towards the South African National Memorial. Before you arrive at the memorial make your way across to the western edge of the wood to find **Rotten Row** on your left. Walk along this ride until you come to a marker stone denoting **Buchanan Street**, this is where you will find the former site of the **South African Battle Headquarters**, marked by a stone obelisk. Continue along the path behind the obelisk which leads to the southwestern edge of the wood where you will see another stone obelisk indicating where the South Africans entered the wood on 16 July 1916. This is also the point

from with the 5/Cameron Highlanders from 26 Brigade launched their charge on 18 July. **Private Percy Robins**, 1/South African Infantry, the younger brother of Will Robins, was one of the South Africans who entered the wood here: 'We weren't at it more than 10 minutes or maybe 15 when I got a bullet through the left calf of my leg. Luckily old Will was with me and he put a field dressing on it.' Sadly, Percy did not survive the war and was killed in April 1917. He is buried in Brown's Copse Cemetery, Roeux. Take the track to the right of the obelisk and then follow the perimeter track, passing Princes Street on the right. Look towards the village of **Longueval** and the church, the raised ground between you and the church marking the former site of the chateau and its associated outbuildings. Continue along the perimeter track, following it round as it swings to the right. As the track bears round to the north again you are in that part of the wood that the Germans were able to defend most easily, particularly as they still held the northern part of Longueval. From here it is possible to get good views of the New Zealand Memorial and High Wood.



Looking towards the South African National Memorial from the wooden gates on Route de Ginchy.



The Rotten Row marker looking towards Buchanan Street with the South African Battle Headquarters obelisk in the distance.



The stone obelisk marking the point where the South Africans entered the wood on 16 July 1916.

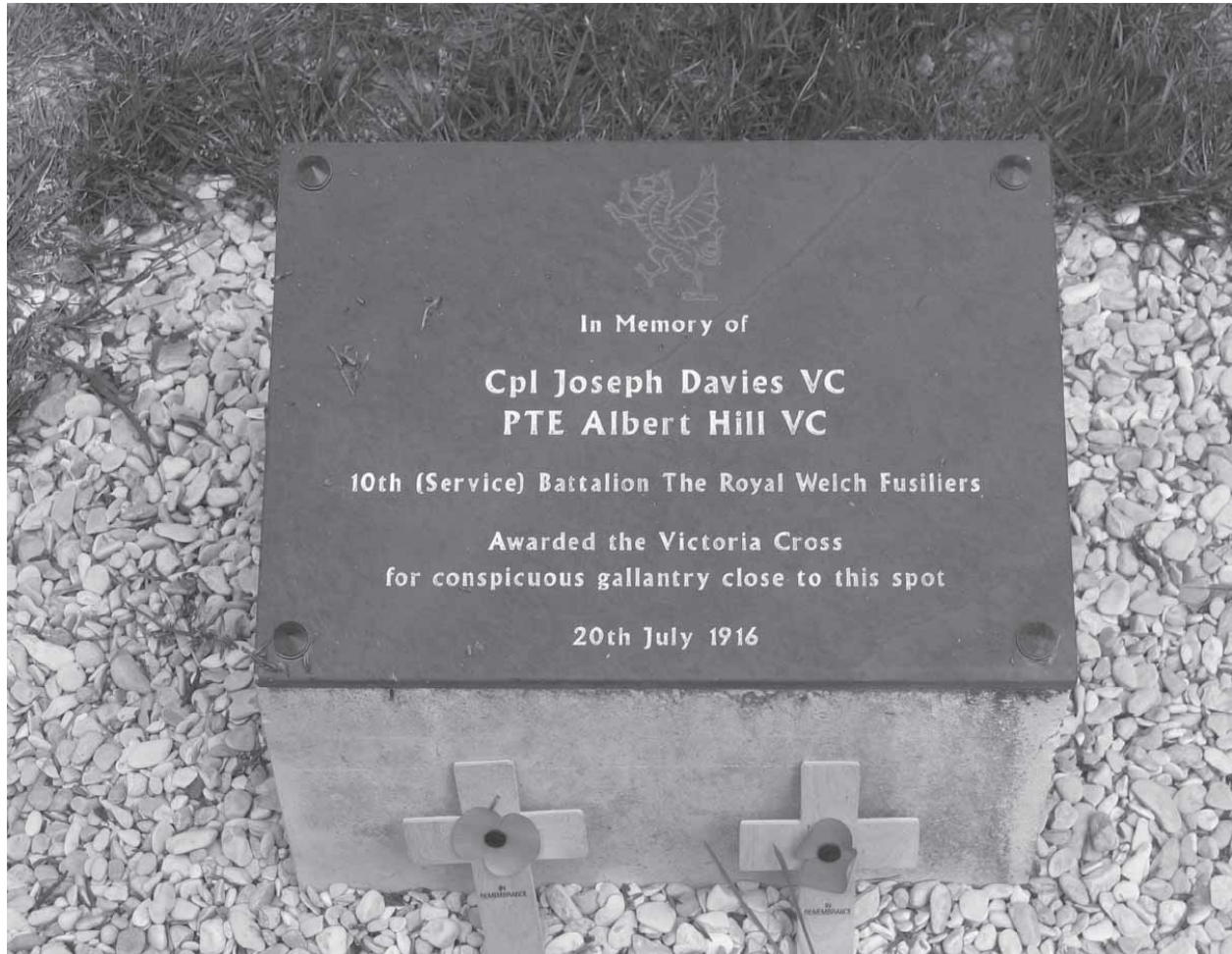
Continue to walk round the perimeter; the track now follows the D197 Flers road until the track turns right. **Edge Trench** ran practically the whole length of this part of the wood and it was along here that the most bitter fighting took place, the Germans not being finally expelled until September.



The hornbeam on Princes Street.

The central ride of **Princes Street** is on your right and you should now walk towards the memorial building. You will soon see the hornbeam tree, the only surviving living thing that was in the wood on 14 July. Surrounded

by a fence, the stone marker in front of the tree was placed there by the South African Ambassador, Mr H. Geldenhuys, in 1988. Despite being filled with shrapnel, it is still alive and looked after by the CWGC.



The plaque commemorating the Victoria Crosses won by Corporal Joseph Davies and Private Albert Hill.

Keep a sharp lookout for the small plaque at ground level commemorating the two Victoria Cross winners, 27-year-old **Corporal Joseph Davies** and 21-year-old **Private Albert Hill**, 10/Royal Welch Fusiliers, who were fighting just to the north of Princes Street on 20 July 1916. The battalion took part in the 76 Brigade attack. Davies, who came from Tipton in Staffordshire, and eight men of his section became separated from D Company just as the second German attack began; he took cover in a shell hole from where his covering fire routed the attack. Not content with that, he followed the

retreating Germans, bayoneting several in the process. Manchester born Private Hill won his cross after dashing forward when the order to charge was given and bayoneting two of the enemy. He later attacked the enemy with bombs, killing and wounding several before the remainder scattered. Davies and Hill both survived the war.

Now walk past the museum building and enter the **South African National Memorial** via the wide grassy entrance you first walked along. The National Memorial commemorates the 10,000 South African dead of the First World War and was designed by Herbert Baker and unveiled in 1926 by General James Hertzog, Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa, on 10 October in the presence of Field Marshal Haig and the widow of General Louis Botha. **Herbert Baker** later wrote that, after he had designed the cemetery, he was fortunate that he was called upon to design the South African Memorial:



The South African National Memorial.

The colonnade of the shelter at the far end of the cemetery faced towards the Wood, and a broad grass path containing the altar-stone and the cross ran between the graves up to the edge of the Wood. On the same axis prolonged we formed a wider avenue through a clearing in the Wood up to a high flint-and-stone semicircular wall; it was terminated at either end with shelter buildings modelled after the summer-house built by an early Dutch Governor on the Groote Schuur estate, which Cecil Rhodes had found in decay and restored; and it is now a familiar object to all South Africans on the slopes of Table Mountain. In the centre of the wall, and of the avenue and pathway of the cemetery, an archway was built crowned with a flat dome on which is set a bronze group of two men in the pride of youth holding hands in comradeship above a war-horse.

The Stone of Remembrance was added on 5 June 1952 to commemorate those South Africans who had died during the Second World War. Looking at the memorial today, it is hard to believe that when it was originally unveiled the ground was an almost barren landscape. In case you are wondering why the walls are not inscribed with the names of the South African dead, you will find them either in Delville Wood Cemetery or on the Thiepval Memorial.

The museum itself was begun in 1984 and opened in November 1986 and serves to remember the 25,000 South Africans who died during the two world wars and the Korean War. The museum is a replica of the Castle of Good Hope in Cape Town and is built around a Cross of Sacrifice surmounted by a Voortrekker Cross. Inside the circular building are numerous bronze reliefs depicting the fighting in Delville Wood and various other South African feats of arms. As you walk down towards the entrance gate it is worth thinking of the words of Captain Alex Ellis, who first saw the wood after the fighting had concluded:

Delville Wood in October 1916 was surely the most terrible spectacle that war had yet vouchsafed the world – Delville Wood, with its unburied corpses and its stinking trenches parapeted with dead Germans to protect those who yet lived. And perhaps some of the men

who died in its foul recesses saw with a prophetic eye of death a future still unrevealed to us who are left. For a Tommy and a German, dying together in the same shell-hole, had smiled at each other before they breathed their last.



The walkway and entrance to the museum.

Delville Wood Cemetery is on the far side of Route de Ginchy and is the third largest cemetery on the Somme with 5,523 graves, sadly over 3,500 of which remain unidentified. Of the identified graves almost every man was killed or died of wounds during July, August and September 1916. The cemetery was created after the Armistice when graves were brought there from ten surrounding battlefields and smaller cemeteries nearby and most of those buried here died in July, August and September 1916. There is one posthumous Victoria Cross recipient, 36-year-old **Sergeant Albert Gill** (IV.C.3), who was killed on 27 July 1916 serving with the 1/KRRC. Born in

Birmingham, he held up an enemy advance by directing the fire from his platoon until he was killed. Eight more men of the 9/Royal Fusiliers, who were killed during the attack on Hardecourt-aux-Bois on 28 August 1918, are buried here (see Guillemont Road Cemetery in **Route 4**). Privates **James Richardson**, **William Brown**, **William Woodhead**, **Henry Redgrave**, **Frederick Pellet**, **Charles Warren** and **James Sharpless** are buried in graves XXVI.L.2 to XXVI.L.7, whilst **Sergeant Edward Richards** is buried in grave XXVI.L.1. **Lieutenant Charles Irwin** (Sp Mem A8) was only 19 years old when he was killed on 10 September serving with 3/Royal Irish Fusiliers; he is remembered on a plaque inside the church at Ginchy. Three subalterns who were killed alongside Second Lieutenant George Marsden-Smedley, 3/Rifle Brigade, during their attack on Guillemont Station ([see Route 4](#)) are buried here; 34-year-old **Lieutenant Anthony Brown** (XIII.L.8), 22-year-old **Second Lieutenant James Henderson** (IV.M.4) and 24-year-old **Second Lieutenant Ernest ‘Nick’ Venner** (XXII.N.6). **Lieutenant Neil Shaw-Stewart** (XIII.N.10), 3/Rifle Brigade, was killed on 21 August leading C Company in the attack on Guillemont. He is also commemorated on a plaque in the Rancourt Souvenir Français Chapel. In 1922 his parents were living at Fonthill Abbey, Tisbury, Wiltshire. They commissioned a separate memorial to their son which is in the form of a stone cross on the A350 which was restored by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission for the centenary commemorations in 2014.



Sergeant Albert Gill VC.

There are 160 South Africans buried here of whom 65 are unidentified

and if you are looking for a grave on which to place your cross of remembrance look no further than **Private Heney Deeley** (XXXII.C.9) of B Company, 2/South African Infantry, who was killed in the wood on 15 July 1916.

Leave the cemetery and turn right to walk along the road, past the Visitor's Centre, to the memorial on the left. This is the **Footballers' Battalions Memorial** commemorating the 17 and 23/Middlesex Regiment, which was unveiled in October 2010, and attended by members of the Football Supporters' Federation and representatives of more than twenty clubs. The 17/Battalion, Middlesex Regiment was formed as a Pals Battalion with a core group of professional footballers, which was the reason for its most commonly used name, the **Football Battalion**. They fought in Delville Wood and near Waterlot Farm and, on 8 August 1916, they were involved in the attack on Guillemont. The 23rd (Service) Battalion, Middlesex Regiment was formed in June 1915 and became known as the **2nd Football Battalion**. Soldiers who fought in the 17 and 23/Middlesex Regiment included the Northampton Town player **Second Lieutenant Walter Tull**, who was one of the first black infantry officers in the British Army.



1914



1918

THE FOOTBALLERS' BATTALIONS

TO THE MEMORY OF
THE OFFICERS AND MEN
OF THE 17TH AND 23RD
BATTALIONS OF THE
MIDDLESEX REGIMENT
WHO SERVED THEIR
GAME AND COUNTRY
DURING THE GREAT WAR

THIS MEMORIAL WAS PROVIDED BY THE GENEROSITY
OF THE PLAYERS, STAFF AND SUPPORTERS
OF ENGLISH AND WELSH FOOTBALL LEAGUE CLUBS



DEDICATED 21ST OCTOBER 2010

'This is worse than a whole season of cup ties'

PRIVATE JACK BORTHWICK OF MILLWALL FC
WOUNDED NEAR THIS SPOT JULY 1916

The Footballers' Battalions Memorial.



Lieutenant Walter Tull played football for Spurs and Northampton Town and was killed in March 1918.



Route 7

LE SARS AND THE BUTTE DE WARLENCOURT

A circular tour beginning at: the church in Warlencourt-Eaucourt.

