



DEBATE PACK

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Commemoration of Passchendaele, the third battle of Ypres

General Debate
Main Chamber
Thursday 13 July 2017

The proceedings of this debate can viewed on Parliamentlive.tv

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1. Background

Extract from **They called it Passchendaele: Government unveils plans to mark centenary of The Third Battle of Ypres**

Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport
3 January 2017

The Centenary of Passchendaele, the Third Battle of Ypres is a key part of the UK Government's four year programme to commemorate the First World War. The Government will be working closely with its delivery partner, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, as well as local partners in Belgium, such as the city of Ypres, the community of Zonnebeke, Passendale and the Westtoer Province of West-Flanders to commemorate the centenary of the First World War in the Flanders Fields region.

Fighting commenced on the Ypres Salient between British and German forces in 1914, and continued throughout the war. The Battle was the first major British offensive on the Ypres Salient. The ferocity and horror of the battle is encapsulated in Siegfried Sassoon's famous line "I died in hell - They called it Passchendaele"

1. Memorial Tablet by Siegfried Sassoon (Aftermath Poem)

Squire nagged and bullied till I went to fight.
(Under Lord Derby's Scheme). I died in hell—
(They called it Passchendaele). My wound was slight,
And I was hobbling back; and then a shell
Burst slick upon the duck-boards: so I fell
Into the bottomless mud, and lost the light.

At sermon-time, while Squire is in his pew,
He gives my gilded name a thoughtful stare:
For, though low down upon the list, I'm there;
'In proud and glorious memory' ... that's my due.
Two bleeding years I fought in France, for Squire:
I suffered anguish that he's never guessed.
Once I came home on leave: and then went west...
What greater glory could a man desire?

2. Press articles

The following is a selection of press and media articles relevant to this debate.

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Daily Telegraph

Memorial pins made with the mud of Passchendaele where thousands died

6 May 2017

Patrick Sawyer

Daily Telegraph

'I died in hell (They called it Passchendaele)': A poignant voyage through the battlefields of Flanders

4 April 2017

David Atkinson

The Guardian

Passchendaele battle centenary events to be held in Belgium

3 January 2017

BBC News

Passchendaele: WW1 battle centenary commemorated

3 January 2017

BBC History

Battle of Passchendaele: 31 July - 6 November 1917

3. Gov.uk

Defence Business Services to display Battle of Passchendaele records at this year's Who Do You Think You Are? Live event

Ministry of Defence
31 March 2017

Passchendaele descendants to commemorate ancestors at the Front

Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport
15 March 2017

They called it Passchendaele: Government unveils plans to mark centenary of The Third Battle of Ypres

Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport
3 January 2017

Speech at Imperial War Museum on First World War centenary plans

Cabinet Office and Prime Minister's Office, 10 Downing Street
11 October 2012

4. PQs

World War I: Commonwealth

31 Jan 2017 | HL4843

Asked by: Lord Black of Brentwood

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to commemorate the role played by Commonwealth countries during the First World War.

Answering member: Lord Ashton of Hyde | Department for Culture, Media and Sport

All Government's First World War Centenary events reflect the enormous contribution of those from across the Commonwealth. This significant contribution is reflected through cultural and military content such as readings and musical performances. In addition to this the first event of the centenary programme at Glasgow Cathedral on 4 August 2014 specifically focused on the commonwealth contribution to the war.

We also invite representatives from the participant nations to our events and will continue to do so when we commemorate the Centenary of Passchendaele – The Third Battle of Ypres on 30/31 July this year and Armistice in November 2018.

World War I: Anniversaries

27 Oct 2015 | 12795

Asked by: Dan Jarvis

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what progress his Department has made on commemorations for the First World War.

Answering member: Tracey Crouch | Department for Culture, Media and Sport

Since the Prime Minister set out plans for the Centenary in October 2012 (a transcript of the Prime Minister's speech can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/speech-at-imperial-war-museum-on-first-world-war-centenary-plans>) the Government has delivered two highly successful commemorative events for the start of the First World War and the Battle of Gallipoli. In 2016 commemorative events will be held for the Battle of Jutland in May and the Somme in July 2016. In 2017 the battle of Passchendaele will be commemorated followed by the Armistice in 2018.

Other commemorations such as the UK Tour of the "poppies" and the national restoration of War memorials also continue, more details can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/first-world-war-centenary>

World War I: Anniversaries
01 Oct 2015 | 8381

Asked by: David Mackintosh

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what further steps his Department is taking to commemorate the First World War centenary leading up to 2018.

Answering member: Tracey Crouch | Department for Culture, Media and Sport

A national commemorative event will be held on 31 May 2016 to mark the Battle of Jutland and the wider war at sea.

There will be a national commemorative event to mark the centenary of the Battle of the Somme at the Thiepval Memorial in Northern France on 1 July 2016. The Government is working with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission on a £1.6m refurbishment of the Monument to ensure that it endures for future generations and on a lighting installation that will see the Monument lit from 1 July 2016. In addition we are working with partners to encourage Somme commemorative activity across the UK.

There will also be national events to commemorate the Third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele) in 2017 and the end of the conflict in 2018.

In addition Government will continue with established programmes for the conservation, repair and protection of War Memorials; the Cathedral Repairs Fund; Schools Battlefield Tours; and the laying of commemorative paving stones and the restoration of graves of Victoria Cross recipients buried in the UK.

The poppies sculptures 'Wave' and 'Weeping Window' will go to locations throughout the UK starting with the Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Woodhorn Museum and Northumberland Archives, and St George's Hall, Liverpool.

There will be a series of school debates beginning next year to look at the causes, conduct and consequences of the War.

We encourage local communities to get involved in commemorating First World War events. Heritage Lottery Fund has recently made available an extra £4m for communities to explore, conserve and share local heritage of the First World War to ensure that these projects can continue throughout the centenary period.

5. Further reading

Memorial Museum Passchendaele 1917
[Passchendaele](#)

Commonwealth War Graves Commission
[Commemorations at CWGC Tyne Cot Cemetery for the Centenary of Passchendaele -- The Third Battle of Ypres](#)

Royal British Legion
[Passchendaele 100](#)

The Long, Long Trail
[The Battles of Ypres, 1917 \(Third Ypres\)](#)

War Poets Association
[Siegfried Sassoon \(1886 – 1967\)](#)

[All-Party Parliamentary Group on War Heritage](#)

Books available from the House of Commons Library

Robin Prior, *Passchendaele: the untold story*, 1996

Lyn MacDonald, *They called it Passchendaele: the story of the battle of Ypres and of the men who fought in it*, 1993

John Terraine, *Road to Passchendaele: the Flanders offensive of 1917: a study in inevitability*, 1977

John Giles, *Ypres salient*, 1970

James E Edmonds, *Military operations: France and Belgium. 1917*, 1948

Beatrix Brice, *Battle book of Ypres*, 1927

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