

**Battlefields Trip
'Ypres' and 'The Somme'**

Name: _____

My Name is:

My Link Teacher / Anglia guide

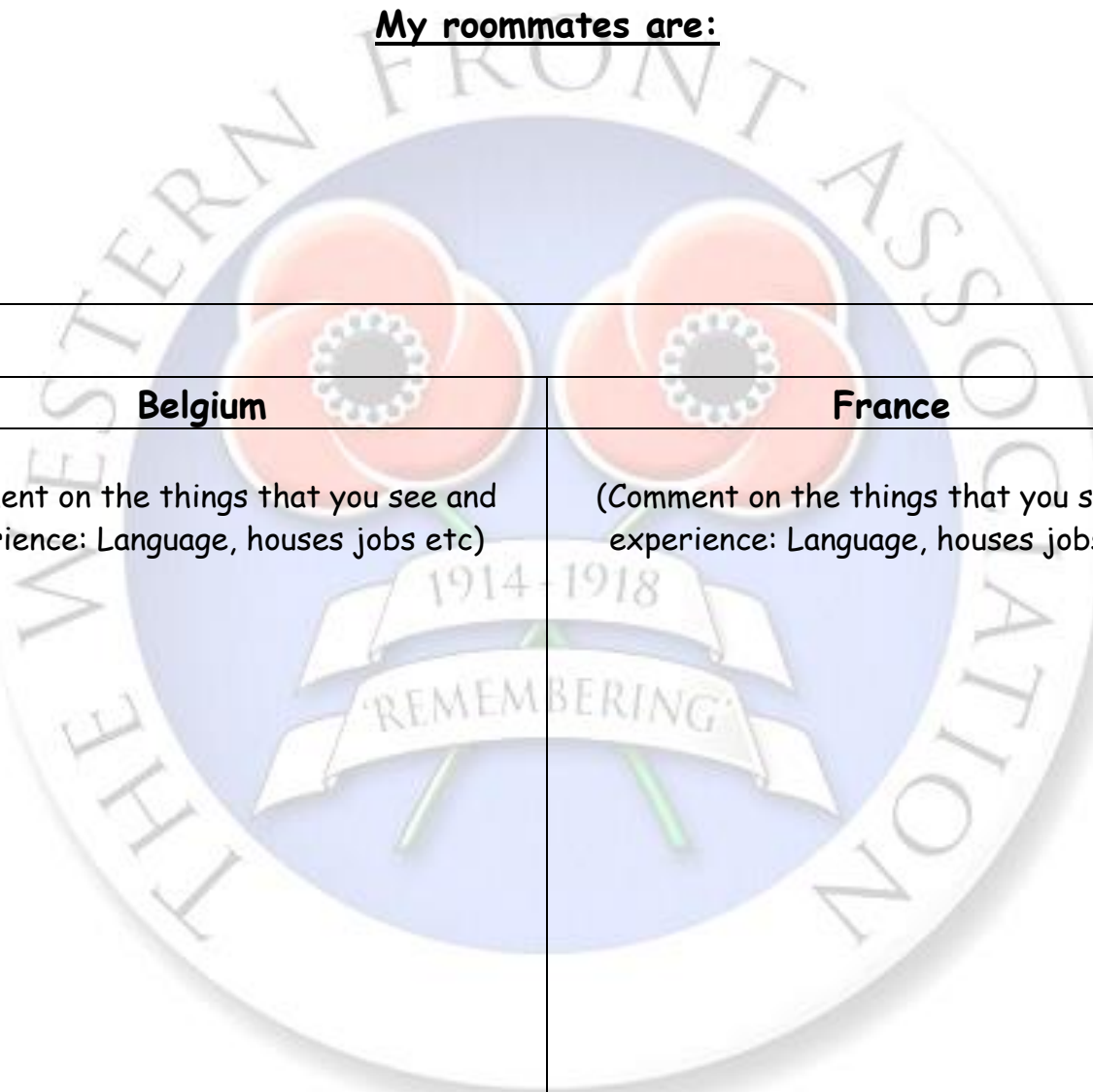
My roommates are:

Belgium

(Comment on the things that you see and experience: Language, houses jobs etc)

France

(Comment on the things that you see and experience: Language, houses jobs etc)