Distance: 9km/5 miles

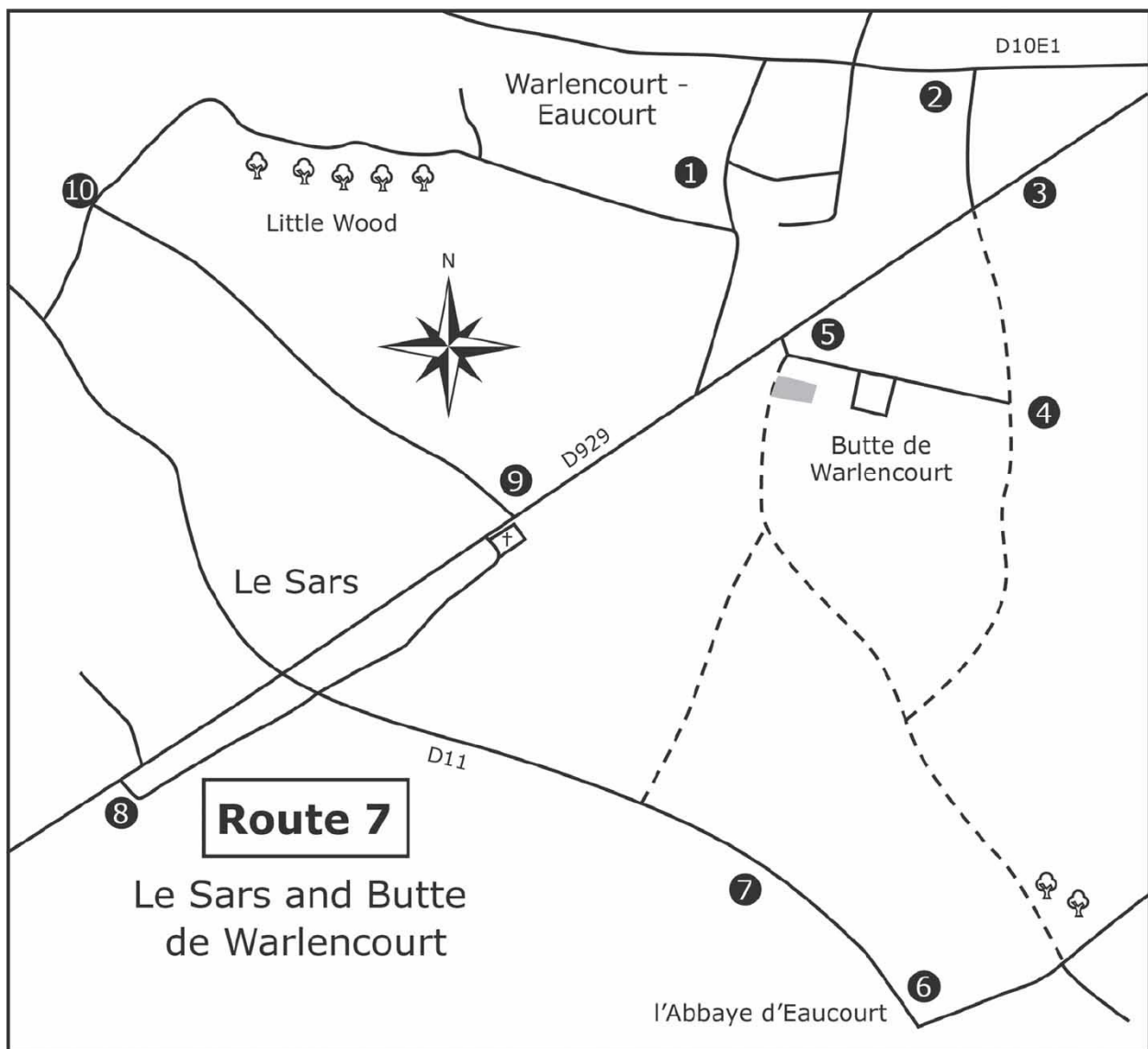
Grade: Moderate

Suitable for:  

Maps: Bapaume 2407 E

General description and context: Le Sars lies a little over 5 miles along the Bapaume road from La Boisselle, a village which featured in the 1 July attacks. Under constant observation from the high ground to the north, at least four divisions took part in the attacks on **Le Sars** and often in the most appalling weather conditions. The **Butte de Warlencourt**, an old burial mound, sits on the ridge and was the objective of many of the attacks and the scene of some of the bitterest fighting of the campaign. Managing to gain a foothold on several occasions, British troops were always driven off by the defending Germans and, at the close of the campaign in November, the Butte remained in German hands and the British line consolidated northwest of Le Sars. Our route begins in Warlencourt-Eaucourt and visits **Warlencourt British Cemetery** before heading south to the Butte de Warlencourt. Here the route takes the unmetalled track to the farm at **Eaucourt l'Abbaye**, which was captured on 3 November by the 47th Division. From the farm complex the D11 leads us into Le Sars, which was captured four days later by units of

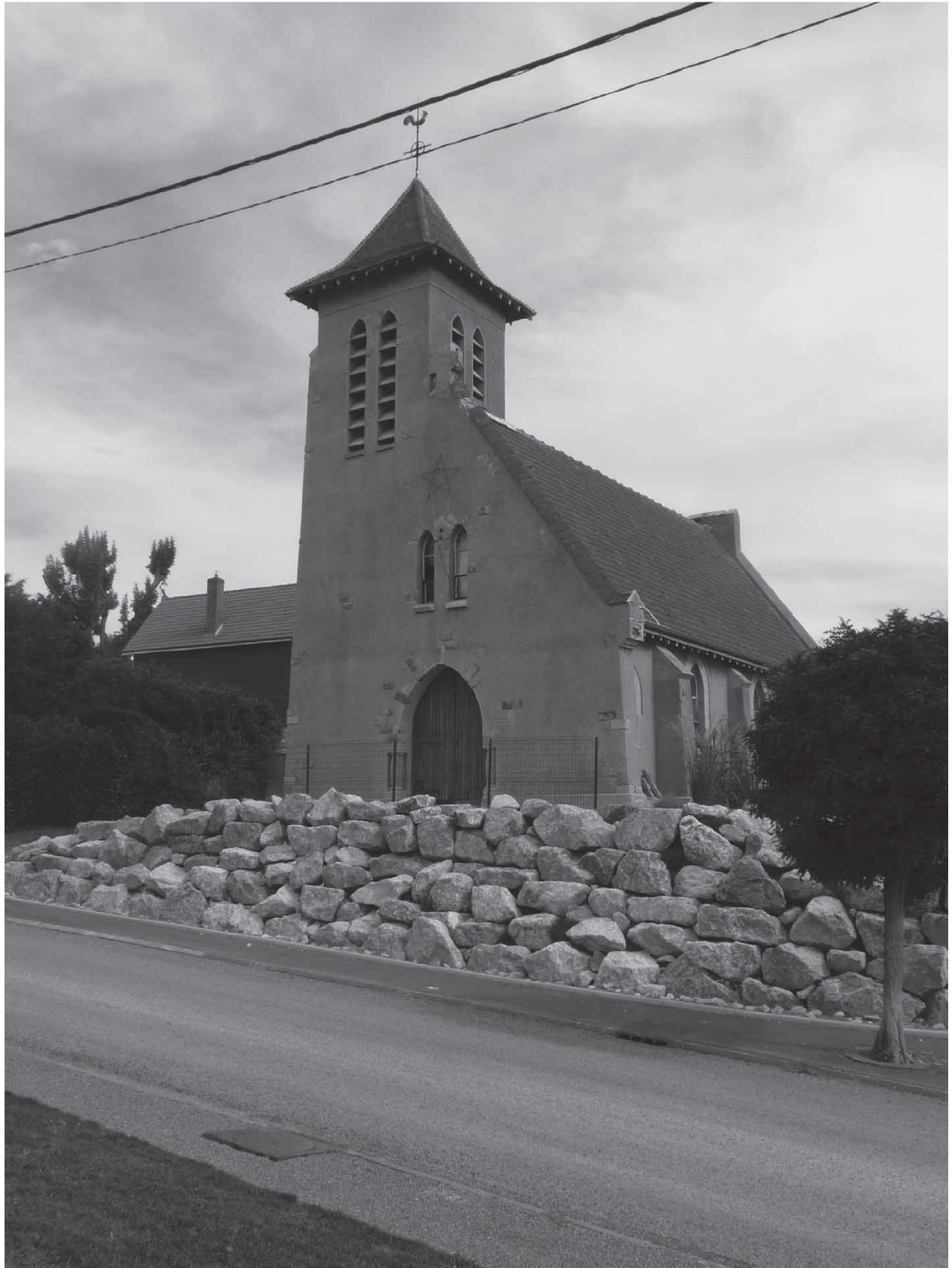
the 23rd Division. At Le Sars we visit the civilian cemetery before rejoining the main road. Cross carefully to the other side of the D929 and continue north along an almost arrow-straight metalled road which rises gently towards a line of wind turbines. Just before the road heads downhill, you see Warlencourt-Eaucourt to your right and straight in front of you is the church spire of Pys. Good views can be had across to the right from here and, although you probably cannot see it, a chalk quarry is across to your left on the D74 Le Sars– Pys Road. The track then takes you past **Little Wood** on the right and returns you to Warlencourt-Eaucourt.



Directions to start: Warlencourt-Eaucourt is a small village to the west of

the D929 between Bapaume and Le Sars and is best approached from the direction of Courcelette. Park your vehicle in Rue de l'Église near the church.

Route description: With the church ❶ behind you head uphill to the junction where a right turn will take you past the village war memorial to the top of the rise where you will see another crossroads, turn right here ❷ and travel downhill to the D929. Take care as you cross the road to visit **Warlencourt British Cemetery** ❸, which you can see 120m to your left. The cemetery, built in 1919, contains men of the units who attacked the Butte de Warlencourt and also those that fought in High Wood and Flers as well as Eaucourt l'Abbaye and today contains 3,505 burials of which 1,823 remain unidentified. There are special memorials to fifty-five casualties known or believed to be buried amongst them and special memorials commemorate another fifteen casualties, formally buried in **Hexham Road Cemetery** on the west side of Eaucourt l'Abbaye, whose graves were destroyed by shellfire. This concentration cemetery also contains the grave of **Sergeant Donald Brown** (III.F.11), 2/Otago Regiment, who was killed on 1 October 1916. His Victoria Cross was awarded for his bravery under fire on 15 September and again on 1 October, when he charged and captured enemy machine-gun positions near High Wood. One of only twenty-three New Zealanders awarded the cross, he is honoured with an oak tree planted in Oamaru, New Zealand.



The church at Warlencourt-Eaucourt.



The village war memorial.



Warlencourt British Cemetery.

If you are searching for two headstones on which to place your crosses of remembrance then look no further than the graves of two Australians. **Private Thomas Spillane** (IV.B.3), aged 26, 17/Battalion, was killed by a shell in Malt Trench on 27 February 1917, a few hundred metres along the road from the cemetery. A day later 18-year-old **Private Roy Cantrill** (VI.H.19), 19/Battalion, was killed by a sniper as the 19/Battalion was bombing its way along the same trench. They may have even been buried close to one another before they were finally brought into the cemetery.

Second Lieutenant Thomas Applegarth (I.J.20) 6/DLI, was 25 years old and one of four officers and eighty-two NCOs and other ranks killed on 5 November 1916 during the battalion's attack on the Butte de Warlencourt. **Lieutenant Denys Armstrong** (VIII.D.10), 5/Northumberland Fusiliers, was killed on 3 October 1916 during another unsuccessful attack on the Butte, the 20-year-old officer was a former student at Bootham School in York and later

began studying as a naval architect. He served in B Company and is remembered on the Durham University Memorial.

Leave the cemetery and retrace your steps taking the first track on the left – **Sentier de la Butte**. From this junction you can see the Butte de Warlencourt on your right, crowned by a stand of trees and the WFA Memorial. After some 100m the track becomes very overgrown and, depending on the time of year, either continue uphill along the sunken lane or take the field edge to the right. This section of track will bring you out by a wooden signpost ④ standing on a bend in the track. The Butte de Warlencourt is to your right.



Sergeant Donald Brown VC.



Second Lieutenant Thomas Applegarth.

The Butte is an ancient burial mound, probably of Gallo-Roman origin, and marks the limit of the British advance in the Somme campaign of 1916.

Dominating the battlefield, it was strongly fortified by the Germans with wire, machine guns, mortars and tunnels and withstood ferocious attacks by the 47th, 9th and 50th Divisions during October and November 1916, only passing into British hands during the German withdrawal to the Hindenburg Line in February 1917.

Lieutenant Charles Carrington of the 1/5 Royal Warwickshires served in the line at Le Sars on three occasions, he wrote in *Soldier from the Wars Returning*, that the Butte was feared by the troops: 'The road [Bapaume–Le Sars] was dominated by a monstrosity. Beside the road which rose up the slope beyond Le Sars, and only 500 yards away, was a round barrow standing up like Silbury Hill beside the Bath Road. What Gallic chieftain slain by Caesar lay buried here we neither knew or cared, but this outgrowth terrified us.' Although the Butte was felt by many to be of little real strategic importance, it was used extensively as a German observation post, and in that respect it dominated the whole battlefield. A simple network of field telephones and runners could, and often did, bring the whole British advance to its knees.



The Butte de Warlencourt, 1917. The cross was probably that which was erected by Captain Robert Malchlen, 1/9 DLI.

There were numerous British attacks against the Butte, one of these was made by III Corps on 7 October against **Gird Trench**, which ran to the north of the Butte from Gueudecourt to Warlencourt. The 47th Division was to attack in the centre, with the 41st Division on the right and the 23rd Division on the left flank. The Germans had dug a new trench – **Diagonal Trench** – across the 47th Division front, over the high ground north of Eaucourt l'Abbaye, westwards into the valley. Diagonal Trench was the first objective and was to be taken by the 1/8 Londons, then the final objective at Gird Trench and the Butte was to be captured by the 1/15 and 1/7 Londons, with the 1/6 Londons in support. On the right the 1/8 Londons were stopped by massed machine-gun fire, as were the 1/15 Londons and the 1/7 Londons. The attack was a failure, although some parties did reportedly reach the Butte but were not seen again. The next day, 142 Brigade attacked with the aim of seizing **Diagonal Trench** and if successful, to storm the Butte. The attack began at 9pm, preceded by a 1-minute artillery bombardment, with the 21 and 22/Londons approaching the trench in the face of withering machine-gun fire. On the left flank three companies of 22/Londons entered the trench and established several strongpoints, only which were found to be completely untenable by day. The final action of 142 Brigade on the Somme under the command of **Brigadier General Frederick Lewis** had also ended in failure.



Lieutenant Colonel Roland Bradford VC.

Another of the more well-known actions was on 5 November 1916 and carried out by three battalions of 151 Brigade who were to attack **Gird Trench** and **Gird Support Trench**. One of these was the 1/9 Durham Light Infantry, a 50th Division battalion commanded by **Lieutenant Colonel Roland Bradford**, an individual whose bravery at Eaucourt l'Abbaye on 1 October led to the award of the Victoria Cross. (Bradford's brother, a lieutenant commander in the Royal Navy also won a posthumous Victoria Cross in April 1918 at Zeebrugge.) On 5 November Bradford's men were part of the assaulting force and tasked with the capture of the Butte and the adjacent quarry. Two battalions of Northumberland Fusiliers, the 1/4 and 1/6, were attached from 149 Brigade in support. Bad weather had turned the ground into a muddy quagmire, the 'depth and type of mud made movement difficult and tiring – not the sort of conditions to experience before a major battle'. Approaching the Butte, the Durham battalions managed to capture the surrounding trenches including **Butte Trench** and **Butte Alley Trench**, whilst the Northumberland Fusiliers established posts on either side which may well have included the final part of **Sentier de la Butte**. Although 1/9 DLI captured the Butte temporarily, they were forced to retreat after the failure to completely clear German dug-outs and a strong German counterattack pushed them back. **Private Norman Gladden** was serving with the 7/Northumberland Fusiliers in 149 Brigade, and he wrote an account of his experiences in *The Somme 1916*, detailing his part in the battle. On 5 November, presumably after the Durhams' assault, he found himself on stretcher bearer duty:



Private Norman Gladden.

We veered right (through Le Sars) and made towards a hump-like eminence in the middle distance, which we came to know as the Butte de Warlencourt ... The Butte completely obscured any view forward but acted as a most effective screen for us. Shells continued to burst on the top or, just missing it, to slide over with a screech and burst fifty or sixty yards away, filling the air with flying muck and metal. So resilient is the human mind and easily injured to the impossible that

amid the horror we sat around like a picnic party, merely crouching closer to the ground each time a shell skimmed over ... Khaki clad figures lay sprawled in death about the foot of the mound which bore all the recent signs of recent fierce conflict. A couple of yards from where I squatted lay the huddled figure of a young man shot through the head.

On 25 February 1917, the Butte was finally occupied as the Germans retreated to the Hindenburg Line 24km to the east and in July 1917 King George V visited the battered and much-fought over position. Within a few weeks three wooden crosses had been placed on the top of the Butte in memory of Roland Bradford's men of the 1/9DLI. The ornate cross in the centre was designed by a member of the same battalion, 31-year-old **Captain Robert Malchlen**, but in 1926 the crosses were removed and placed in Chester-le-Street and Bishop Auckland parish churches and Durham Cathedral, where they can still be seen today. Malchlen survived the war and died in 1972.

From the wooden marker post follow the track down to the Butte de Warlencourt. The mound was once owned by the Western Front Association but in October 2018 it was sold to a former chairman of the association, much to the chagrin of many of the members. At the foot of the mound, by the seat near the entrance, is a brass plaque fixed to a tree in memory of the officers and men of the 8/London (Post Office Rifles) who were part of the attacking force on 7 October. A wooden pathway composed of decking material snakes its way to the top of the Butte where excellent views can be had, but take care as the walkway can be slippery when wet. At the top a Western Front Association Memorial, erected in 1990, stands overlooking the battlefield along with four information panels and an orientation table. On a clear day it is possible to see the Newfoundland Caribou at Gueudecourt amidst a clump of trees.



A wooden pathway allows visitors to climb to the top of the Butte de Warlencourt.



