

The christmas truce



1. The first Christmas Truce occurred on Christmas Eve or Christmas day in 1914 during World War 1, along the Western Front (Ypres). About 100. 000 British and German troops were involved. They stopped fighting for one day to celebrate Christmas, some even stopped until New Year's Day. Both sides sang christmas carols of their own and they exchanged small gifts like alcohol on No Man's Land. There was a second one on Christmas Eve in 1915 between French and German troops on the Western Front. They made peace, ceased hostilities, visited each other trough trench tunnels ... for one day.

2. The army generals were irritated when they heard what was happening, and issued strict orders forbidding friendly communication with the opposing troops. In the following years of the war, artillery bombardments were ordered on Christmas Eve to try to ensure that there were no further lulls in the combat. Troops were also rotated through various sectors of the front to prevent them from becoming overly familiar with the enemy.

3. - Not everybody wanted the Christmas Truce - On both sides the soldiers wrote about lulls in the fighting. - 2/3 of the soldiers was involved in the Christmas Truce

In the museum you saw sculptures of soldiers of the opposite side shaking their hands, but there was a glass wall between them. Also one of soldiers giving present ...

The Battle of Passchendaele

1. It was one of the major battles of the First World War, during July and November 1917. The Entente troops under British command attacked the

German army to get the control of Passchendaele, near Ypres. The British Army wanted to achieve a breakthrough of the German defences. They launched several attacks, but they never managed to break through the German lines. This battle lasted until the Canadian Corps took Passchendaele in November 1917. The capturing of German territory by the Allies was at a cost of 140. 000 casualties. Afterwards the Germans recaptured their lost territory.

2. - It was the strip of ground between the frontline trenches of the opposing armies. - There were holes of shells filled with rainwater where soldiers drowned in. - The soldiers lay there waiting for a signal to attack

- The Battles of Passchendaele is the Third Battle.

In the museum you saw a model of the battle field of Passchendaele with the holes filled with water and horses and soldiers that drowned in it.

Poison Gas in World War 1

1. - Tear gas: stimulates the corneal nerves in the eyes to cause tearing, pain, and even blindness. - Mustard gas: people exposed to mustard gas rarely suffer immediate symptoms, but within 24 hours of exposure to mustard gas, victims experience intense itching and skin irritation, which gradually turns into large blisters filled with yellow fluid wherever the mustard gas contacted the skin. It burns and your organs melt and turn into liquid that comes out of your mouth. - phosgene: It is a very toxic gas that causes death by pulmonary oedema/ - chlorine: Chlorine is a toxic gas that irritates the respiratory system.

2. The soldiers had to urinate on a cloth and hold it over their mouth and nose against chlorine. To protect themselves against tear gas, they used gas goggles. Afterwards, the gas helmet was introduced. Several versions, every time better than the last one, were invented out of different matters.

Then the box respirator was invented, a two-piece design: a mouthpiece connected via a hose to a box filter. The box filter contained granules of chemicals that neutralised the gas, delivering clean air to the wearer.

4. -Germans would keep their advance in chemical weapons during the rest of the war. -Even if the wind blew in the wrong direction (they were at the wrong side of the front). -Many of the soldiers suffered from respiratory disorders and anxiety for the rest of their lives. - There were also gas masks for animals (dogs, horses ...)

In the museum you saw different kinds of gas masks.

Personal stories

Henry Farr: Henry Farr joined the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) in 1914. He was sent to the front in France, but there, he collapsed, shaking, and was sent to the hospital for treatment. He returned to the battlefield and participated in the Somme Offensive. In mid-September 1916, however, Farr refused to go ahead into the trenches with the rest of his squadron; after being dragged forward, struggling, he broke away and ran back. He was given a death sentence for cowardice, which was carried out on October 16.