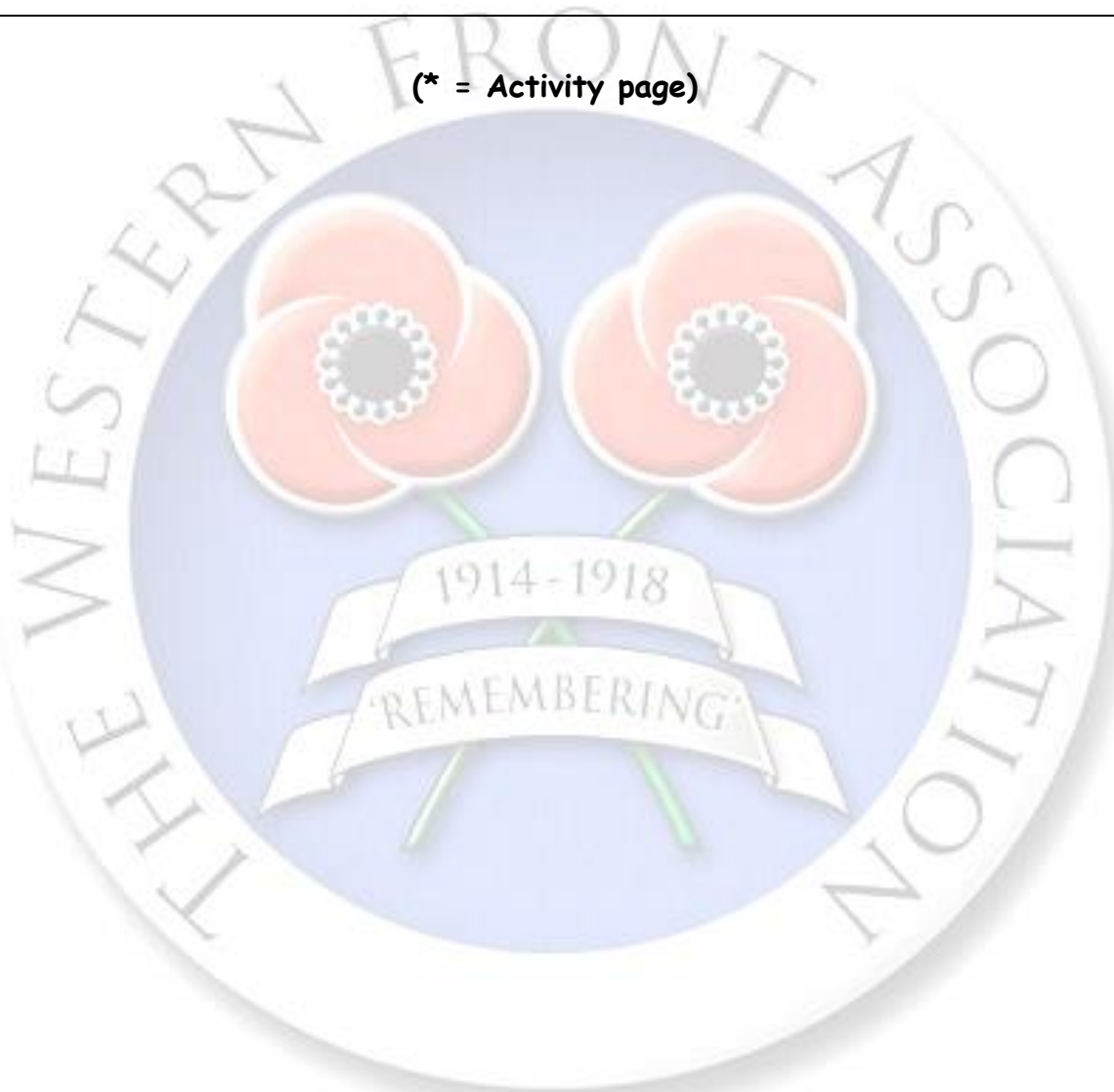


Contents Page:

N.B. Shadowed boxes i.e. Indicate an opportunity for you to enhance your experience of the trip, it isn't schoolwork but please attempt the task so that you get the most from the visit. It's nice to look back at a future time and reflect on your experiences.

Itinerary (may be subject to change)

(* = Activity page)



Glossary:

During this visit you will encounter many words, some of which will be new to you, so to make sure that you get the most from your visit, some are listed below:

Flanders	=	name given to the flat land across N. France and Belgium
Enfilade	=	when soldiers are shot/ attacked at from the side (flank).
Salient	=	a "bulge" which sticks out into enemy land
Artillery	=	large cannons or "guns"
Front line	=	where opposing armies meet
No-mans land	=	space between opposing armies
Passchendaele	=	A village name, also given to the third Battle of Ypres
"Wipers"	=	a nickname given to Ypres by British soldiers
Division	=	a military term approximately 10,000 fighting men i.e. 29 th Division- all armies were organised into Divisions.

WARNING!!

Over 90 years after the war unexploded munitions are still ploughed up in a dangerous, unstable condition. All such items must be treated with extreme caution and avoided. This 'iron harvest' is still responsible for death and disfigurement. It is **absolutely forbidden** that artefacts such as these are tampered with and under **NO CIRCUMSTANCES** picked up.

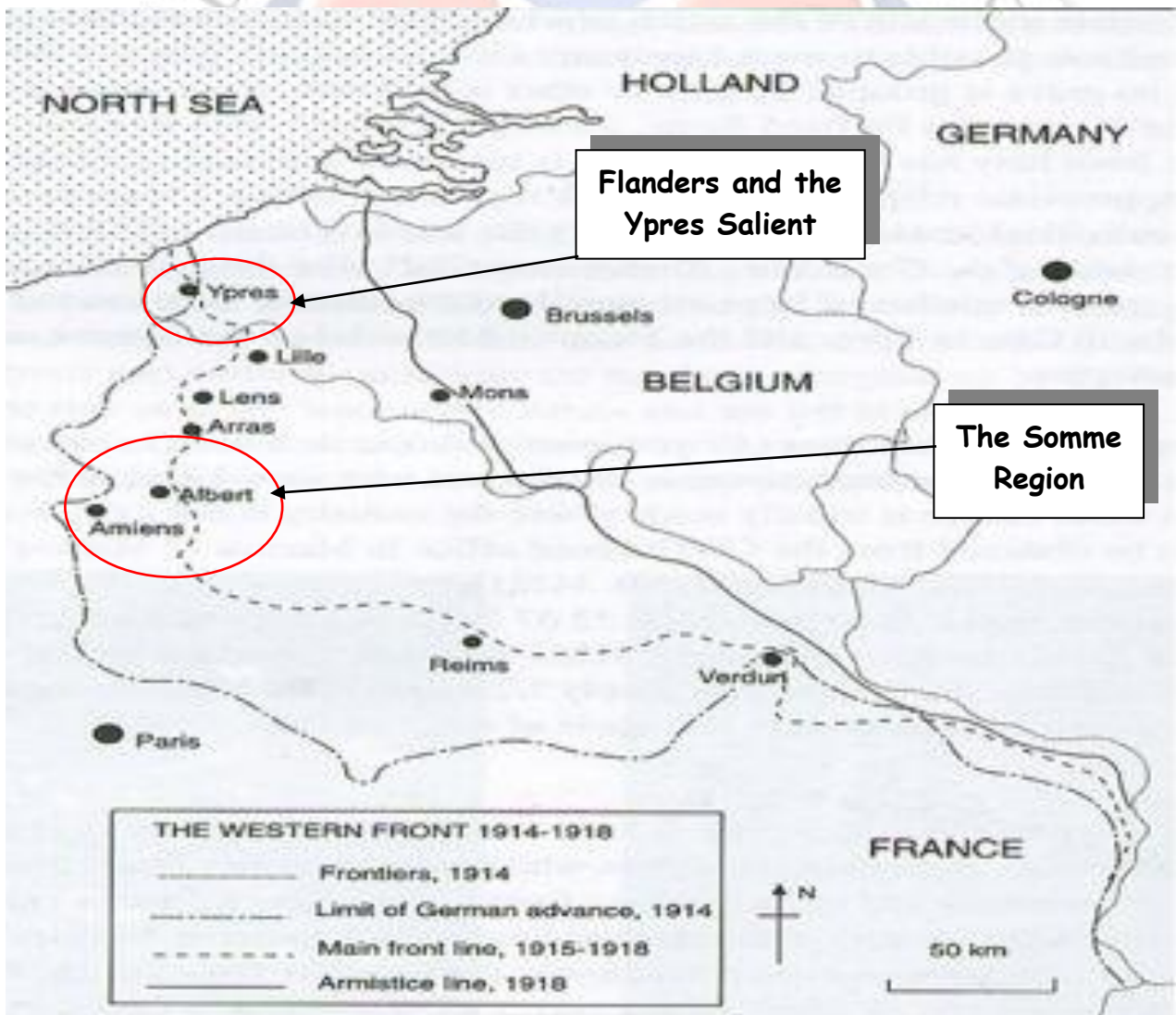
Why Ypres and the Somme?