The WFA Memorial at the summit of the Butte de Warlencourt.

Leave the Butte and continue downhill to pass the abandoned quarry on the left. Just before the junction with the D929 take the track on the left ⑤ towards **Eaucourt l'Abbaye** and continue past the right-hand fork. From here it is approximately 470m to the junction with a second track on the left, at which point the route begins to ascend to a final junction with the D11. The road straight in front of you was known by the troops as **Hexham Road**. Turn right here along the road to Eaucourt l'Abbaye and stop after 250m where the road bears round to the right towards Le Sars. Across to your right you can see the track we have just travelled along whilst further to the right you should be able to see the Butte with the white WFA Monument on the top.

The walled farm complex of Eaucourt l'Abbaye ⑥ is larger than it was in 1916, when it consisted of two farm buildings within an enclosure on the site of a former Augustian abbey, where large cellars provided the German

garrison with excellent shelter from shellfire.

The attack of 1 October was made by III Corps, with support from one division from XV Corps. The artillery bombardment began at 7am and at 3.15pm the infantry advanced from their assembly trenches. In the front wave of the 47th Division were the 19, 20 and the 17/Londons with the 18/Londons in support. The 23/Londons, from 143 Brigade, were placed under the orders of 141 Brigade and were to be used as and when became necessary. Two tanks, D8 commanded by **Lieutenant Brown** and D16 *Dracula* commanded by **Lieutenant Jacobs**, co-operated with the infantry, but had to start from cover from near the Starfish Redoubt (see [Route 2](#)), and did not appear until at least an hour after the attack had begun. The right two battalions entered the **Flers Line** without difficulty. But their further advance was held up by persistent machine-gun fire from the west corner of the abbey enclosure. Once these guns had been overwhelmed by the tanks, the 19 and 20/Londons rushed through the village and established a line to the north of it. This position was held by troops under **Second Lieutenant Needham** of the 20/Londons who held on under most difficult conditions until the line was established round Eaucourt l'Abbaye. His award of the Military Cross was gazetted in December 1916. On the left of the attack, the 17/Londons came up against uncut wire in front of the **Flers Line**; some of them got through this, but not in strong enough force to hold the line, and they were bombed out, unable to take its objectives.

To their left was the 151 Brigade of the 50th Division. On 1 October it was during this attack that **Roland Bradford** was awarded the Victoria Cross when he took command of the 6/DLI after its commanding officer, Major Wilkinson, had been wounded. As the attack ground to a halt under a hail of machine-gun fire Bradford rallied the officers and men of both battalions and led them forward, capturing Flers Trench by 9.30pm.

On the following day at 3.35pm two companies of the 18/Londons attacked up the Flers Line successfully, got through the Eaucourt l'Abbaye defences, and completed the circuit of British troops round the position. On 4 October 140 Brigade took over the line from the 141 Brigade in preparation for another general attack. On the next day the 6/Londons of 149 Brigade occupied the old mill ⑦ 600m west of Eaucourt l'Abbaye.

Le Sars was also the scene of the award of another Victoria Cross on 4 October when **Second Lieutenant Henry Kelly**, 10/Duke of Wellingtons, carried his wounded Company Sergeant Major back to British lines and then went out again to bring in other wounded men. Kelly was also awarded the Military Cross and bar, and retired with the rank of major. He died in 1960 and is buried in the Southern Cemetery in Manchester.



Second Lieutenant Henry Kelly VC.

Continue along the road towards Le Sars, passing the site of the former mill on the left and the bridge across the stream which is easy to miss. After

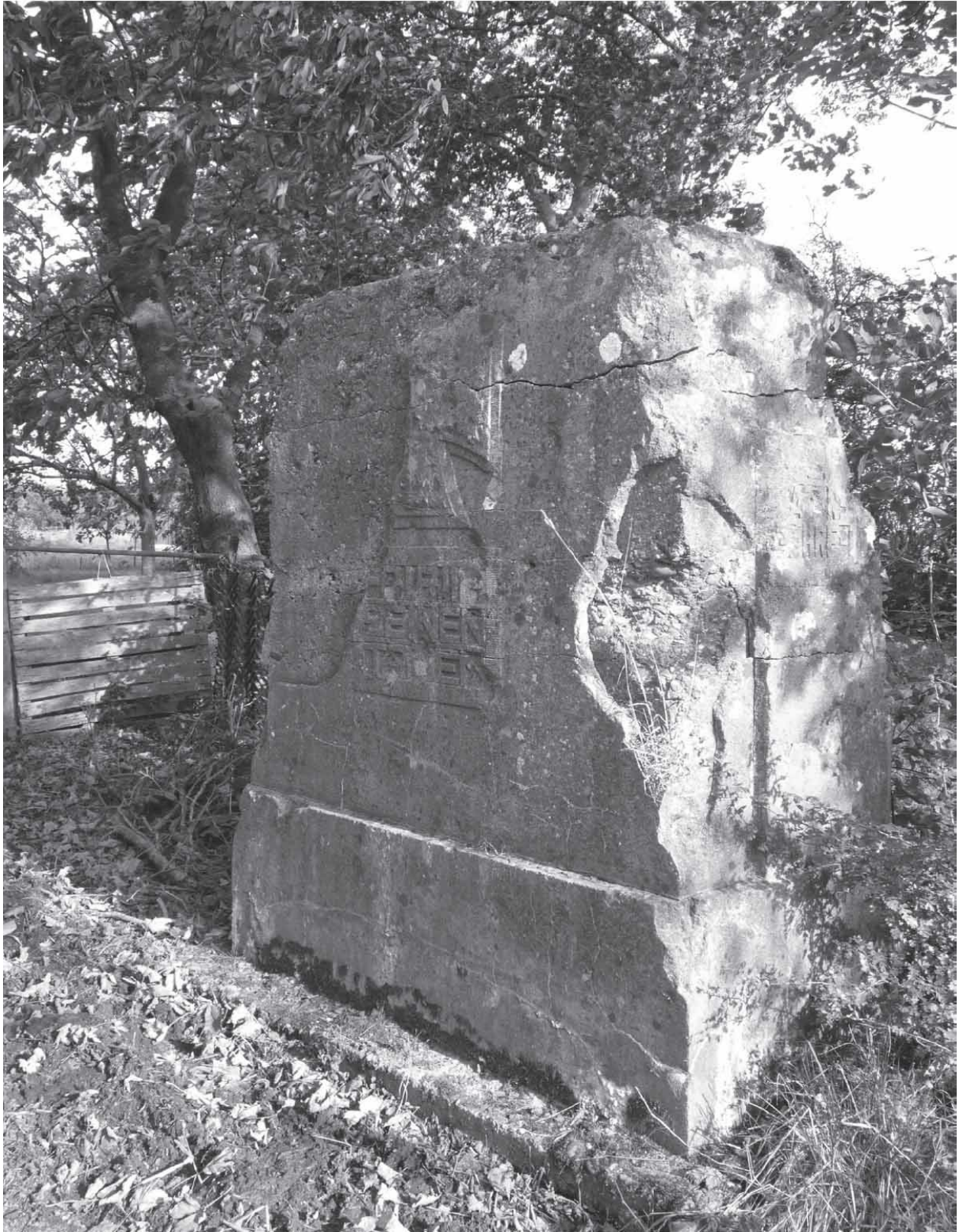
crossing the bridge, the road begins to rise again, and a crossroads of tracks appears straight in front of you. Stop here. On the right hand of these tracks, at the time of writing, is a private memorial fixed to the fence commemorating the approximate spot where **Private Alexander 'Alex' Stevenson** of 12 Platoon, C Company, 12/DLI was killed on 7 October 1916. His name is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial. The road on which you are standing is the sunken road mentioned in contemporary war diaries and on your left was the German trench system known as **The Tangle**, and it is likely that Stevenson was killed during the assault on this German strongpoint.

The capture of Le Sars does not rate as a battle in the official nomenclature of the First World War and is classed as a tactical incident during the **Battles of the Transloy Ridges**. On 7 October two battalions of 68 Brigade attacked the village from your left towards Le Sars, crossing the road in front of you, whilst 69 Brigade came from the direction of **Destemont Farm**, on the Le Sars–Bapaume road, to attack the village from the extreme left. In the first phase 12/DLI would take **The Tangle** and the sunken road beyond it, whilst 69 Brigade would secure the village as far as the crossroads. Phase two would see 16/DLI move up between the two battalions and take the remainder of the village with the 11/West Yorkshires. Imagine for a moment the men of 12/DLI swarming across the fields from your left to take **The Tangle** and the sunken road. Tank D2, commanded by **Second Lieutenant Bell**, was operating at this point and reportedly crushed the surrounding barbed wire, enabling the battalion to take the position before it was knocked out. Some seventy German prisoners were taken but the battalion lost over thirty men killed and eighty wounded.

Continue uphill and 80m before the major junction with the D929 is a crossroads of tracks where you have a choice. To your left a short detour of some 350m will take you to the original grey stone memorial dedicated to the German RIR 111 **8**, which was once part of the German cemetery that was destroyed in the later fighting. The burials were later transferred to the German Cemetery at **Villers-au-Flos**. We do visit this memorial during the **car tour in Route 9**, but either way it is worth seeing particularly as this unit was holding the line east of Fricourt on 1 July 1916 and is one of the few

German memorials to be found on the Somme. The memorial is a little hard to find and is contained within a farmyard on the right at the junction of tracks about 40m from the road.

Back at the junction, the right-hand track will bring you to **Le Sars Communal Cemetery** ⑨ and was probably used by C Company, 13/DLI to gain access to the main street of the village on 7 October. The cemetery contains one Second World War casualty, 32-year-old **Sergeant Robert Hinds**, RASC, who died on 1 September 1944.



The memorial to the German RIR 111.

Charles Carrington was in the Le Sars sector for a total of 15 nights, which he writes was enough to reduce the fighting strength of his battalion from something over 500 to less than 400:



Le Sars Communal Cemetery.

Once in position at Le Sars you could not show a finger by daylight, and by night every path by which you might be supposed to move was raked by machine guns which had been trained on it by day. The Entrance to the village, that is the gap in the ruins where the Bapaume Road passed through, the only way, by which you must pass, was under continuous shellfire. If you could reach your funk hole, and crouch in it there was a fair chance of you coming out of it alive next

day to run the gauntlet of the Bapaume Road again.

With Carrington's words in mind leave the cemetery and follow the track to the junction with the D929 – take care here. A right turn at the junction will bring you in 80m to a metalled track on the left, running between two large farm buildings. Take this track and in 600m you will cross the British front line, representing the furthest point reached during the 1916 Somme campaign. Stop where the road begins to rise towards a line of wind turbines. Warlencourt-Eaucourt is to your right and straight ahead is the church spire of Pys. The British front line ran from right to left across the road and was separated from the German front line by approximately 600m of no-man's-land. The track now descends to a junction ⑩, which was the estimated position of the German front line, running almost parallel to that of the British. Turn right at the junction and follow the track through a right-hand bend and past **Little Wood**, or Le Petit Bois as it is marked on IGN maps. Continue to the road and turn left into Warlencourt-Eaucourt where you will find your vehicle.



The metalled track running between two large farm buildings near Le Sars Communal Cemetery.



Route 8

BEAUCOURT

A circular tour beginning at: Hamel

Distance: 11km/7 miles

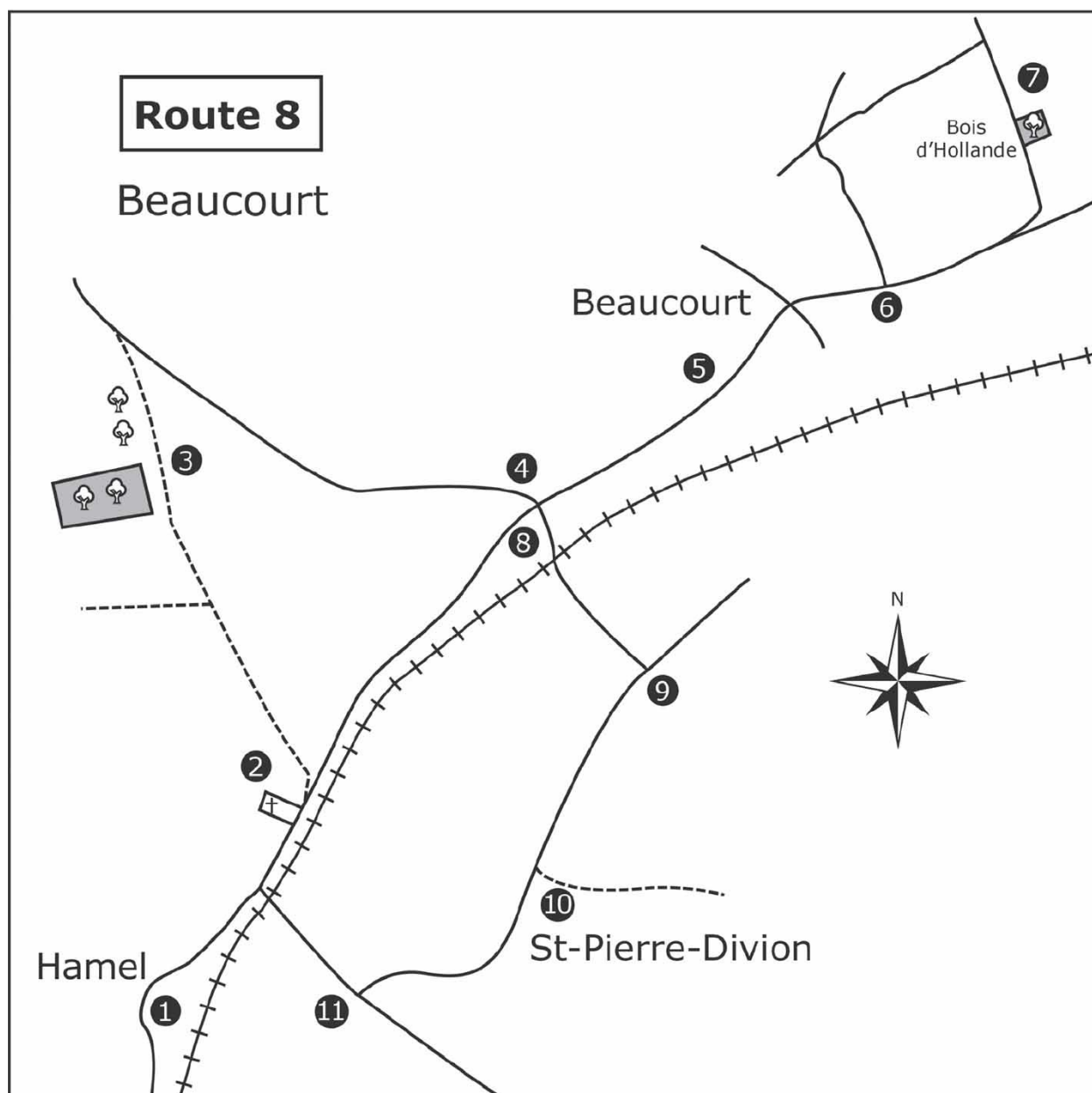
Grade: Moderate

Suitable for:  

Maps: Archeux-en-Ameinois 2407 O

General description and context: The 63rd (Royal Naval) Division (RND) was formed on 3 September 1914; the decision was taken to train and equip two brigades of Naval Reservists and the hitherto independent Marine Brigade as an infantry division and this had the full approval of Lord Kitchener. The division had already served at Antwerp and Gallipoli and was now part of the Fifth Army on the Somme and although originally part of the Royal Navy, they retained their naval ranks and named their battalions after naval heroes such as Anson, Drake, Hawke, Hood, Howe and Nelson making up 188 and 189 Brigades. There were also five British and Irish battalions in 190 Brigade, the 1/Honourable Artillery Regiment (HAC), 7/Royal Fusiliers, 4/Bedfords, 10/Dublin Fusiliers and 1/5 Cheshires as pioneers. Our route takes us from Hamel to **Ancre British Cemetery** from where it heads uphill passing through the three lines of German trenches to take in some of the finest views on the Somme. Going downhill towards the communal cemetery a sharp right-hand turn onto the D4151 Rue de Beaumont takes you to the crossroads with the D50 at **Gare de Beaucourt**. A left turn at the crossroads will take you past the **RND Memorial** and into the village at **Beaucourt**

(Beaucourt-sur-l'Ancre to give it its proper name) where you continue past the crossroads. We carry on along the D29 taking a track on the left eventually reaching the **Bois d'Hollande**. Stop here to visit the private memorials in the wood before returning to the D29 and retracing your steps through Beaucourt to the crossroads at Gare de Beaucourt where we tell the story of **Sub Lieutenant Edwin Dyett**. Turn left here to cross the railway line, pausing to see the former railway buildings on the right, before continuing through **St-Pierre-Divion**. Turn right just before Thiepval Wood and cross the railway line again, returning to Hamel to visit the CWGC Cemetery.



