

Flanders Fields 1917 and God's Son



**Flanders
Poppy**

**Harry Patch
1898-2009**

***“Narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life”* Matthew 7:14**

Flanders Fields and God's Son

What is termed Flanders Fields¹ is part of the northwest corner of Belgium that borders on the North Sea. It is a roughly semi-circular area of gradually rising ground of 5-6 miles radius east of the town of Ypres, the main town in the area. Flanders was fought over for most of WW1 but it is the major battle fought between July and November 1917 that is best known. That battle is called Passchendaele, named after a village on the easternmost edge of Flanders Fields and on the crest of the rising ground called Passchendaele Ridge. Passchendaele was the final objective of the battle and it was captured in early November 1917. Each yard of ground gained during the battle cost Britain and her Allies 30 men.

Just as the Flanders poppy is a reminder of that battle and of the Great War, it should be noted that God's Son, our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, endured experiences that the Passchendaele battle grimly illustrates. That should always be part of our Remembrance.

Last Survivor

Mr Harry Patch was Britain's last surviving WW1 trench veteran². The book *The Last Fighting Tommy* is his biography. He died in 2009 aged 111. He served in Flanders Fields from June to September 1917 in the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry³. Mr Patch said that he never forgot his three comrades-in-arms who were killed on September 22nd 1917, in the same shell burst by which he was wounded and knocked out of the war. Mr Patch said therefore that September 22nd was his Remembrance Day. The Lord's words ***“in remembrance of me”*** occur 3 times in scripture; Luke 22:19, 1 Corinthians 11:24, 25 with respect to *His* wounds *and* death. Each and every day should be a remembrance of that.

“Known unto God” Acts 15:18, Philippians 4:6

Because they were unidentified, many men who died in WW1 are only remembered by their headstone that reads: *A Soldier of the Great War, Known Unto God*. The words *Known Unto God* are from a 1611 Authorised King James Holy Bible. That Book shows that Jesus was never unidentified but always **“known unto God.”** **“As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father”** John 10:15. Be sure the Father knoweth you.

A Terrible Enemy

Remember that the Lord faced a terrible enemy. The Flanders battle showed just how terrible an enemy can be. At dawn on October 9th 1917⁴, about 90 Australians under the command of 22 year-old Lieutenant Frank Scott raided German positions in a strongly-defended sector called Celtic Wood. Lieutenant Scott and his men were severely shelled, outnumbered, cut off from support, dogged by knee-deep mud and engaged in fierce hand-to-hand fighting. A third of the Australians were killed including Lieutenant Scott. The rest got back to Australian lines but most of them were wounded. They’d been through a horrific ordeal, face-to-face with a terrible enemy on all sides. So it was with the Lord. **“The assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet...thou hast brought me into the dust of death”** Psalm 22:15-16. Note: **“Thou”** is God because Jesus said **“not my will but thine, be done”** Luke 22:42 for you and I. Never forget that.

Personal Recollections and God’s Promise

Like Harry Patch, other Flanders survivors^{5, 6} endured things like those Jesus went through. Corporal Joseph Pincombe, *on a place like hell:*

“Everywhere, as far as you could see, there were spurts of earth from shells bursting ...going off like geysers shooting up in the air. As far as you could see...there was nothing but mud, mud, mud for miles and just a few stumps of trees here and there and all hell let loose around you.” The Lord went to hell for you and I. **“Out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice”** Jonah 2:2 but **“when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared”** Hebrews 5:7, now **“he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him”** Hebrews 7:25. Never forget that.

Private Richard Mercer, *on the means of movement, vital but exposed, see figure:*

“We used to walk along these wooden duckboards...The Germans would concentrate on these things [but] You just did not want to go off the duckboards.” So true. **“Narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life”** Matthew 7:14 but **“the fiery darts of the wicked”** Ephesians 6:16 will fall yet Jesus said **“I am the way”** John 14:6 so don’t stray off the way.

Private Reginald Le Brun, *a Canadian machine gunner, on being alone:*

“They pushed the machine guns right out in front. There was nothing between us and the Germans across the swamp. Three times during the night they shelled us heavily...By morning, of our team of six, only my buddy Private Tombes and I were left. Then came the burst that got Tombes...It was a terrible feeling to be the only one left.” Jesus knew that. **“And they all forsook him, and fled”** Mark 14:50. Yet the Lord said **“I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee”** Hebrews 13:5. **That promise is the best part of remembrance.**

References

¹ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Passchendaele, Purnell’s History of the First World War, Vol. 6, p 2358

² www.thisisbristol.co.uk/Thousands-line-streets-Harry-Patch-funeral/story-11247003-detail/story.html#axzz2RbOXmHxg, www.landgirl1980.co.uk/2011/04/last-fighting-tommy-by-harry-patch.html

³ news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/somerset/6760973.stm

⁴ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mystery_of_Celtic_Wood, 1914-1918.invisionzone.com/forums/index.php?showtopic=186710

⁵ *They Called It Passchendaele* by Lyn MacDonald, Michael Joseph, 1978, pp 139, 228-229

⁶ www.journal.forces.gc.ca/vo9/no2/09-leach-eng.asp