Introduction:

This visit has **two** main purposes. **Firstly**, to experience outside of the classroom, the living aspects of History, in ways that text books never can. **Secondly** to experience a foreign culture in an age when the world has literally got smaller due to new technology and the European Union.

Ypres and the Somme were selected, not by us the teachers, but by History itself. Any map will show you just how close Ypres and the Somme are to the Channel coastline and how Britain could never allow an enemy to occupy that part of the coast. Britain had to fight in World War One; of that there is no question because the German decision to invade Belgium meant war for Britain. For a fuller appreciation of the strategy see the map below:

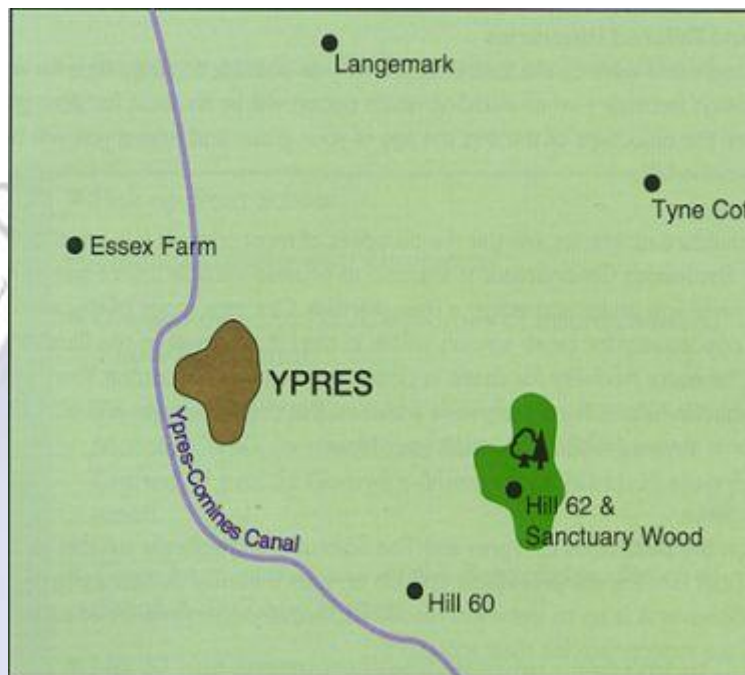
The Western Front 1914-18:



Ypres in particular has had great deal of importance for Britain. For over 300 years British soldiers have been dying there, fighting at different times against the French, Germans and Spanish.

The French regard the **Somme** region as the '**terre sacre**' (sacred earth). During the First World War the British did not arrive there until late in 1915 after the French asked the British to take over more of the Western Front.

Belgium the Country and Ypres the town:

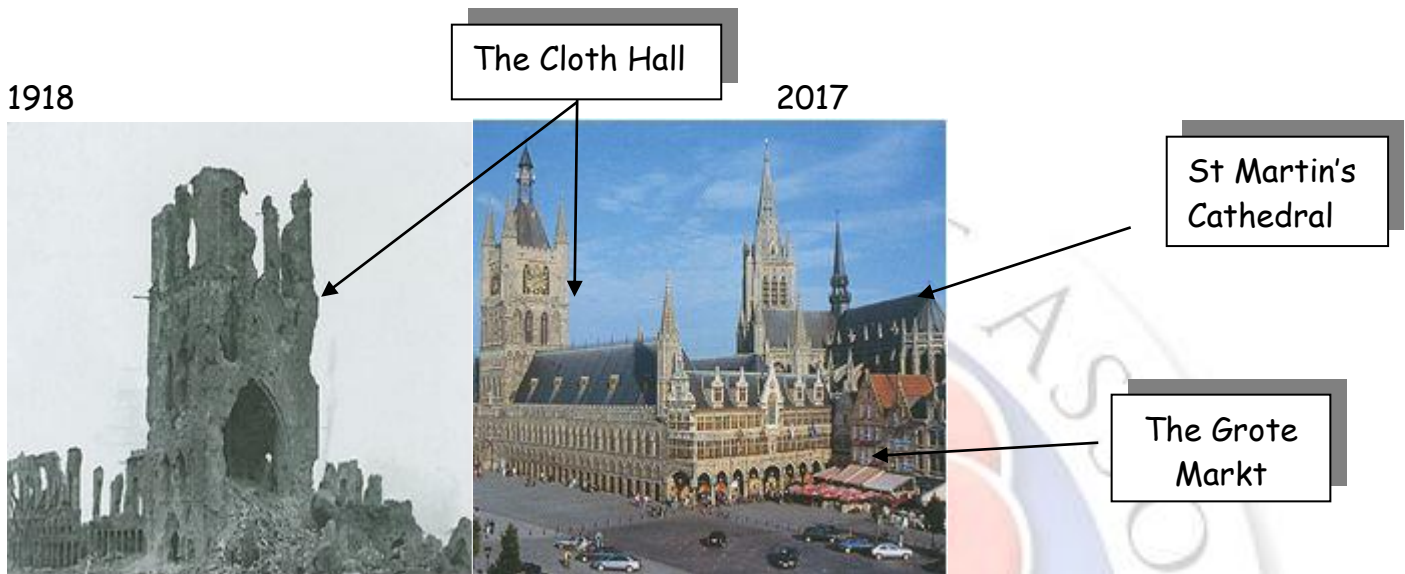


Places that we will be visiting in the Ypres Salient:

- 'Essex Farm Cemetery'
- Menin Gate,
- 'Tyne Cot Cemetery' and Memorial to the Missing
- Langemark German Cemetery
- Passchendaele Museum
- Village of Poperinge

Ypres: 'The Martyred City'

A medieval town of outstanding architectural significance is how Ypres would have looked in 1914. Contrast the pictures below to see how 4 years of battle took its toll.