What is perhaps not known is that prior to the attack on 13 November the RND battalions had fallen from an average of nearly 700 men to barely 500. This was largely due to the hardship endured by the digging of assembly trenches by General Cameron Shute. The decision was said to be a wise one but added appreciably to the burden experienced by the men. It is said that only the excellent relations between officers and men turned the scale of the attack to one of victory.

Two tanks were allocated to support the RND advance but it was soon

realised that with the ground so well churned up by the bombardment that they would be more of a hindrance than an asset and they had been sent back to the rear. On 14 November two were brought forward led by Lieutenant Alan Campbell in an attempt to deal with a redoubt which continued to hold up part of the Division's advance on the high ground above the Ancre British Cemetery. Both tanks soon became bogged down in mud but one of them advanced far enough to be able to use guns to good effect, forcing the German garrison of over 400 to surrender. Another tank supported the men of the 39th Division south of the railway line in their advance towards the German Hansa Line.

The casualties suffered by the RND during the capture of Beaucourt were not far short of 3,000 officers and men. The strength of the two Naval Brigades at the end of the battle was under 600 officers and men each, and of this strength more than a third was provided by the Hood and Drake Battalions. One has to say that had it not been for the success of the Hood and Drake battalions, and in particular the leadership of Lieutenant Colonel Freyberg, then the battle may have had a different ending.

Directions to start: Hamel can be approached from Albert in the south on the D50 or from Thiepval in the east on the D73. Park in the car park ❶ behind the *Marie* near to the village war memorial. However, if you wish to leave out Hamel, an alternative starting point would be the Ancre British Cemetery but we do recommend you visit the CWGC Cemetery at Hamel afterwards.

Route description: Keeping the village war memorial on the left, go gently uphill passing the church, 150m on the left along Rue de l'Église, and as the road bends round to the right follow signs for Ancre British Cemetery. The church is mentioned by the poet and writer **Edmund Blunden**, 11/Royal Sussex, when his battalion was billeted in Hamel and in the latter half of the campaign there were obviously still treasures left to discover amongst the ruins:

Hamel church attracted me, and although stripped and tottering still

had that spirit clinging to it which would have been the richest poetry to George Herbert [a Welsh-born poet, and priest of the Church of England]. Stooping along the trampled gardens amongst the refuse of war, I found my way into the white arched cellar, half collapsed, and with some astonishment discerned that it was crammed with cases of rations.



The village war memorial at Hamel.



Edmund Blunden.

Continue along the D50 and just before the turning on the right, notice the steep banks on the left adjacent to the River Ancre, this is the site of the former Kentish Caves. Blunden found them particularly useful as a safe haven during November 1916. The caves were named after **Lieutenant Colonel Reginald Kentish**, who commanded the 1/Battalion East Lancashire Regiment from 20 June 1915–24 September 1915. He survived the war and founded the National Playing Fields Association in 1925.

Ignore the turning on the right which crosses the railway line, signposted Thiepval and the Ulster Tower. Continue for 200m to **Ancre British Cemetery ②**, which lies in a hollow. In fact, if you face the Cross of Sacrifice the RND passed from the left to the German front line on the right. We describe this cemetery and the events of 1 July in our companion volume, *A Visitor's Guide to the First Day of the Somme*. The cemetery was constructed in what was then no-man's-land and has burials from the 1 July 1916 Ulster Division attack, the 3 September attack by the 39th Division and the successful attack by the 63rd Royal Naval Division (RND) on 13 November. One of the more well-known casualties of the November 1916 attack was **Lieutenant Hon. Vere Harmsworth** (V.E.19) of the Hawke Battalion who was killed on 13 November. His brother Harold, who died of wounds in February 1918, was serving with the 2/Irish Guards. There were originally 517 burials almost all consisting of the RND and 36th Divisions, but after the Armistice the cemetery was greatly enlarged when many more graves from the same battlefields and from smaller burial grounds were brought in. There are now 2,540 casualties buried or commemorated in the cemetery, 1,335 of which are unidentified, but special memorials commemorate 43 casualties known or believed to be buried amongst them. Almost opposite and on the other side of the railway line is the site of **The Mound** and **The Crow's Nest**.

Leave the cemetery and continue along the track on the left which rises almost immediately at the end of the cemetery wall. Initially the track traces the line of no-man's-land and from here there are good views to be had of **Ancre British Cemetery**. As the track winds uphill, it crosses the German

front line after approximately 500m, from this point stop and look at the view across the Ancre behind you. The Schwaben Redoubt is left of **Mill Road Cemetery** with the **Ulster Tower** and the **Thiepval Memorial** on the skyline. To your left is where the battalions of the 63rd Royal Naval Division formed up prior to the attack on 13 November with the Royal Marine Light Infantry (RMLI) on the extreme left, in touch with the 51st (Highland) Division and the battalions of 189 Brigade, Hood and Drake, on the right close to the railway line. The battalions of 190 Brigade formed the third wave. One company from the Honourable Artillery Company (HAC) was detailed to cover the right of the advance by seizing **The Mound**, a knoll which formed the southernmost piece of the German system north of the Ancre and tasked with clearing the German dug-outs along the railway embankment. This they managed to do after brisk fighting with trench mortars and machine guns providing valuable support by 6.45am. The 63rd Division's sector was about 1,000m in width, the front running at right angles to the river valley which ran almost due east to Beaucourt. To the north the divisional boundary, depending on which map you refer to, was just past the point which is marked by the concrete remains of a German bunker or machine-gun post. Beyond the divisional boundary was the preserve of the 51 (Highland) Division whose task was to capture Beaumont-Hamel. The four divisional objectives of the RND were as follows:



The route takes the track on the left which rises almost immediately at the end of the cemetery Wall.

1. On the higher ground, and about 150 metres from the assembly trenches, was the German front line system consisting of the usual three lines of trenches, the first objective was the third line of German trenches and was known as the **Dotted Green Line**.
2. Next came a valley with a road known as Station Road running along it and ascending up a ridge running from Beaumont-Hamel to Beaucourt Station. The second objective, or **Green Line**, was on the ridge.
3. Beaucourt Village was the third objective or **Yellow Line**.
4. The final objective, the **Red Line**, was a position to be taken up beyond Beaucourt village.

The first objective was to be attacked by 1/Royal Marine Light Infantry

(RMLI), the Howe, Hawke and Hood Battalions advancing in four waves. The second objective was to be attacked by 2/RMLI, Anson, Nelson and Drake Battalions in similar waves. Zero hour was at 5.45am on 13 November, but as you can imagine the troops of the 63rd Division reached the assembly area at 9pm the previous evening and had to lie out in the open and in the rain only 150m from the German line. It must have been a tense time.

So much for the plan which looked good on paper! The two Naval Brigades led the attack with the 188th Brigade on the left and 189th Brigade on the right. The 190th Brigade was in support. The 1/RMLI was commanded by 40-year-old **Lieutenant Colonel Francis Cartwright** and took nearly half of their casualties for the whole battle in the first few minutes of crossing no-man's-land. Every company commander was killed and very few men reached the German first line. Cartwright was killed in April 1917 and is buried at Duisans British Cemetery, Etrun. The 2/RMLI, commanded by **Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Hutchinson**, fared little better than their sister battalion. Some of their number got into the German third line but were either killed or pushed back. On their right the Howe Battalion were followed by the Anson Battalion and the 4/Bedfords. The Howe Battalion lost every company commander but did manage to establish a footing in the German lines. The Anson Battalion, which had already lost their commanding officer, **Lieutenant Colonel Frederick Saunders**, to shellfire before the attack began, was led by **Lieutenant Commander Jack Gilliland**.

On the right, the Hood Battalion, followed by Drake, encountered strong opposition from enfilade machine-gun fire on the left causing considerable loss and **Lieutenant Colonel Arthur Tetley** commanding the Drake was mortally wounded. He is buried in Varennes Military Cemetery. The Hood Battalion, perhaps because the officers commanding the first wave kept closer to the creeping barrage, was able to avoid some of the German fire and maintained the direction of their advance. They passed through the German front system taking the three trench lines and clearing the dug-outs in the German third line. On the left of the advance, more or less in the centre of the division, the Hawke and Nelson Battalions attacked in the mist at 5.45am but as the first wave approached the German trenches and with the artillery

barrage still on the German first line, a devastating German machine-gun fire broke out from a redoubt situated between the first and second enemy lines and opposite the Hawke Battalion front. Today there is nothing left to mark the position of the redoubt but a burst of fire from one of the machine guns situated here wounded **Lieutenant Colonel Leslie Wilson**, commanding the Hawke Battalion, and several other officers. The whole battalion suffered extremely badly and within minutes 'no longer existed as a unit'. This was where Lieutenant Alan Herbert's friend **Vere Harmsworth** was killed, one of over 400 officers and men who fell at the redoubt along with **Lieutenant William Ker** and **Sub Lieutenant James Cook**. Alan Herbert was a notable poet who expressed his grief at losing his friends in 'Beaucourt Revisited'. After the war, he published *The Secret Battle* and joined the staff of *Punch* in 1924. Elected as Independent MP for Oxford in the 1935 general election, Herbert campaigned for private member's rights, piloted the Matrimonial Causes Act 1937 through Parliament, opposed the Entertainments Duty and campaigned against the Oxford Group. He joined the River Emergency Service in 1938 and served in the Second World War as a petty officer in the Royal Naval Auxiliary Patrol. He died in 1971. William Ker is remembered on the Thiepval Memorial and James Cook is buried in Y Ravine Cemetery.

General Schute, in his report on the battle, attributed the failure of the attack at this point to the mist which he thinks concealed the entrance to the redoubt. The reason why it was never successfully attacked by the RND is probably because no officers or men got within bomb or bayonet range in one piece. The disastrous losses of the Hawke Battalion speak for themselves.

Corporal Reginald Haine of the 1/HAC remembered the redoubts as quite formidable:

I think Beaucourt was the most intense battle I was ever in, it was really grim. On the first day we had to get through the wire, which made a lot of casualties. Then there was a very complex trench system. And when you got through the first trench system you had a bit of open country and then there were these redoubts and things that the Germans were holding on to. The Germans were very good at that time, they hadn't lost their nerve.

Continue uphill past the concrete remains of a German bunker or machine-gun post and at the T-junction of tracks go straight ahead; Beaumont-Hamel is about half a kilometre to the north of this junction. The track now goes downhill along Station Road towards the white cliffs of the old quarry and Beaumont-Hamel Communal Cemetery ③, which you will see on your right. Station Road ran parallel to Station Trench and was roughly where the German Second Line trenches were. Stop at the cemetery to find the memorial stones of 23-year-old **Hector Morel** who died for France on 12 October 1914 and 32-year-old **Raymond Mauciere** who died for France on 21 March 1915.



The concrete remains of an old German pillbox.

The Hood advance should have halted just before Station Road to allow the Drake to take the Ridge beyond Station Road, but Drake had been drawn into the battle for the German trench lines on the left of the Hood front and had lost half of their effective force. The situation was quickly resolved by **Lieutenant Colonel Bernard Freyberg**, commanding the Hood, deciding to continue the advance with 300 men of the Hood and 120 of the Drake along with men from the HAC company and a machine gun from 189/MGC following the advance. It was a risky advance but the combined attack was successful, the dug-outs in Station Road yielding 400 prisoners and the second objective was secured with a force of nearly 400 men and 9 officers under his command.



Beaumont-Hamel Communal Cemetery.

Leave the cemetery and at the junction with the D4151, turn sharp right,

ignoring the road on the left, to continue straight ahead. After 450m look across to the right to see a series of terraced indentations which may be remnants of the German occupation.

Continue along the valley to the crossroads with the D50 at Gare de Beaucourt where a left turn ④ takes you towards Beaucourt and Miramont. At this point the men of the 63rd Division met with those of the 39th Division, namely the 1/1 Cambridgeshires, who had crossed the river bridge near Beaucourt Station and resupplied Freyberg's men with bombs in preparation for their attack on Beaucourt.



A series of terraced indentations on the D4151 which may be remnants of the German occupation.

D 4151

GARE DE BEAUCOURT

Commune de BEAUMONT-HAMEL



All that remains of the Gare de Beaucourt is the crossroads.

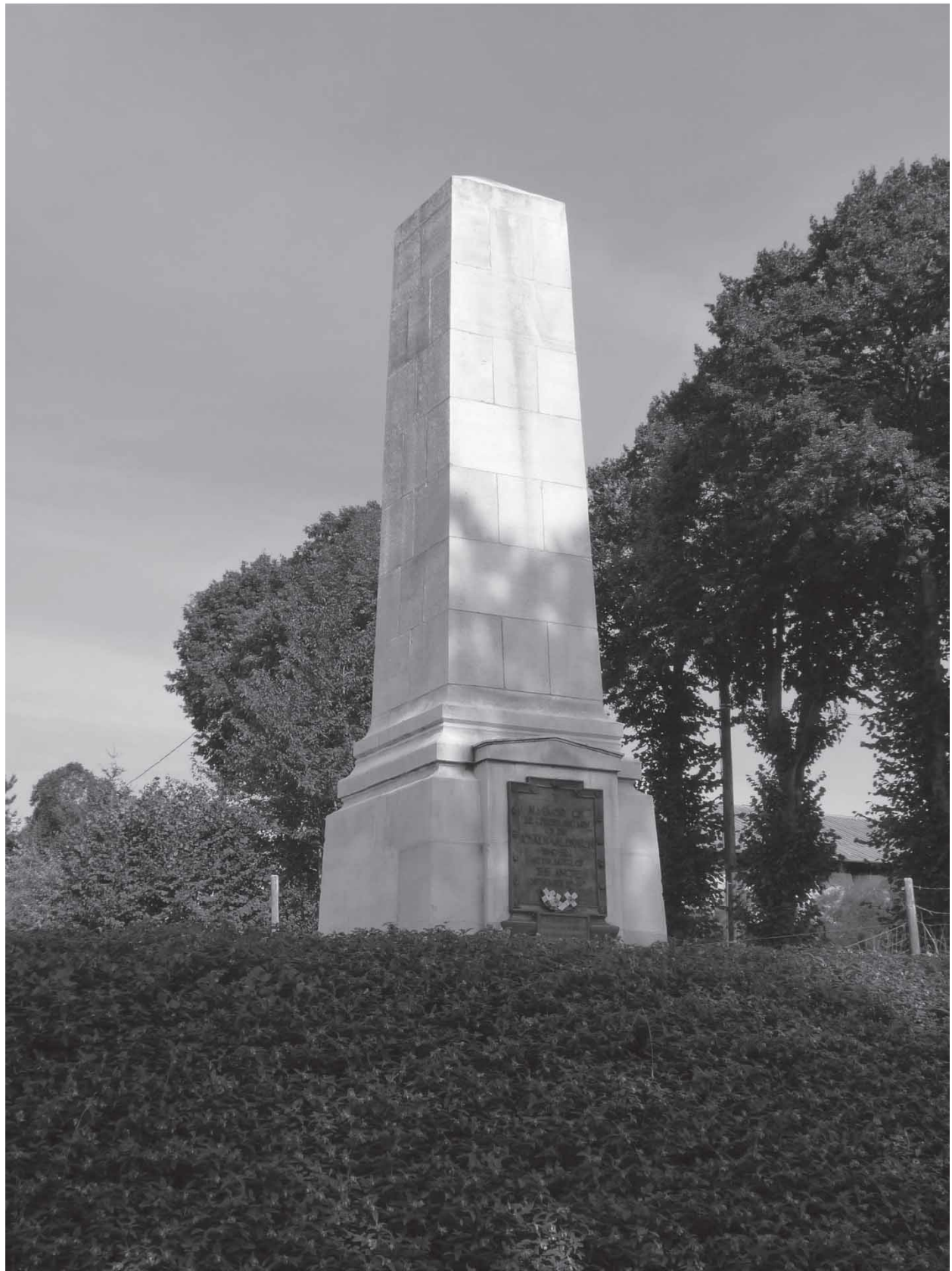
There was a pause of 70 minutes on the Green Line and then at 7.30am the barrage lifted heralding the attack on the Yellow Line. Colonel Freyberg and **Lieutenant Commander Jack Gilliland** led two independent assaults on the Yellow Line with both groups reaching the line without serious losses. Reports received at Divisional Headquarters enabled Major General Sir Cameron Shute to decide that 188 Brigade – re-enforced by 190 Brigade – must fight its way across the German front-line system on the left before he could exploit the success gained on the right by Colonel Freyberg. The result of this decision was the postponement of the attack on Beaucourt village until the next day.