The Cloth Hall (Ypres) during and after the War.

Ypres made a great deal of money in the 13th - 15th centuries as a trading centre for cloth. The profits of this paid for the magnificent "Cloth" Hall and St Martin's Cathedral which are the main feature of the town square or 'Grote Markt'. It is hard to imagine that since 1918 these two buildings have been totally restored, as has 99% of the town.

Belgium is a nation divided into two groups: Flemish and Walloon. Walloons speak French and the Flemish speaks a dialect similar to Dutch called "Flemish". You will see both languages around the town, as well as many English names.

The English language influence comes from the fact that the British fought in and around Ypres for four years 1914 - 18. British soldiers, who were never the best at learning languages, made up their own versions of Flemish/French names i.e.

Wytchaete	=	<i>"White Sheet"</i>
Ypres	=	<i>"Wipers"</i>
Ploegsteert	=	<i>"Plug Street"</i>
Poperinghe	=	<i>"Pop"</i>

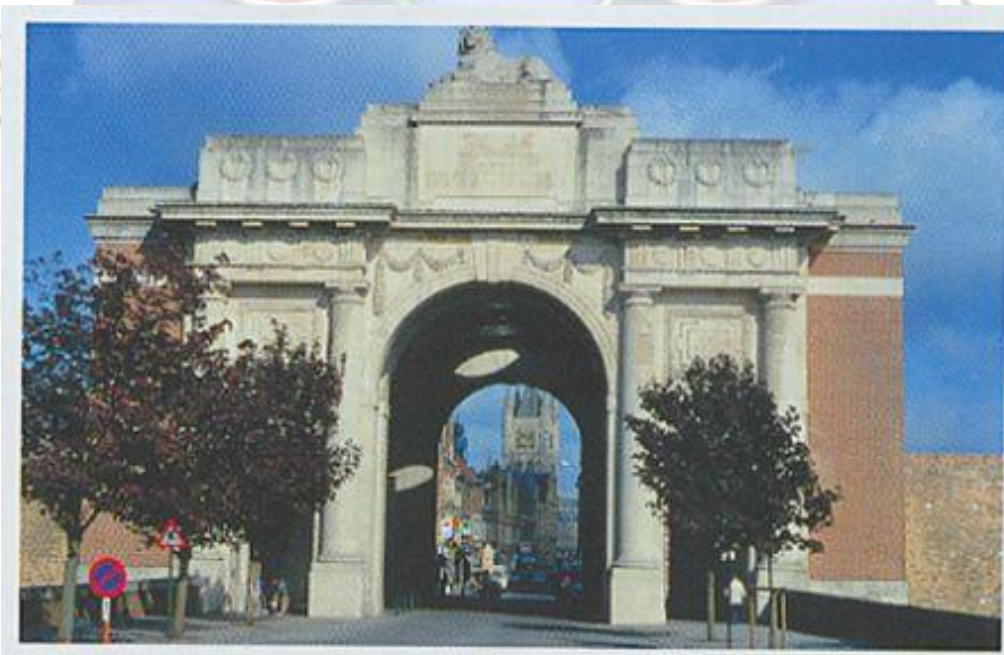
Activity: There are many different ways of spelling **Ypres** - how many can you find during your visit, look at road signs and signs around the town: **(There is a prize for the most variations found)** There are at least 3 ways

The Menin Gate:

Opened in 1927 and designed by Sir Reginald Blomfield, this is the most important monument in Ypres. Originally there was no gate here, but as a record to the 54.896 men who have no known grave (up to August 1917) it was deemed fit to erect a gate and inscribe all the names by regiment. Every night at 8 o'clock the haunting bugle call, known as the last post, is played by the local Fire Brigade, as a mark of respect from the good people of Ypres. (The only exception was during World War Two when the Germans occupied the city). You can access the city ramparts and take in the size of the memorial by using the stairways.

Activity: What is your impression of this memorial?

The Menin Gate:



Complete the tasks on the next page

Activities:

1. Try to find a panel with your with your surname on it.
2. Describe the ceremony of the Menin Gate and how you felt when you experienced the bugle call of the 'last post'.
3. How did you feel when you found the soldier you were looking for?



**The Fire
Brigade
Buglers**

The Cloth Hall

Essex Farm Cemetery:



1918



2009



The name 'Essex Farm' was given by British soldiers in World War One and there are many interesting aspects to this cemetery. Firstly, you will see the **memorial** erected in 1985 to **Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae, Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps (R.C.A.M.C.)**

The story goes that McCrae was operating on wounded soldiers near to the concrete bunkers on the canal bank and saw a poppy gently in the breeze on the damaged soil. He was so moved that he wrote the famous poem - "In Flanders Fields"

*In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.*

*We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.*

*Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.*



Visit the restored concrete bunkers (left of the cemetery towards the canal bank) and imagine what conditions were like to treat the wounded soldiers.

In the cemetery itself, there are over 1,000 soldiers from British and Commonwealth regiments, one of which is **Private Strudwick** aged only 15 when he was killed in 1916. Spare him a thought on your tour; use the register to find his final resting place.

Activities:

1. Describe the Essex Farm Cemetery:

2. Find the grave of Private Strudwick- how is it different to some of the others?

3. Write 2 or 3 lines from McCrae's poem that describes the horrors of war.

4. There is a particular Victoria Cross winner in this cemetery from the South Staffordshire Regiment, find his grave and write down his name and details. (This has a particular significance to Wolverhampton)

Write here any interesting facts that your guide gives you

Langemarck:

The road leading to the village



Image was taken from where the cemetery now stands looking towards the town.