The HAC was sent up to reinforce Colonel Freyberg on the Beaucourt Trench line and reinforcements were sought from Five Corps with fresh troops brought up through the Ancre Valley and the 111 Brigade of the 37th Division placed at General Shute's disposal. Eventually Gilliland's party was able to push on to the Yellow Line with the enemy to his left in **Muck Trench**, until nightfall when the party was able to join up with Colonel Freyberg.

The road climbs gently to the **RND Memorial** on the left ⑤. Stop here. The memorial, in the form of an obelisk, was designed by Alan Brace and the land on which it stands was said to have been purchased for 200 francs. In 1921, when the Royal Naval Division Memorial Committee was seeking to put a monument in place, Lord Rothermere, the father of Vere Harmsworth who was killed in the attack, offered to provide funding. With his help the memorial was unveiled on 12 November 1922 by **General Sir Hubert Gough** with approximately 200 officers and men in attendance from the division who had fought in the battle.

On 13 September one of the Hood Battalion company commanders leading his men up the slope towards Beaucourt was **Lieutenant Commander Frederick Kelly**, a man who was amongst the four surviving officers of the battalion which left Avonmouth for Gallipoli in 1915. Lieutenant Colonel Bernard Freyberg remembered his contribution to the battle:

Our task in the battle was to capture the front-line system, and as we advanced north-east by compass, we passed the burning entrances of dugouts, which showed the phosphorous bombs were taking effect. It was in rushing a strongpoint at the entrance to one of these, that Kelly was killed. These dugouts were elaborate two-storeyed affair, with electric light and in one case, a lift. Owing to our heavy casualties it was never known really how it all happened, but it appears that someone on Kelly's left had missed a dugout entrance from which the enemy were shooting. The situation was critical. Unless the strongpoint was captured at once, enemy machine guns would pop up everywhere; hesitation would have endangered the success of the whole attack on our front. Kelly, being an experienced soldier, knew this quite well and he must have known the risk he was taking, when with a few men he rushed the machine gun. A few of the men reached the position but Kelly, with most of them, was killed at the moment of victory.



The RND Memorial obelisk.

Kelly is buried at Martinsart British Cemetery. As you can well understand, on the night of 13/14 November 1916 there was considerable confusion with trenches obliterated and distances impossible to calculate. Two battalions from the 111 Brigade had been sent up that night to the ridge to attack Beaucourt Trench at 6am, so enabling Colonel Freyberg's force to include a battalion from 111 Brigade supported by 7th Royal Fusiliers from 190th Brigade to advance on Beaucourt.

Sergeant Major Richard Tobin of the Hood Battalion remembers a conversation with Freyberg shortly before Beaucourt was taken:

Colonel Freyberg said, 'Hello Tobin, how are you?' and I said, 'Alright, sir.' He said, 'We'll get a VC today,' so I replied, 'You can have mine as well.' He got his. Our final objective was the village of Beaucourt, but we hadn't sufficient men to take it so we dug in and waited for reinforcements to come up. The colonel sent me out on a battle patrol. That's when you go ahead of your trench with just twenty or thirty men. You're there to hold up a counterattack as long as you can. Well that's a posh way of putting it. You're really there to do as much damage as you can, to warn the front line whilst they're getting ready.

The memorial to the Royal Naval Division stands just inside the village and it is from here a Hood Battalion subaltern, **Sub Lieutenant Trevor Jacobs**, described the battle on 14 September:

The next morning at dawn we took Beaucourt. I fired about 40 rounds with a rifle. It was an extraordinary thing to see the Boches rushing up to surrender, with hands up, any number of them ... I had received news that all my company officers were wounded and I had to be ready to take command of my company which was mixed up with other men I had commandeered. Our CO was badly wounded in the neck but I hear he is getting on well. He is being recommended for the Victoria Cross.

Jacobs was quite correct about the Victoria Cross but was sadly killed in 1917 whilst leading a company of Hoods. He is buried at Queens Cemetery in Bucquoy. **Lieutenant Colonel Bernard Freyberg** found himself leading not only his own men from the Hood Battalion but those of Drake Battalion as well. **Lieutenant Colonel Arthur Tetley**, the commanding officer of Drake battalion, died aged 36 of wounds on 14 November 1916, on the same day that Freyberg and his men stormed the village of Beaucourt. Corporal Reginald Haine remembers the second day of the attack very well, particularly as Freyberg was wounded quite close to him:



Bernard Freyberg VC during the Second World War.

It was astounding to me that on the second day we did take Beaucourt, because we were very thin on the ground for that attack ... General

Freyberg was wounded just near me on the second day and we said, 'For God's sake get in Sir!' But he was like that and he paid the price; he went down ... We had a most gruelling time that second day. When we got beyond the village and there were no trenches, we went into shell holes as deep as we could get.

However, despite the strong resistance in the trenches to the west of the village, Beaucourt fell remarkably easily with the gain of 500 prisoners and by 10.30am Freyberg reported that he was in control of Beaucourt. Though wounded on at least two occasions, he refused to leave the line until he had issued final instructions. His Victoria Cross was gazetted in December 1916. Freyberg had three brothers who served in the war, two of whom were killed. Oscar was killed in Gallipoli with the Collingwood Battalion and Paul was killed in 1917 serving with the 3/New Zealand Rifle Brigade.

Leave the memorial and continue straight past the church on the right to the crossroads. If you look left you can see the village war memorial. Continue straight ahead and, as the road descends, take the unmetalled track just after the metal barrier ⑥ on the left. Continue along the track to reach a minor road where a right turn is followed almost immediately by a track on the right, which rises steeply uphill. As the track reaches the crest of the hill the **Bois d'Hollande** comes into view on the right. Halfway up the hill look across to the right where the Thiepval Memorial is visible on the skyline with the Leipzig Redoubt to its left. Bear right at the junction and continue towards the wood where the track becomes metalled.

After dark on 15 November the relief of the two Naval Brigades of the 63rd Division by the 37th Division began, temporarily leaving 190 Brigade to clear the battlefield. Marching out of the battle zone for two months' rest, they were delighted to hear they were going to Rue, some 24km north of Abbeville near the coast.

On the night of 16 November, 63 Brigade (21st Division) pushed up **Ancre Trench** and established a post at the Bois d'Hollande. Stop at the north-west corner of the wood ⑦, where you will see a track leading for some 20m to a tree near the western edge of the wood. There are two crosses fixed to the tree, one commemorating 23-year-old **Private Henry Austin**, 9/

North Staffs, who was killed on 20 or 21 November 1916, and the other, which is hard to read, commemorating **Private David Amos** of the same battalion, who was killed on 21 November. Both men are remembered on the Thiepval Memorial. A few metres to the right is a wooden plaque, commemorating **Corporal L. Burrows**. Bois d'Hollande was the furthest point reached in this area during the 1916 Somme campaign.



The Beaucourt-sur-l'Ancre village war memorial.



The northwest corner of Bois d'Hollande.

From the wood a metalled track descends to join the D50. Turn right here and retrace your steps towards Beaucourt. As the road goes downhill and bends to the right, look left to what can only be described as a temporary memorial to **Lance Corporal John Warren**, 10/York and Lancaster Regiment (63 Brigade). The memorial also lists sixteen other men of the battalion who died during the **Battle of the Ancre** on 15/16 September. Notice also the old elephant shelter on the right now being used as part of a fence.

Continue past the church and the **RND Memorial**, which is now on your right, to the Gare de Beaucourt crossroads where a left turn will take you onto

the D4151. From here it is 85m to the railway line, go straight over, but bear in mind this is a very dangerous crossing point. At the far side of the railway line stop and look right ⑧. You will see three buildings, the furthest two are on the site of **Beaucourt-Hamel Station**. The station building was, at one point in the battle, the site of the RND Brigade Headquarters and where it all began to go wrong for **Sub Lieutenant Edwin Dyett** of the Nelson Battalion. Dyett was one of only three officers shot in the First World War and joined the Royal Navy in 1915, following in the footsteps of his father, a captain in the Merchant Navy. A rather ineffectual junior officer, he found himself, along with the rest of the division, about to take part in the battle for Beaucourt. The Nelson Battalion was the reserve for the Hood and Hawke Battalions which were, as we know, charged with taking the German Front Line on 13 November 1916. As he was not considered to be quality material, Edwin Dyett was left as a reserve officer and it was only in the course of the battle with confusion all around that he was sent forward with reserves. Not being able to find anyone from his unit, Dyett and another officer decided to return to **Brigade Headquarters** for more information. At Beaucourt Station they met up with a junior officer on staff duties who had a number of men with him who needed taking back to the front. Whilst his companion accompanied the men back to the front and went on to take part in the latter stages of the battle, Dyett took offence at being ordered by a junior officer and continued on his way towards the rear. Meeting up with a number of soldiers who were also lost, they spent the night in a shell hole. What he did not realise was that the junior officer put in a report explaining Dyett's refusal to go forward. The following day Dyett was found at **Englebelmer** some kilometres behind the front line. He was placed under arrest and later charged with desertion. Unfortunately for him, the army decided that he had shown cowardice and that he had deserted his position for two days. If it had happened at any other era in time he may have lived, the court recommending mercy due to his age. But the political climate was against him. Edwin Dyett was convicted and shot at dawn at St Firmin. He is buried at Le Crotoy Communal Cemetery.



Two private memorials attached to a tree in Bois d'Hollande.



Bois d'Hollande from the road leading down to the D50.



A private memorial in memory of Lance Corporal John Warren and sixteen men of the 10/York and Lancaster Regiment.



The former building of Beaucourt-Hamel railway station.



The church at St-Pierre-Divion.

Continue across the bridge over the River Ancre. This is where the 1/1 Cambridgeshires met the men of the 63rd Division and resupplied them. At the next T-junction ⑨ turn right along the Route de St Pierre. We describe the village of **St-Pierre-Divion** and its significance on 1 July in our companion volume, *The First Day of the Somme*. Go through St-Pierre-Divion to the church. It is always worth looking in the cemetery of civilian churchyards ⑩, in this case there are several generations of Brien buried here, linked probably to the nearby Rue Adolphe Brien. As you look down the road imagine the men of 118 Brigade (39th Division) coming towards you. They formed up in no-man's-land on guide tapes put in place by 234/Field Company, RE, the 1/1 Herefords had the Hansa Line as their objective whilst the 1/1 Cambridgeshires had the Station Crossing and Beaucourt Mill as their objective. Leave the church, glancing to the right to see the German helmet and shell mounted on an electricity cable mast.

Continue to the next T-junction ⑪. Thiepval Wood is straight ahead and Mill Road is to your left leading uphill to the Ulster Tower and Thiepval Memorial. Turn right to cross the River Ancre and the railway line before a left turn returns you to Hamel and your vehicle.



Relics from the First World War?

This is a good opportunity to visit **Hamel Military Cemetery** which is on the D50 at the southern end of the village. The cemetery was begun by fighting units and Field Ambulances in August 1915 and carried on until June 1917 and was described by Blunden as a ‘soldiers cemetery open all hours’. A few further burials were made in Plot II, Row F, after the capture of the village in 1918. It was known at times by the names of **Brook Street Trench** and **White City** and was enlarged after the Armistice. There are now 487 casualties commemorated here and, of these, nearly 809 are unidentified. Amongst the first burials were **Privates Fred Eames** (I.D.19) and **William Hawes** (I.D.18) of the 1/Hampshires. Both men died on 31 July 1915 and both enlisted in Portsmouth. The inscription at the foot of Eames’s headstone says: ‘He laid down his life for his friend’, but there is little to confirm the friend was William Hawes in the battalion war diary. Also buried here are thirty-seven men of the RND, listed under Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve. This number includes 28-year-old **Surgeon Godfrey Walker** (II.D.21) of the RND Field Ambulance, who was killed on 14 November, **Lieutenant Colonel Frederick Saunders** (II.E.9), who was killed whilst in command of the Anson Battalion on 12 November, and **Lieutenant Colonel Norman Burge** (II.D.20) of the Nelson Battalion who was killed a day later on 13 November 1916. Another lieutenant colonel, killed on 7 February 1917 whilst in command of the 1/ HAC, was 56-year-old **Ernest Boyle** (I.E.2). Mortally wounded near Grandcourt, he was struck by a shell within 1.8m of his dugout. He has the dubious pleasure of being the oldest officer in the HAC to be killed in battle during the First World War. **Lieutenant Gilbert Hawkins** (II.D.4) and **Second Lieutenant Ernest Holmes** (II.D.3), both members of the 13/King’s Royal Rifle Corps, were brought here after the battle. Hawkins may well have been the first British officer into Beaucourt on 14 November. The **Revd Ernest Trevor**, chaplain to the 13/Royal Fusiliers, was possibly killed when a forward dressing station was shelled on 14 September. He went to Durham School with Lieutenant Alfred Maynard of the Howe Battalion. Aged 22, Maynard was the youngest of the twenty-seven England internationals to die in the war and was killed on 13 November

leading A Company into battle. He has no known grave and is remembered on the Thiepval Memorial as well as on the St Margaret's Church memorial, Durham School, and the Emmanuel College, Cambridge memorial.



Surgeon Godfrey Walker.



Lieutenant Colonel Norman Burge.

Route 9

THE CAR TOUR

A circular tour beginning at: the Australian Memorial at Pozières

Distance: 58km/36 miles

Suitable for:  

Maps: The Michelin Map *Pas-de-Calais, Somme* will provide a useful overview along with the individual IGN maps recommended for route guidance

General description and context: We have designed the car tour purely as a basis for further exploration and where the tour invades the walking and cycle routes, which it does on numerous occasions, please be aware that we have not included cemetery information where it has already been described in a specific route. Likewise, we have not included Beaucourt in the car tour which, although an important part of the Somme offensive, is geographically in the far northwestern corner of the area and we have confined the tour to between the A1 Motorway in the east and the D929 in the west.

We begin in **Pozières** and drive along the D929, turning right into **Martinpuich** before arriving at **High Wood** where we continue down the D107 towards **Longueval**. Turning right onto the D20 we pass **Caterpillar Valley Cemetery and the New Zealand Memorial** before visiting Bazentin and the memorials on the ridge. From Bazentin we visit Mametz Wood and the **Welsh Division Memorial**. At Montauban we cross the D197 to **Bernafay** and **Trônes Woods**, passing **Guillemont Road Cemetery** prior to entering Guillemont where we take the D20 to Longueval. Here we visit the

New Zealand Memorial after which we visit Flers and Ginchy. Taking the road to Lesboeufs, we pass the **Guards' Memorial**, the **Meakin Memorial** and the **Guards' Cemetery** before driving through the village to Gueudecourt on the D74. A short visit to the **Newfoundland Caribou** sees us back on the D74, passing the **AIF Burial Ground**, to Eaucourt l'Abbaye. From the Abbaye we drive in the direction of **Warlencourt British Cemetery** and the **Butte de Warlencourt** which is a short distance from Le Sars. After a final stop at the RIR 111 Memorial we return to Pozières.

Directions to start: Pozières is a village that straddles the D929 and is best approached from Albert in the west. You may wish to visit the **Pozières Memorial** and the **King's Royal Rifle Corps** Memorial Cross before you enter the village. Once in Pozières park in the 1st Australian Memorial car park on the left of the road.



The entrance to the Pozières Memorial and British Cemetery.

Route description: Approaching from Albert you will pass the **Pozières Memorial** on the left, take great care parking in the designated layby in front of the memorial as the road is used by fast-moving traffic. The road frontage consists of an open arcade which is broken in the centre by the entrance. Along the walls stone tablets are fixed bearing the names of the dead grouped under their regiments. The memorial commemorates over 14,000 casualties of the United Kingdom and 300 of the South African Forces who have no known grave and who died on the Somme from 21 March 7 August 1918. The corps and regiments most largely represented are: the Rifle Brigade with over 600 names, the Durham Light Infantry with approximately 600 names, the Machine Gun Corps with over 500, the Manchester Regiment with approximately 500 and the Royal Horse and Royal Field Artillery with over 400 names. Enclosed within the memorial walls is **Pozières British Cemetery** which contains the bodies of men killed during the Battle of Pozières and the Battle of the Somme, Plot II of which contains original burials of 1916, 1917 and 1918, carried out by fighting units and field ambulances. The remaining plots were made after the Armistice when graves were brought in from the battlefields immediately surrounding the cemetery, the majority of them of soldiers who died in the autumn of 1916 during the latter stages of the Battle of the Somme, but a few represent the fighting in August 1918. There are now 2,758 casualties buried or commemorated in this cemetery; 1,380 of the burials are unidentified but there are special memorials to 23 casualties known or believed to be buried amongst them. There is also one German soldier buried here. The memorial and cemetery were unveiled by **Major General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien** in August 1930.

One Victoria Cross recipient is buried in the cemetery: he is **Sergeant Claud Castleton** of the Australian Machine Gun Corps, killed on 29 July 1916. Commemorated on the memorial under their respective regiments are three further Victoria Cross recipients, **Private Herbert Colombine**, Machine Gun Corps, **Second Lieutenant Edmund de Wind**, Royal Irish Rifles, and **Lieutenant Colonel Wilfrith Elstob**, Manchester Regiment.

Leave the cemetery and continue for another 500m towards Pozières where you will find the memorial cross to the thirteen battalions of the

King's Royal Rifle Corps (KRRC) on the right just as you enter the village. Parking can be difficult here and it is probably best to continue and park in the Australian Memorial car park, walking back to the KRRC Memorial. This is a regimental memorial and is dedicated to the officers and men of the KRRC who gave their lives on the battlefields of France. A similar cross can be found at Hooge in Belgium.

Continue into Pozières and take the next road on the left, which is signposted to the Australian Memorial, parking in the car park. Here you can visit the remnants of the **Gibraltar Blockhouse** and the **orientation table** before walking up to the impressive obelisk commemorating the **Australian 1st Division**. There are plenty of information boards dotted around the site which tell the story of the capture of Pozières by the Australian 1st Division.



The King's Royal Rifle Corps Memorial cross.



The Gibraltar Blockhouse has a number of attractions for the battlefield visitor.

Leave the site and turn left to drive along the D929, passing **Tommy's Cafe** on the right. Just as you are leaving Pozières there is a water tower on the left decorated with the names of the 1916 Australian Victoria Cross winners, almost identical to the decorated water tower at Bullecourt. Park in the layby a little further on the right and walk back to the water tower. In front of the water tower is a 1934 memorial dedicated to **Gustave Lemoine**, who died locally in an air accident and gained the World Altitude Record in 1933, flying a Potez 50, to reach a height of 13,661m. Lemoine is buried in the Paris suburb of St-Ouen in the Cimetière Parisien.



The Pozières water tower.



The Courcellette Canadian Memorial.

Return to your vehicle and continue for 250m to reach the site of the Pozières Windmill and Tank Memorial, overshadowed somewhat by the red and white transmitter mast. Again, take care crossing this road as the traffic appears to have the race-track mentality. From here it is just over 3km to the **Courcellette Canadian Memorial** which you will see on your left. Slow down, as you will pass the site of the former Sugar Factory on your left, about 400m from the memorial and marked by the red-brick buildings of the farm complex. This was the principal objective of the Canadian Corps on 15 September 1916. Park in the layby on the right opposite the memorial and use the zebra crossing to reach the other side of the road. The park is sited a little to the east of the initial victory of the Canadians and on entering the memorial a large granite block can be seen straight ahead. Those of you who have been to **Crest Farm** at Passchendaele will notice this park is of the same construction and design of other Canadian memorials in France and Belgium. The granite block is simply inscribed with the words: ‘The

Canadian Corps bore a valiant part in forcing back the Germans on these slopes during the Battles of the Somme Sept 3rd–Nov 18th 1916'. A circular hedge surrounds the memorial which is screened from the road by trees. When the Canadian Corps moved from the Ypres Salient to the Somme at the beginning of September 1916, its first major action was the Battle of Flers-Courcelette, launched at dawn on 15 September. The Canadian Corps assaulted on a 2km front, aided by a tank called *Crème de Menthe*, near the village of Courcelette. The attack went well and by 8am the main objective, the nearby defensive position known the **Sugar Factory**, was taken, and the Canadians pushed ahead to **Courcelette**, which you can just catch a glimpse of through the trees on the left.

Continue for 150m to the next right turn, signposted D6 Martinpuich. The village was in all probability a German Headquarters at the start of the 1916 battle, and the German bunker that still remains relatively intact was most likely the battle headquarters. The capture of **Martinpuich** by the 15th (Scottish) Division took place on 15 September 1916. The village was lost on 25 March 1918, during the German spring offensive, and finally recaptured on 25 August by troops of V Corps. **Lieutenant Cyril Slack** and the 4/East Yorks were part of the attacking force on 15 September and in a letter home he extolled the virtues of the new armoured vehicles: 'These new "tanks" are splendid things, and they give a tremendous feeling of confidence quite apart from the other work they do. A couple of them patrolled the streets of Martinpuich whilst the Boches were actually in possession of the place. We had one with us when we went over.'

Continue into the village to reach the first crossroads where a left turn will bring you to the church in approximately 250m. Just beyond the church is the **47th (London) Division Memorial** in the form of a white stone gateway with attached loggia – a sheltered outdoor area – which was inaugurated in 1925 by **Lieutenant General Sir George Gorringe**. The memorial commemorates the fighting by the division in the area between 15 and 22 September 1916. On the village war memorial behind the gate is a plaque commemorating the German RIR 109, placed there in 1964 by German veterans. The memorial seats in the loggia commemorate the 14/London Scottish, the 19/St Pancras Rifles and the 21/Surrey Rifles. Retrace your steps

to the crossroads and go straight across along the **Grande Rue**, bear right at the fork and in 40m look across to the right to see the former German Battle Headquarters bunker.



The 47th (London) Division Memorial at Martinpuich.

Back at the crossroads turn right, following signs for Longueval and Delville Wood. We are now going to visit **Martinpuich Communal Cemetery**, which is on the right, 200m further along the road where there is good parking. On entering the cemetery bear left to find the five headstones, one of which is unidentified. Leave your vehicle in the car park and turn right to walk along the track for 100m to find a grass track on the right. **Martinpuich British Cemetery** is at the end of this path and positioned on the side of a hill. The cemetery now contains 115 burials, 9 of which are unidentified, in addition there are 4 burials destroyed by shellfire in 1918 and represented by special memorials. First opened in November 1916, it was used by fighting units and field ambulances until June 1917 until the end of August 1918. Of the thirty-four Australian burials one of the oldest was 42-year-old **Private Frederick Wray** (B.5) of the 17/Battalion AIF. He died of wounds at Fricourt on 27 February 1917. The single Canadian buried here is 26-year-old **Gunner John Pethick** (E.9) who was killed on 11 November 1916, serving with the Canadian Field Artillery. Amongst the ten British officers buried here is 18-year-old **Second Lieutenant William Sellar** (A.13) who was a medical student before he enlisted. He was killed flying in a DH9 over Albert with 98 Squadron on 29 August 1918.



Private Fred Wray, who died of wounds in February 1917.

Return to your vehicle and continue along the road towards High Wood stopping outside the **London Cemetery and Extension** on the right. The wood and its memorials are described in **Route 2** along with details of the cemetery. Continue downhill towards Longueval on the D107, the church spire of Longueval and Delville Wood being clearly visible on the left and **Caterpillar Valley Cemetery** on the right-hand skyline. This is the ground over which the two regiments of the Secunderabad Brigade Cavalry charged from right to left on 14 July 1916, a charge that is described in **Route 2**.



An aerial view of High Wood showing the London Cemetery and Extension on the left.

At the junction with the D20 cross the road with care and park your vehicle. This is the site of the former Longueval Windmill and there are three memorials to see here. The first is the **New Zealand Memorial Garden**

complete with a metal information panel and on the same plot of land is the new memorial to the **Indian Forces**, which was inaugurated in October 2019. At first glance the memorial, with its figures mounted on the top of a plinth, does seem to be a little on the comical side and perhaps does not have the same gravitas as the Indian Forces Memorial at the Menin Gate in Ypres or indeed the Neuve-Chapelle Indian Memorial. Across the road is the **Bristol's Own** cross commemorating the 12/Gloucestershire Regiment, which was re-erected in 1986 on the site of the original cross that was lost during the Second World War. The battalion fought at Longueval and Guillemont in July and September 1916 and the cross marks the site where the battalion formed up.

From where you have parked your vehicle, turn left on the D20 towards Contalmaison and **Caterpillar Valley Cemetery**, which you will find on the left in approximately 400m. Caterpillar Valley was the name given to the long valley which rises eastwards past Caterpillar Wood to the high ground at Guillemont. Caterpillar Valley was captured during a successful Dawn Attack by the 3rd, 7th and 9th Divisions on Bazentin Ridge on 14 July 1916 but it was lost in the German advance of March 1918 and recovered by the 38th (Welsh) Division on 28 August 1918, when a little cemetery was made (now Plot 1) containing twenty-five graves of the 38th Division and the 6th Dragoon Guards. After the Armistice, this cemetery was hugely increased when the graves of more than 5,500 officers and men were brought in from other small cemeteries, and the battlefields of the Somme. The cemetery now contains 5,569 Commonwealth burials of which 3,796 are unidentified.



The memorial to Indian forces on the Somme.



Bristol's Own, the cross re-erected in 1986.

On 6 November 2004, the remains of an unidentified New Zealand soldier were removed from the cemetery and entrusted to New Zealand at a ceremony held at the New Zealand Memorial. Two pairs of brothers are buried within the cemetery, 26-year-old **Second Lieutenant Harold John Macbeth** (XII.H.17), 17/London Regiment (Stepney and Poplar Rifles), who died on 15 September 1916 and 36-year-old **Lieutenant Stanley Macbeth** (XII.H.19), 1st/18 London Regiment (London Irish Rifles), who died on the same day. Both boys were the sons of John and Annie Macbeth of Tooting Common, London. Scottish brothers, 33-year-old **Lance Corporal Thomas Sim** (33.II.K), who was killed on 27 July 1916, and 27-year-old **Sergeant John Sim** (XI.H.20), who was killed three days later, were both serving with the 5/Gordon Highlanders. **Private Arthur Harvie** (II.B.5) was serving with the 50/Battalion AIF when he was killed, aged 29, in Gird Trench, near Flers on 19 November 1916. A bank clerk from Rose Park, South Australia, he was wounded by a shell and died later that day. Killed in the same month was 20-year-old **Private Aubrey Peacock** (II.B.8), who died of wounds on 10 November 1916 whilst serving with the 20/Battalion AIF. One of the most senior officers buried here is 39-year-old **Lieutenant Colonel William Drysdale** (VI.E.11), who was killed commanding the 7/Leicesters on 29 September 1916. Drysdale is also remembered by a brass plaque in Kirkcaldy Old Parish Church. On the east side of the cemetery is the **Caterpillar Valley (New Zealand) Memorial**, commemorating more than 1,200 officers and men of the New Zealand Division who died in the Battles of the Somme in 1916, and whose graves are not known. This is one of seven memorials in France and Belgium to those New Zealand soldiers who died on the Western Front and whose graves are not known.



Caterpillar Valley Cemetery.

From the car park outside the cemetery it is possible to see High Wood on the right with London Cemetery and Extension and, on a clear day, the transmitter mast at Pozières. From the cemetery continue towards Contalmaison and take the first turning on the right. This track is passable for vehicles in good weather and bends sharply right after 200m to arrive at **Thistle Dump Cemetery** on the left. The cemetery was begun in August 1916 and used as a front-line cemetery until February 1917. It was later increased after the Armistice by the concentration of fifty-six graves from the surrounding battlefields. There are now 196 casualties buried here, 59 of which are unidentified. The cemetery also contains seven German war graves. In Row E are two men of the 4/Australian Pioneers who were both killed on 16 February 1916. **Private Harry Davies** (E.32) and 28-year-old **Private Henry Martin** (E.33) were building a light railway when they were hit by shellfire. Martin's friend, Private Norman Reynolds, was one of the

burial party:



Thistle Dump Cemetery.

Shortly after our battalion moved to another locality but before moving the battalion erected a cross on the grave. The cross is painted white but the names of Martin and Davies are painted in black ... my late friend and comrade would be roughly five foot six inches in height, medium build with a ruddy complexion, hair russet or reddish, amongst his friends he was often called 'Bluey'.

Another Australian, this time from Mildura in Victoria, was 23-year-old **Private Edward Thomas** (D.3) who was killed on 11 November 1916 whilst serving with the 6/Field Ambulance, Australian Medical Corps. One of the first casualties to be buried here was **Lance Corporal Ernest Batterbury** (A.35), who was killed serving with the 7/Rifle Brigade on 18 August 1916. A former hosiery assistant from London, he is also remembered at St Mark's

Church, Kennington Oval, London. Two New Zealanders, who were probably killed near the New Zealand Memorial, were 24-year-old **Second Lieutenant Kenneth Ambrose** (C.18) of the New Zealand Machine gun Corps and **Captain Geoffrey Armstrong** (A.31) of the 2/Auckland Regiment. Armstrong was in command of No. 3 Company at the time of his death and is also remembered on the Devonport War Memorial, New Zealand. Both men were killed on 15 September 1916.



Crucifix Corner is surrounded by a small copse and easy to miss in summer.