This place has a special significance, as it is one of the first places that the Germans used poisonous chlorine gas on 22nd April 1915. The village was fought over many times and by 1918 there were no buildings left standing at all.

German cemeteries are very different to British ones and it is hoped that you will be able to compare them for yourselves. You will have been brought today to the German Military Cemetery, the '**Soldatenfriedhof**'.

The whole cemetery is a place of commemoration, with chapels that record the names of those known to have been buried here, including many students. There are two sections to the graveyard:-

- i) '**Alterfriedhof**' (old cemetery): under the shadow of the great oak trees and has grey slatish stones with names in white lettering. Here lie 10,143 of whom 3,835 are unknown. Scattered around are small basalt crosses. You will also see the 'Kamaraden-grab' - **the mass grave of 24,834 men**. If you look up you will see the brooding figures of mourning comrades.
- ii) '**Einbuttungs freidhof-Nord**' (Northern graveyard). Here you will find 3 concrete bunkers, which formed part of the heavily fortified "Langemark Line", a line of trenches and bunkers, which were very costly to British soldiers. 9,475 men lie buried here and there are many memorials.

Activities: How is Langemark German Cemetery different to the British cemeteries? Think about lay out and the grave stones
How does it make you feel?

'Tyne Cot' Cemetery (and Memorial to the Missing):

'Tyne Cot' was given this name by men of the British 50th Division. It is the **largest** of all of the British/Commonwealth cemeteries, with **11,908 graves**. 'Tyne Cot' is situated on a slope and further up on the slope is the village of **Paschendaele** (Passendale), which is often regarded as the worst battle of the war (July - November 1917). Passendale was seen as the typical muddy, "lunar" landscape vision from hell that is associated with World War One.



The Great Cross is built above an **original German bunker**.

There are **34,880** names on the panels to the missing, whom disappeared between August 1916 to November 1918. From the cemetery across the road, in the distance, is Ypres. Such a view in 1914-18 would have been impossible.

Tyne Cot Cemetery and Memorial to the missing:

The Great Cross built above German bunkers



The memorial to the missing

Activities:

1. Make your way to the main gate, this is where the cemetery register is; stand to the side of the gate facing the road. Can you see the spires of Ypres?
2. Make your way to the Cross of Sacrifice. Look back towards the main gate and comment on the field of fire that the German Machine gunners in the Concrete bunker beneath your feet would have had.
3. Walk to the Panels at the Far end of the Cemetery. How do you feel looking at the names of men who still lie in the fields around you?
4. Are there just British graves here, if not what other country is represented?

Write here any interesting facts that the Anglia Guides tell you

'Les Halles d'Ypres':

*A tangle of Torn iron rods and spluttered beams,
On brickwork past the skill of a mason to mend:
A wall with bright blue poster-odd as dreams
Is the city's latter end.*

*A shapeless obelisk looms Saint Martin's spire.
Now a leaning aiming- mark for the German guns:
And the Cloth Hall crouches beside, disfigured with fire,
The glory of Flanders once.*

*Only the four square tower still bears the trace
Of beauty that was, and strong embattled age'
And gilded ceremonies and pride of place-
Before this senseless rage*

*And still you may see (below moon serene,
The mysterious, changeless vault of sharp blue light),
The pigeons come to the tower, and flaunt and preen.
And flicker in playful flight.*

By Edmund Blunden (1917) a soldier of the Great War

Activity: Label the image with phrases that Blunden uses to describe the cloth Hall from the poem.



The Somme: Refer to Map:

Day One: the Northern Battlefield.

Geography is the dictating factor of battle here. The lie of the land is known as topography and in the Northern sector the dominating topographical feature is the high ground. The advantages to an occupying army are enormous. The high ground is determined by a series of ridges: Hawthorn Ridge, Redan Ridge, Thiepval Ridge and the highest point on the Somme the Pozieres Ridge.

Brief History:

The decision to attack on the Somme was made in 1915. It was intended that the French would attack at the same time as the Russians and the British; this three-pronged attack was meant to end the war in 1916. However the Germans attacked first and in February they met the French at the fortress town of Verdun.

By the spring of 1916 the French were desperate for help and urged their British allies to attack on the Somme. The 'Big Push' as the Somme was referred to began on July 1st 1916. Some 12 Divisions of British infantry attacked the Germans on an 18 mile front. The British lost 60,000 soldiers of which 22,000 were killed, most of them in the first 2 hours.

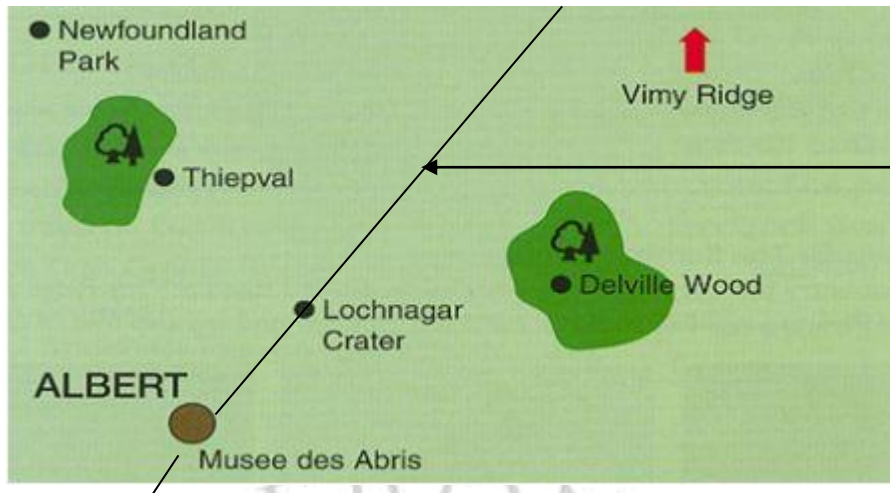
The day was disastrous for many Regiments for example the Newfoundland Regiment at Beaumont Hamel losing 90% of their strength. This pattern was repeated elsewhere as the German positions were so strong.