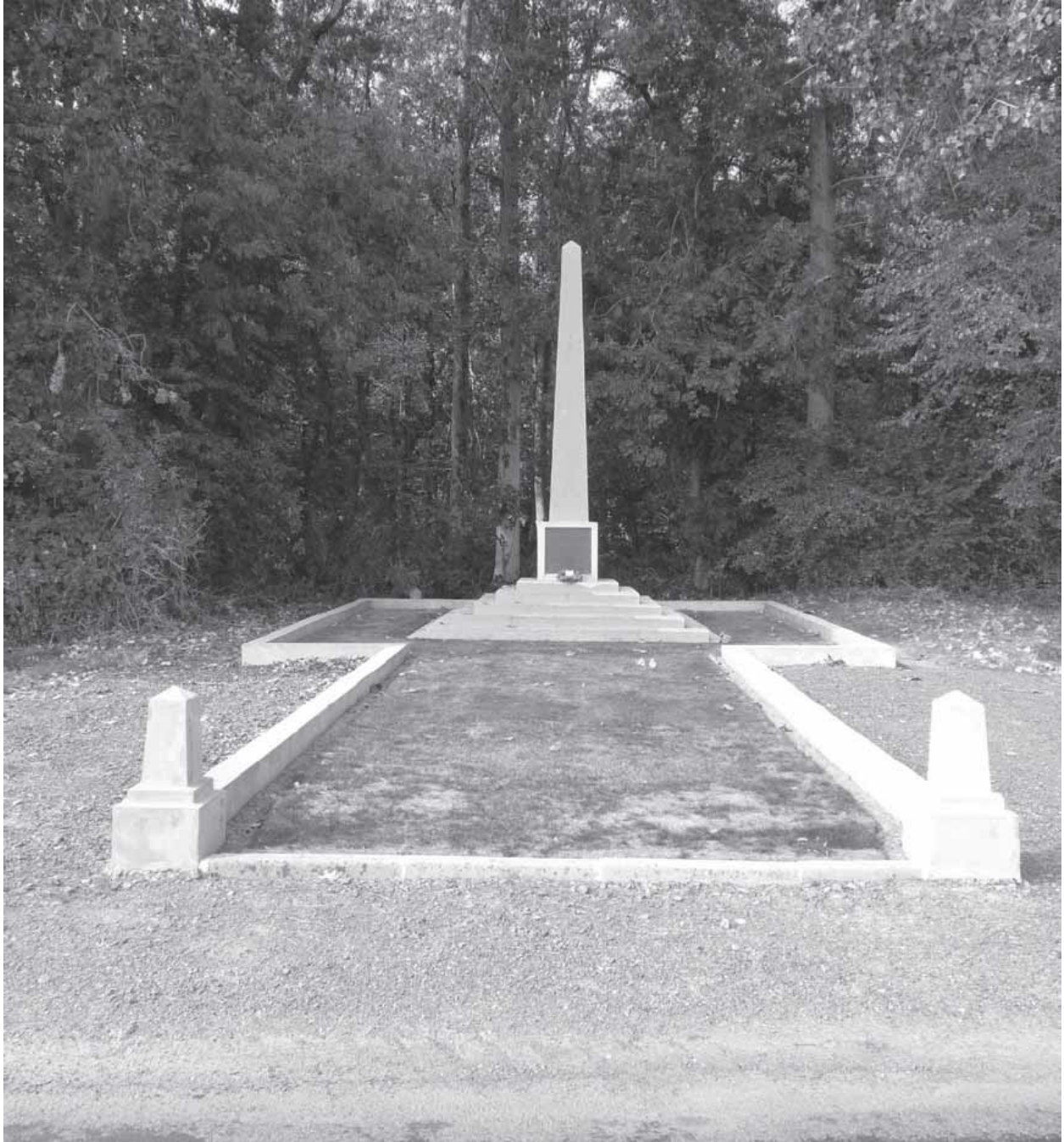
Retrace your steps to the D20 and turn right, continuing for another 600m to a clump of trees on the right opposite a minor road which leads to Bazentin-le-Grand and **Quarry Cemetery**. This is **Crucifix Corner** (not to be confused with the Crucifix Corner at Authuille and that at Villers-Bretonneux) and amongst the trees is a crucifix, difficult to see amongst the vegetation in the summer, which gives it name to the junction and is only a short distance from High Wood. This is where the two regiments of the Secunderabad Division crossed the road and charged towards High Wood along Caterpillar Valley along the line of the original Caterpillar Wood. The first track on the right leads directly to High Wood and is where **Elgin Avenue** and **High Alley** provided the 'up' and 'down' communication trenches to High Wood. The second track on the right heads towards the old windmill at Bazentin which was used by **Private Frank Richards** (see [Routes 1](#) and [2](#)).

The D73 turning to Bazentin is 450m further down the road, on arrival in the village continue along Rue Lamark, past the **Lamark Memorial** on the left, bearing right at the church to reach the grass track on the left leading to **Bazentin-le-Petit Military Cemetery**. This should not be confused with **Bazentin-le-Petit Communal Cemetery and Extension** where Robert Graves was wounded for a second time by a chip of marble and is described in **Route 1**. The road leading down to this cemetery – Rue Neve – is almost opposite the church. From Bazentin-le-Petit Military Cemetery continue to the junction, passing the **Nine Brave Men Memorial** on the right, turning right towards High Wood. About 300m along the road is a crucifix, standing on the right side of the road almost hidden by vegetation. The crucifix commemorates **Captain Houston Wallace**, 10/Worcesters, who was killed on 22 July 1916.

Retrace your steps back to the D20 and turn right for 400m until you see a CWGC signpost for **Flatiron Copse Cemetery**. Turn left here, passing Sabot Copse on your left, and travel downhill along a minor road until you see the cemetery on your right. There is a good metalled track down to the cemetery which soon degrades into a passable track down to the **38th Division Welsh Memorial**, however, the track is perfectly adequate for cars. Both Flatiron Copse Cemetery and the Welsh Memorial are described in **Route 1**. Passing

the Welsh Memorial, take the metalled road on the left at the fork, which rises to enable you to see the church spire of Mametz and **Dantzig Alley Cemetery** on the skyline. The road now descends to pass **Queen's Nullah** on the left and, in 160m, to the fork in the road which hosts one of the only CWGC signposts in Welsh on the Western Front. Bear left here towards Mametz, taking due care of any traffic coming from the right. Once in the village turn left at the village war memorial onto the junction with the D64 signposted Dantzig Alley Cemetery and Montauban. However, if you wish to visit Mametz church, turn right for 190m. Inside there is a rather splendid marble plaque dedicated to the 38th (Welsh) Division with inscriptions in Welsh, French and English. Mametz was adopted by Llandudno after the war.

Retrace your steps and continue past Dantzig Alley Cemetery. You are now travelling along the road described in our *Visitor's Guide to The First Day of the Somme*. Some 600m past Montauban, passing the disturbed ground of the **Briqueterie**, you will come to a crossroads with the D197 by Bernafay Wood. Go straight across following the D64 to Guillemont and Colombes stopping after 80m where you will see a Gîte de France signpost. If you walk 150m up the track you will come to the former station building, now Bernafay Bed and Breakfast, that serviced the railway track running from Carnoy, through Bernafay and Trônes Woods on its way to Guillemont Station.



The 18th (Eastern) Division Memorial at Trônes Wood.

Bernafay Wood is now on your left and after the gap you will see Trônes Wood. As the road bends round to the left the **18th (Eastern) Division Memorial** comes into view on the left. On 14 July the 54 Brigade took over the assault, finally capturing the wood, the story of which is described in **Route 4**. Parking by the memorial is difficult and it may be more practical to

park further down the road and walk back. The sharp-eyed amongst you will notice the memorial is almost identical to that at the **Thiepval Memorial** and at **Clapham Junction** on the Menin road at Ypres. Continue for 700m to **Guillemont Road Cemetery** on the right and park. On leaving the cemetery continue along the road towards Guillemont. It was in the fields to the right that **Captain Noel Chavasse**, medical officer of the 1/10 King's Liverpool Regiment, won his first Victoria Cross on 9 August 1916. As you pass the first track on the left note that it will eventually lead to the **Second Lieutenant George Marsden-Smedley** Memorial, which we look at in detail in **Route 4**.



Captain Noel Chavasse VC.

Once in Guillemont park near to the Catholic church in the nearby **Rue Ernst Jünger**. The village stands on the highest point on the ridge and was captured and cleared on 3 September 1916, lost in March 1918, during the German advance, but retaken on 29 August by the 18th and 38th (Welsh) Divisions. **Guillemont** was an important point in the German defences at the beginning of the Battle of the Somme and was initially taken by the 2/Royal Scots Fusiliers on 30 July before the battalion was obliged to fall back. Entered for a short time by the 55th (West Lancashire) Division on 8 August, it was finally taken and cleared by the 20th (Light) Division and a brigade of the 16th (Irish) division. Having visited the church with the memorial to the **16th (Irish) Division** outside, continue downhill towards Longueval passing the grain silo, which was the former site of **Guillemont Station**, and the green factory complex which was the site of **Waterlot Farm** ([see Route 4](#)). As we near Delville Wood we can see the South African Memorial and **Delville Wood Cemetery** on the right with the Communal Cemetery almost at the junction of the D20 and Route de Ginchy. At the junction we pass the **Footballers' Battalions Memorial** on the right. Unveiled in October 2010, it is dedicated to the officers and men of the 17 and 23/Middlesex Regiment.



The New Zealand Memorial.

Bear left at the junction into Longueval, and then right at the prominent Piper's Memorial. We are now going to visit the tall obelisk of the **New Zealand Memorial**, signposted New Zealand Forces Memorial, which is at the far end of the road you are now on. Ignore the turning to Flers on the right and continue uphill to the monument. The monument and the actions around it are described in **Route 2**. On your way back from the memorial pause at

the calvary on the left, it was in the fields to the left of the calvary that **Major 'Billy' Congreve** was killed on 20 July 1916. Retrace your steps back to the Flers junction turning sharp left onto the D197. This battle and the route we are about to follow is well covered in **Route 5**. Continue along the D197, passing the last resting place of Tank D17 at **Rideau de Filoires** on the right. This is the route that **Second Lieutenant Legge** in D6 and **Lieutenant Hastie** in D17 took to Flers. As you enter Flers note the memorial on the right commemorating the French 17th and 18th Infantry Regiments, which fought here in 1914. Flers was captured on 15 September in the Battle of Flers-Courcelette, when it was entered by the New Zealand and 41st Divisions behind tanks, the innovative new weapons that were used here for the first time. The village was lost during the German advance of March 1918 and retaken at the end of the following August by the 10/West Yorks and the 6/Dorsets of the 17th Division. Once in Flers follow the road past the various memorials and the church to reach the 41st Division Memorial on the green. From here **Bulls Road Cemetery** is another 500m along the Rue de Gueudecourt.

Retrace your steps through Flers to the French memorial and turn left – signposted Ginchy – by the calvary. As the road rises Delville Wood comes into view and straight ahead is the village of Ginchy. Just by the electricity pylons you will pass the small copse on the left containing the memorial cross to **Sergent Georges Lejoindre** and **Sergent Georges Pfister**. As you cross under the pylons the road becomes sunken and begins to descend towards Ginchy Communal Cemetery, this is the approximate position that **Lieutenant Colonel John Campell**, commanding 3/Coldstreams, won the so-called 'Tally-Ho Victoria Cross'.

Continue past the Communal Cemetery into Ginchy, past the war memorial, and stop outside the church. Ginchy was initially taken on 3 September 1916 by the 7th Division and was lost again on the same day, being finally captured by the 16th (Irish) Division on 9 September. Inside the church, to the right of the altar, is a private memorial to 27-year-old **Major Cedric Charles Dickens**, the grandson of the famous Victorian author **Charles Dickens**. He was killed leading his men into battle near Bouleaux Wood on 9 September 1916 whilst serving with the 1/13th Battalion London

Regiment. To the left of the altar is another plaque, commemorating 19-year-old **Lieutenant Charles Irwin** of the 7/Royal Irish Rifles who died of wounds received in the attack on Ginchy on 10 September. Irwin is buried in Delville Wood Cemetery and Dickens is remembered on the Thiepval Memorial. A wooden cross and accompanying information board commemorates the spot where Dickens died and those wishing to visit the site will find it signposted just off the D20, west of the **Bois de Bouleaux** where the original peace and serenity is spoilt by the addition of a wind-turbine farm.



The memorial cross erected to commemorate the death of Major Cedric Dickens.

From the church continue to the junction and turn left along Rue de Morval and in 160m turn sharp left along Sentier de Lesboeufs. Now look across to the high ground on the right to see the former site of the **Ginchy Telegraph** by the electricity pylon whilst just off to the right of the road was where Raymond Asquith was killed. Continue to the **Guards' Memorial** on the left and stop. The memorial sits on high ground overlooking the two battlegrounds where the unit fought in 1916 and replaces a wooden cross that stood on the spot during the war. It was unveiled in October 1928 by Major General Geoffrey Feilding, who commanded the Guards Division in 1916.



The Guards' Memorial.

Leave the memorial and continue along the road for 600m to the **Captain Herbert Meakin Memorial**, which stands rather forlornly just inside the fields on the left. Meakin was commissioned in 1914 into the 3/Coldstream Guards and attached to 1/Guards Trench Mortar Battery. He was killed near

Lesboeufs on 25 September 1916 and originally buried under a wooden cross. Unfortunately, the exact whereabouts of his grave was lost and the memorial you see today was erected at the approximate position of the grave. The iron railings that once surrounded the memorial were damaged and removed in the 1990s and the inscription on the memorial is all but erased. There is currently a campaign to have the memorial renovated to its former glory. A future British Prime Minister, **Lieutenant Harold Macmillan**, serving with the 2/Grenadier Guards, was severely wounded on 15 September whilst on the Lesboeufs road. Carried back to Ginchy by stretcher-bearers, he was attended to in an advanced dressing station and spent the rest of the war in a military hospital unable to walk, and suffered pain and partial immobility for the rest of his life.



The Captain Herbert Meakin Memorial.



Captain Herbert Meakin.

From here it is 350m to the **Guards' Cemetery** where there is good parking. At the time of the Armistice, the cemetery consisted of only forty graves (now Plot I), mainly officers and men of the 2/Grenadier Guards who died on 25 September 1916, but it was increased in size when graves were brought in from the battlefields and small cemeteries round Lesboeufs. There are now 3,137 casualties buried or commemorated in this cemetery of which 1,644 are unidentified and there are special memorials to 83 soldiers known or believed to be buried amongst them. In 1962, the isolated grave at

Lesboeufs of three officers of the 2/Coldstream Guards, killed in action on the 26 September and buried near Lesboeufs, was opened. However, as no remains were found, possibly due to an incorrect marker, these three officers, one of whom was **Major Harry Verelst**, were commemorated by Special Memorial E in this cemetery. Amongst those killed on 25 September was 22-year-old **Lieutenant Hon. William Alastair Damer Parnell** (1.C.1), of No. 4 Company, 2/Grenadier Guards, and 25-year-old Captain Alfred Cuninghame, who was one of the original Grenadier Guards officers sent out in 1914 on the outbreak of war. Cuninghame is buried at Fricourt. **Private Leonard Hayward** (13.K.8) was killed, aged 22, on 15 September at Ginchy serving with the 2/Grenadier Guards, before enlistment he was a chartered accountant. Another Guardsman from the 2nd Battalion killed on 25 September was 25-year-old **Private Percival Harding** (2.A.9), a former civil servant in the Office of Woods, Forest and Land Revenues. **Sergeant John Donnelly** (6.F.7) was killed with 64 Brigade at Gueudecourt on 25 September and won a DCM during the Boer War. Re-enlisting in 1914, he was posted to the 1/East Yorkshires (attached to 6/Dorsetshire Regiment) and was awarded the Military Medal shortly afterwards. He was 44 years old when he was killed. **Second Lieutenant Thomas Hervey** (4.F.2), 2/KRRC, was another casualty of 15 September and was a Hampshire vicar's son in the colonial service. The inscription on the base of his headstone reads: 'In far Fiji he heard his country's call and came and died'.



The Guards' Cemetery, Lesboeufs.