British Generals have come under a lot of criticism for the way that they handled the Somme Battle, they have been accused of incompetence, in particular General Rawlinson and Field Marshal Haig. You only have to look at the cemeteries to realise that the Somme is an emotional place. However recently many historians have come up with other reasons why there were so many casualties on the Somme and other Great War battles, an old soldier who had fought on the Somme was once asked:

Interviewer: "Why did Field Marshal Haig kill so many British soldiers".

Old soldier: "No lad it was the Germans that did that".

You will form your own views on why the casualties were so high in World war one, but remember the Germans at the time had the best Army in the World and as one British General said "What ever you do you lose a lot of men".



The D929 road divided the battle field into North and South

Newfoundland Park- Beaumont Hamel:

The site of Newfoundland Park was the Divisional area of the 29th Division on 1st July 1916. The area is unusual because it is one of the few places that the Germans were positioned at the bottom of the hill. The Park is in fact Canadian soil.

Activities:

1. After your introduction to the park. Stand at the foot of the Caribou Memorial and look down the hill to the old German positions. Can you see the danger tree? Why do think it was called this?

2. Make your way to the top of the Caribou Memorial, what else can you see from this position? What would not have been present during the war? Think of the view that either side would have.

3. What is your impression of Newfoundland Park?

The Picture below was taken here



The preserved Trenches: a piece of Canadian soil given to by the grateful French Nation.

How the Newfoundland Park would have looked at the end of 1916:

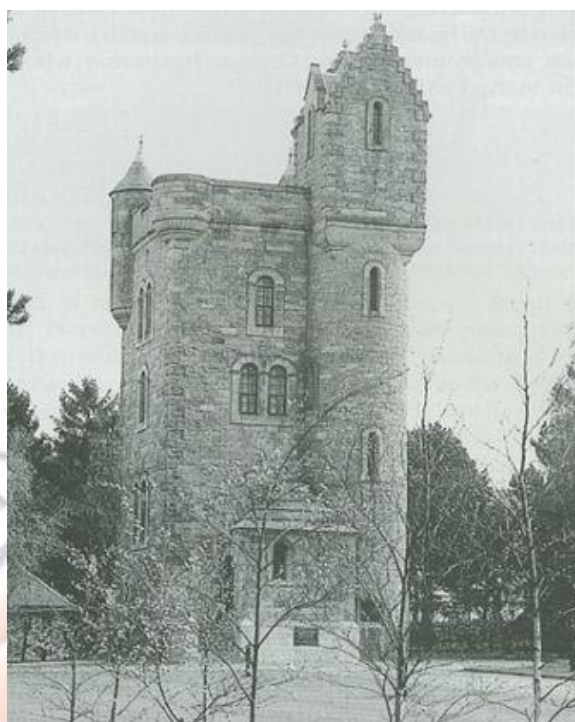


Carbiou Memorial is here today

Activity: what changes can you see in the photographs?

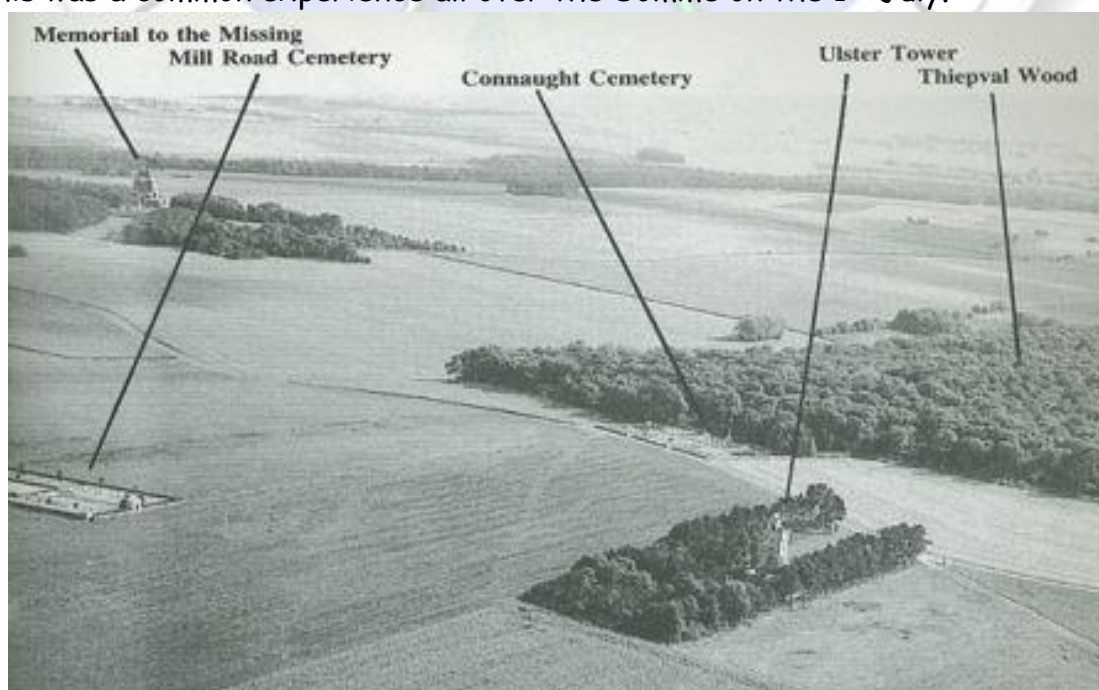
Write here any interesting facts that the Anglia Guides tell you

The Ulster Tower Memorial Thiepval:



Ulster Tower (and visitor centre) was built in 1921 to remember the Ulster soldiers who fought on the Thiepval Ridge. The memorial is an exact replica of a tower in Northern Ireland (County Down) and it was felt that any returning Irish soldiers who recognise the tower as symbol of their home land and a fitting tribute to the fallen.

The 36th (Ulster) Division attacked here on the 1st of July, they suffered massive casualties as they attempted to break through. The failure of the 29th Division across the river Ancre at Newfoundland Park meant that the Irish soldiers were enfiladed from machine guns in 'Y' Ravine. This was a common experience all over the Somme on the 1st July.