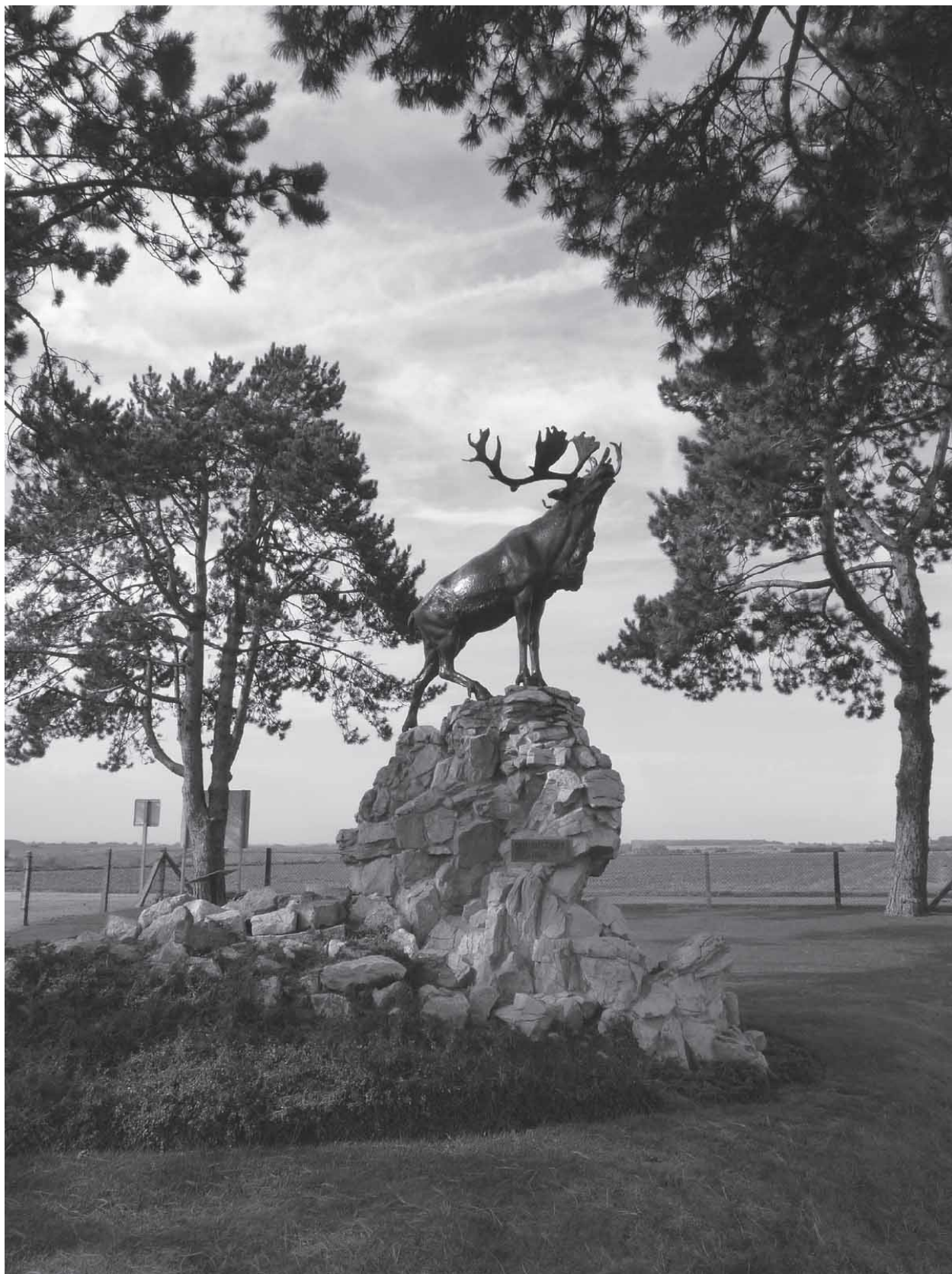
Leave the cemetery and continue into Lesboeufs. It was on the high ground just before the village that **Captain Sir Ian Colquhoun**, 1/Scots Guards, and his band of men were driven back during the attack of 15 September 1916 (see [Route 4](#)). You are now heading towards the church and the French war memorial. Lesboeufs was attacked by the Guards Division on 15 September 1916 and captured by them on the 25th. It was lost on 24 March 1918 during the German offensive when the village was the scene of a notable stand by the 63/Machine Gun Battalion. Lesboeufs was recaptured on 29 August 1918 by the 10/South Wales Borderers. **Captain Geoffrey Fildes**, 2/Coldstream Guards, was part of the successful attack on 25 September:

Sharp on Zero to the minute, the din overhead swelled to an unparalleled volume. The air howled like a storm and presently the ground beneath and beside me commenced to beat and tremble. A new note joined into this tempest of war; the dirge I remembered so well at Festubert – machine gun bullets! I wanted to get up and cheer for

England. I was trembling with excitement ... In scattered irregular line we marched onwards, still keeping a vigilant look out for stragglers or any who would still desire to fight. The line of trees on the further edge of the village came into view, their tops wreathed by our shrapnel bursts.

Fildes was the son of the artist Sir Luke Fildes and after enlisting on the outbreak of war he was commissioned into the Coldstream Guards in 1915.

Passing the church on the left, follow the main road round a left-hand bend and the D74 will now take you to Gueudecourt. At the crossroads with the D574 in Gueudecourt turn right – signposted Beaulencourt – along the Rue du Caribou. You will soon see the Newfoundland Caribou on the skyline marked by a clump of trees on the right where there is a large car park. The memorial stands in an enclosure above a section of preserved trench – now thought to be the remnants of **Mild Trench** – at the furthestmost point of the British advance in 1916, and became the front line held during the winter of 1916–17. If you stand and look across the road, the Butte de Warlencourt on the far side of the D929 can just be made out in clear weather. There are five Caribou monuments in France and Belgium commemorating the Newfoundland Regiment's accomplishments, contributions and sacrifices: the **Beaumont-Hamel Newfoundland Memorial** is described in our companion guide *The First Day of the Somme* and the Caribou Monument at **Monchy-le-Preux** is described in *Arras South*. The remaining monuments are at **Masnières**, near Cambrai, and **Courtrai**.



The Newfoundland Caribou at Gueudecourt.

Retrace your steps back along the D574 to the crossroads in Gueudecourt and turn right onto the D74, signposted Le Sars. Continue for 750m, past the Communal Cemetery, to the **AIF Burial Ground**, which you will see signposted down Grass Lane on the left. There is ample parking outside. The cemetery was begun by Australian medical units. The original graves are in Plot I, Rows A and B and it was very greatly enlarged after the Armistice when almost 4,000 Commonwealth and French graves were brought in from the battlefields of the Somme, and later from a wider area. There are now 3,475 servicemen buried or commemorated in this cemetery, 2,263 of the burials, nearly two-thirds, are unidentified and there are special memorials to twenty-three casualties known or believed to be buried amongst them. Other special memorials record the names of three casualties buried in a cemetery at Flers, whose graves could not be found. The cemetery also contains 170 French and 3 German war graves. There is one Victoria Cross recipient here, 26-year-old **Sergeant Harold Jackson** (XV.A.21/31), of C Company, 7/East Yorkshire Regiment. Although killed at Thiepval on 24 August 1918, his body was removed to this cemetery in 1927 where his grave is in the front row of Plot XV, against the front wall. With him are 24-year-old **CSM Enos England**, a highly decorated veteran of the 6/Dorsetshires, who was killed on 24 August 1918 and **Private Cyril Hant**, another decorated soldier who was killed on 25 August 1918 serving with the 10/ West Yorkshires. All three men were killed at Thiepval during the attack by the 17th Division. One of the most senior officers buried here is **Lieutenant Colonel Charles Duncombe, Earl of Feversham** (III.L.29), who was commanding the 21/KRRC when he was killed on 15 September. At the time of his death, he was a member of the House of Lords, having succeeded his grandfather as second Earl of Feversham in January 1915. Before this, he had spent almost a decade in the Commons as Conservative MP for Thirsk and Malton. Originally buried south of the cemetery in a private grave, his remains were brought into the cemetery in 1945. There is a Memorial Cross dedicated to him outside the Church of St Mary's, Rievaulx. Of the 275 identified Australians buried here, two of these men are 18-year-old **Private Henry Ashford** (IV.L.25), from Scone, NSW, who was killed on 23 November 1916 serving with the 59/Battalion and 22-year-old **Second Lieutenant Alfred Newland** (X.1.1),

of the 6/Machine Gun Company, who was killed by a shell at **Factory Corner**, which you can see about 300m away from the rear wall of the cemetery, on 8 November 1916. Commissioned in the field some five weeks before his death, he came from Pomborneit, Victoria. Another Australian killed at Factory Corner was 36-year-old **Private Peter Jensen** (I.K.15), 31/Battalion. His death on 27 October 1916 made a widow of his wife Emily who lived in Five Dock, NSW.



The AIF Burial Ground at Grass Lane.



Lieutenant Colonel Charles Duncombe, Earl of Feversham.

Leave the cemetery and return to the D74, turning left to continue over the crossroads – **Factory Corner** – towards Le Sars. As you descend the hill you will see **Eaucourt l'Abbaye** on the left and in the distance the church at Le Sars. At the crossroads turn left to visit the farm complex at Eaucourt l'Abbaye. On your return to the crossroads glance over to the track on the left which is part of **Route 7**. Go straight across at the crossroads to Ligny-Tilloy,

which was behind the German line in 1916. Follow the minor road into the village turning left at the road junction with the D10E1, which will take you to another junction with the D929. Turn left and continue for 400m to **Warlencourt British Cemetery** on the left. Park outside. Take care here as the road is often quite busy. Leave the cemetery and continue for 650m to a turning on the left, leading to the **Butte de Warlencourt**. Bear left and head uphill to the car park on the minor road. This is the mound that **CQMS George Harbottle**, 6/Northumberland Fusiliers, described as ‘a pit heap all grown over with grass’ which made ‘life a misery for both friend and foe’. Today it is an excellent place to have your lunch.



The Butte de Warlencourt.

Leave the Butte de Warlencourt and return to the main road and turn left towards **Le Sars** which lies just inside the furthest limits of the British advance, just 5 miles from where the battle began at La Boisselle in July 1916. Continue through Le Sars until you reach the last building in the village on the left, turn left here and drive for approximately 80m up a small track and park. The memorial you are going to see is behind the farm buildings on the left on the other side of a gate. Dedicated to the fallen of RIR 111, the

memorial is pictured in the *Michelin Guide to the Somme* which describes the former German cemetery that once accompanied the memorial stone. Turn around at the junction of track and return to the D929 turning left towards the Canadian Memorial, passing *Destemont Farm* on the right. This road will take you straight to Pozières where a welcome end-of-tour drink can be bought in Tommy's Cafe.



The memorial stone to the fallen of RIR 111.

Appendix 1

THE TIMETABLE OF ATTACK

July	
1–13	Battle of Albert
1	Capture of Montauban
1	Capture of Mametz
2	Capture of Fricourt
2–4	Capture of La Boisselle
3	Capture of Bernafay Wood
7–11	Capture of Mametz Wood
10	Capture of Contalmaison
7–13	Fighting in Trônes Wood
14–17	Battle of Bazentin Ridge
14	Capture of Trônes Wood
14–18 and 29	Capture of Longueval
15 July–3 Sept.	Battle of Delville Wood
17	Capture of Ovillers
20–30	Attacks on High Wood
23 July–13 Sept.	Battle of Pozières Ridge
27–8	Capture of Delville Wood
August	
6 Aug.–3 Sept.	Fighting for Mouquet Farm

8–9	Attack on Waterlot Farm
September	
3–6	Battle of Guillemont
9	Battle of Ginchy
14	Capture of the Wonder Work
15–22	Battle of Flers-Courcelette
15	Capture of Flers
15	Capture of High Wood
15	Capture of Martinpuich
25–8	Battle of Morval
25	Capture of Lesboeufs
26	Battle of Thiepval Ridge
26	Capture of Combles
26	Capture of Gueudecourt
26	Capture of Mouquet Farm
October	
1–18	Battle of Transloy Ridges
1 Oct.–11 Nov.	Battle of Ancre Heights
1–3	Capture of Eaucourt l'Abbaye
7	Capture of Le Sars
7 Oct.–5 Nov.	Attacks on Butte de Warlencourt
9	Capture of Stuff Redoubt
14	Capture of Schwaben Redoubt
21	Capture of Regina Trench
21	Capture of Stuff Trench
November	
13	Capture of Beaumont-Hamel
14	Capture of Beaucourt
13–19	Battle of the Ancre

Appendix 2

WHERE THE VC HOLDERS ARE BURIED

From 5 July 1916, until the Somme offensive finally ground to a halt in November of that year, thirty-eight Victoria crosses were awarded of which nine were posthumous. Below are the men who were awarded posthumous medals together with the two men who were killed in action on a later date. The location of the six men who were awarded posthumous Victoria Crosses from 1–4 July can be found in our companion guide, *The First Day of the Somme*.

Name	Date of Death	Where	Reference
Wilkinson, Lieutenant Thomas <i>7/Loyal North Lincs</i>	5 July	La Boisselle	Thiepval Memorial
Congreve, Major William La Touche <i>3/Rifle Brigade</i>	20 July	Longueval	Corbie Communal Cemetery Extension (1.F.35)
Cooke, Private Thomas <i>8/Battalion AIF</i>	25 July	Pozières	Villers- Bretonneux Memorial
Gill, Sergeant Albert <i>1/King's Royal Rifle Corps</i>	27 July	Delville Wood	Delville Wood Cemetery (IV.C.3)
Castleton, Sergeant Claude <i>Australian Machine Gun Corps</i>	28 July	Pozières	Pozières British Cemetery (IV.L.43)

Name	Date of Death	Where	Reference
Miller, Private James <i>7/King's Own Royal Lincs</i>	31 July	Bazentin- le-Petit	Dartmoor Cemetery (1.C.64)
Short, Private William <i>8/Yorkshires</i>	6 August	Munster Alley, Pozières	Contalmaison Chateau Cemetery (II.B.16)
Chavasse, Captain Noel RAMC	9 August	Guillemont	KIA 4 August 1917. Brandhoek New Military Cemetery, Belgium (III.B.15)
Jones, Sergeant David <i>6/Connaught Rangers</i>	3 September	Guillemont	KIA 7 October 1916. Bancourt British Cemetery (V.F.20)
Bradford, Lieutenant Colonel. Roland <i>1/9 DLI</i>	1 October	Eaucourt l'Abbaye	KIA 30 November 1917. Hermies British Cemetery (F.10)
Richardson, Piper James <i>16/Battalion CEF</i>	8 October	Courcelette	Adnac Military Cemetery (III.F.36)

FURTHER READING

There are six **Battleground Europe** titles that cover the area we have described in the guide, and these books are generally good value and cover specific areas in more detail:

Renshaw, M. *Beaucourt*, Pen & Sword, 2003
Cave, N. *Delville Wood*, Pen & Sword, 2014
Pidgeon, T. *Flers and Gueudecourt*, Pen & Sword, 2002
Stedman, M. *Guillemont*, Pen & Sword, 1999
Pedersen, P. *Hamel*, Pen & Sword, 2003
Keech, G. *Pozières*, Pen & Sword, 2011

The fighting around High Wood is covered by Terry Norman's *The Hell They Called High Wood* (Pen & Sword, 2009) and Michael Harrison's *High Wood* (Pen & Sword, 2017).

As you might expect, the battle has generated a huge wealth of literature, some of which has been used in this guide:

Chapman, G. *A Passionate Prodigality*, Nicholson, 1933
Jerrold, D. *The Royal Naval Division*, Oakpast, 2015
Graves, R. *Goodbye To All That*, Cape, 1929
Gladden, N. *The Somme 1916*, William Kimber, 1974
Kelly, D. *39 Months With The Tigers*, Ernest Benn, 1930
McCarthy, C. *The Somme, The Day-by-Day Account*, Brockhampton, 2002
Sassoon, S. *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer*, Faber, 1965

Slack, C. *Grandfather's Adventures in the Great War*, Stockwell, 1977
Richards, F. *Old Soldiers Never Die*, Naval & Military, 2009
Jünger, E. *Storm of Steel*, Penguin, 2007
Wyn Griffith, L. *Up to Mametz and Beyond*, Pen & Sword, 2010

A more general approach can be found in Gary Sheffield's *Somme* and Malcolm Brown's *IWM Book of the Somme* along with Gerald Gliddon's *Somme 1916*. The authors can also recommend Martin Middlebrook's *Guide to the Somme Battlefields* which covers the area from Cr cy to the end of the Second World War, and the recently updated *Walking the Somme* by Paul Reed.