Thiepval Memorial

This memorial occupies the high point of Thiepval and is viewable from any where on the battlefield. It is a place of immense presence and commands the utmost respect. There are recorded here the names of 73,000 men who were killed in the Somme Battles (1916 and 1918) who have no known grave.



Memorial registers

The Memorial to the Missing of the Somme

You will be given special instructions here about how to get the most from this memorial.

Activities:

1. What is the inscription across the two sections of the main arch?
2. Why are the British and French flags being flown?
3. How many Local Midland Regiments can you find?
4. Did you find a soldier with your surname? Use the memorial register for help; find out some details about him. *The register is on the left and right of the first steps you come to.*
5. How do you feel at this place?

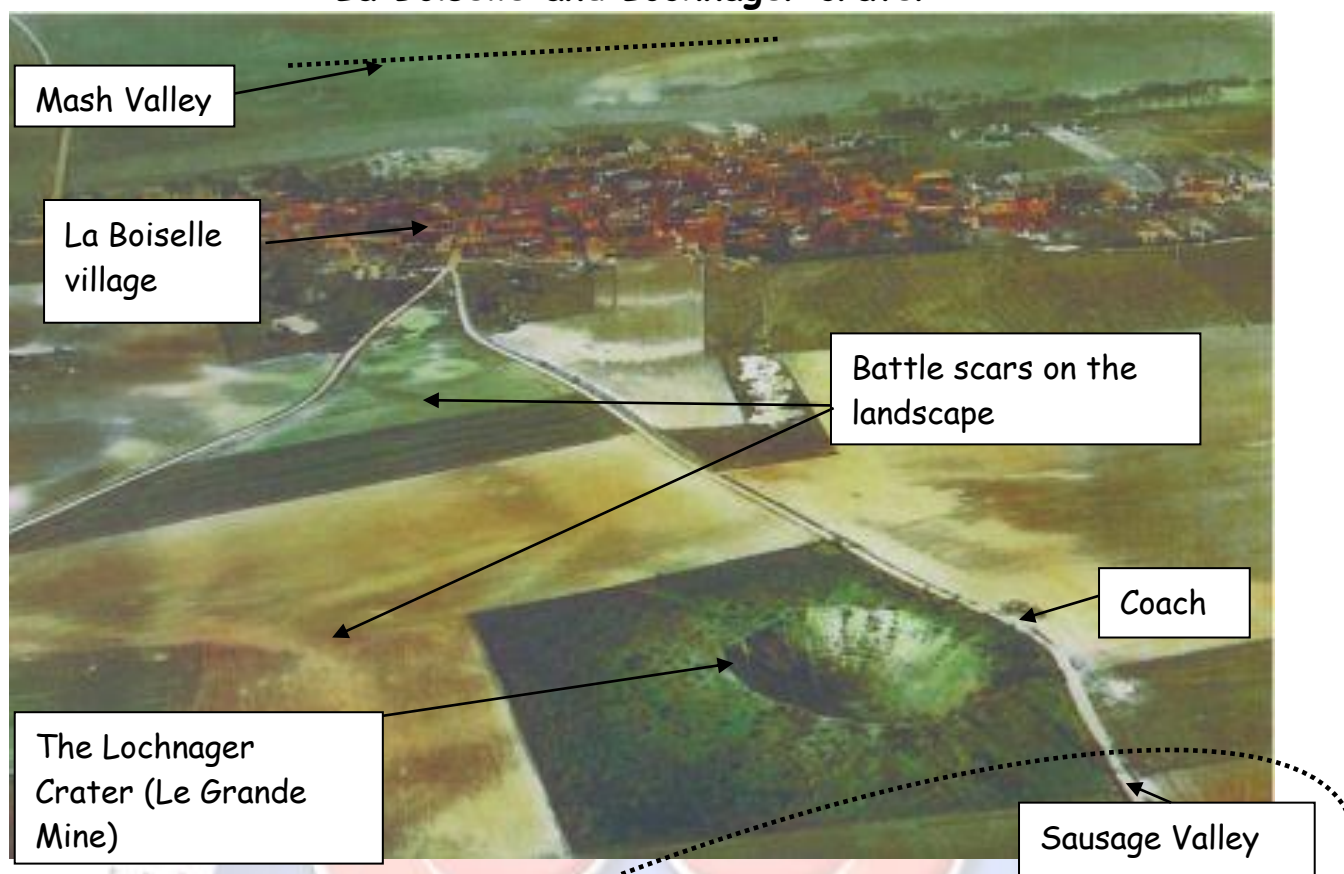


This is the view toward the Thiepval wood from the back of the memorial, the positions the British attacked from on 1st July 1916. There are both French and British graves here.

Activity:

Make a field sketch of the area towards the Thiepval memorial: Firstly draw the horizon line, add any notable features i.e.) roads etc, explain the direction and label features (see the viewing platform table) from the top with arrows. Sketch as well as you can- take time to do it:

La Boisselle and Lochnager crater:



This crater was blown on the 1st July 1916 to destroy the strong German positions that protected the village of La Boisselle. Attacked by the British 34th Division the initial assault was a costly failure. Lochnager crater was an important position because it protected the two sister valleys one called 'Sausage' because of its shape on a map and the other called 'Mash'.

Activity:

Walk around the perimeter of the crater. Imagine the amount of TNT required to blow a hole this big. (**Beware of the edge and do not go down to the bottom**). What are your impressions of the Crater? Describe the smells and sounds you might have experienced when this exploded.

Opposite where you started your walk is a patch of rough ground with poppies and tributes to a soldier called **George Nugent** who was only discovered a few years ago, he is buried nearby in Ovillers Cemetery. How do you feel walking where undiscovered remains lie only inches away in all the fields of the Somme?

Vimy Ridge

was a very important strategic position overlooking the Lens-Douai Plateau. The Canadians were given the task of storming the ridge on the 9th April 1917 as part of the battle of Arras. Excellent work with regard to communications, supplies and secrecy enabled the Canadians to achieve one of the most celebrated and stunning victories of the war. This memorial and visitor centre is part of a vast memorial park. The preserved trenches convey some comprehension of the proximity of the opposing trenches but this is essentially an artificial experience:



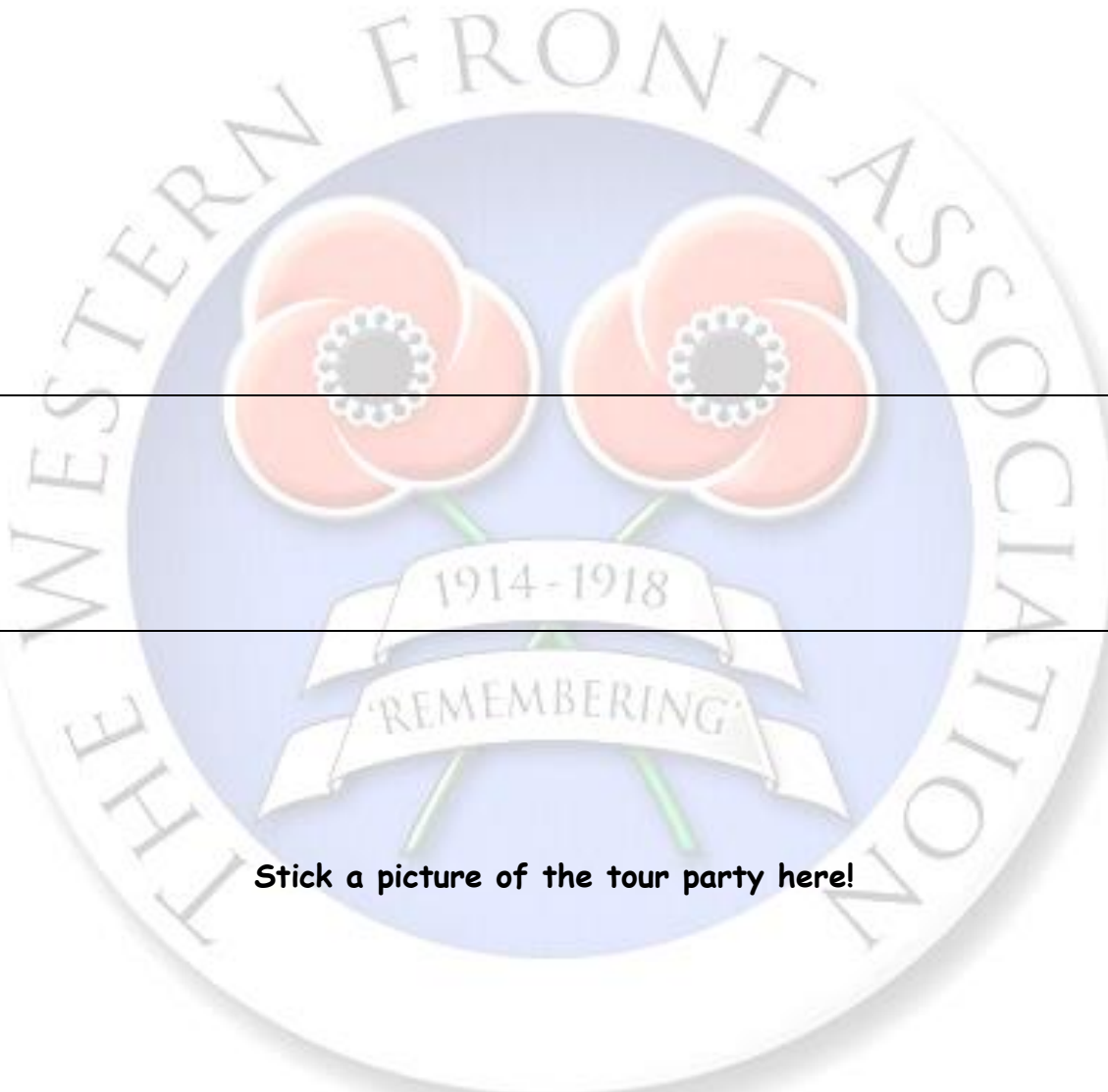
Activity:

Look at the trenches of both sides, what surprises you most about the trench systems? Think about how close they are.

What difficulties would the soldiers have had attacking in this area?

Write here any interesting facts that the Anglia Guides tell you

Stick a picture of the memorial here!



Stick a picture of the tour party here!



The Western Front Association Competition

The Western Front Association (WFA) was formed with the aim of furthering interest in The Great War of 1914-1918. We also aim to perpetuate the memory, courage and comradeship of all those on all sides who served their countries in France and Flanders and their own countries during the Great War.

'Remembrance'

The competition is run by the Wolverhampton Branch of the WFA; the competition is open to all secondary schools in the midlands. Over the last few years winners have come from Aldersley High School in Wolverhampton, Thomas Telford School and the Corbet School in Shropshire. This year we have more schools from Wolverhampton and Birmingham entering this fabulous competition.

What do you have to do????

The theme of the competition is '**Remembrance**'. Your task is to write between 400 and 500 words on why we should remember the Great War.

This is not about all the facts and figures of the war; this extended piece of writing is about your thoughts and feelings of 'why we should remember'

Think about today's world, conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan so why is remembrance of those that sacrificed their lives so important.

How did you feeling visiting the cemeteries, the memorials to the missing and listening to the stories of ordinary men who lost their lives for the freedom you now enjoy.

On your work make sure you name and school name are at the top with the title 'Remembrance'

CASH PRIZES AND CERTIFICATES FOR THE LUCKY WINNERS!!

Winners receive their prizes at a ceremony at the University of Wolverhampton on a Saturday in January.

From when you get back from your trip you have until the DATE to get your entries into NAME- either email me at EMAIL or hand it to me in school.

Any Questions visit www.westernfrontassociation.com click on 'Contact us' and leave your message.

My final thoughts on the way home are:

What is the most important thing you have learned from this visit?

Use the library to research further the Great War

The Horrible History series will give you a good introduction to the war

The Internet:

www.cwgc.org/ (Specialist search site for casualties)

www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/fww.htm (WW1 encyclopaedia)

www.trenchesontheweb (WW1 encyclopaedia)

www.westernfrontassociation.com (Major Association for Great War Research)

**"They shall not grow old as we that are left grow old,
Age shall not weary them nor the years condemn,
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them".**

By L. Binyon