



Photo 1 - Yorkshire Trench & Dugout - © Birger Stichelbaut

PRESS KIT

Yorkshire Trench & Dugout reopens after thorough repairs

Questions on content *Yorkshire Trench & Dugout*

Stephen.Lodewyck@ieper.be | +32 (0) 486 072 763 | director *In Flanders Fields Museum*

Annick.Vandenbilcke@ieper.be | +32 (0) 57 239 453 | staff member *In Flanders Fields Museum*

Press contact *In Flanders Fields Museum*

Dries.VanRobaey@ieper.be | +32 (0) 57 239 453

Lyn.Coene@ieper.be | +32 (0) 57 239 224

President of AGB Museums Ypres

Dimitry.Soenen@ieper.be | +32 (0)477 846 597



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Yorkshire Trench & Dugout is a unique historical and archaeological site. It includes a shallow trench from 1915 and a restored trench, with entrances to a deep dugout (underground shelter), from 1917. It is the only British trench in the Ypres Salient still in its original location. Thanks to grants and crowdfunding campaigns in the UK and Belgium, the Yorkshire Trench & Dugout has undergone a thorough restoration and has now reopened.

A unique window on the past

In late October 1914, on the eastern side of Ypres town, a bulge formed in the Front Line and the city found itself in the middle of this 'Ypres Salient.' It became one of the most notorious war zones on the Western Front and The Yorkshire Trench was located on its northern stretch.

After the first 'successful' gas attack on 22 April 1915, a shallow trench was created, initially by the French, but it was managed by the British from 5 June 1915 onwards. In the spring of 1917, a new trench – Yorkshire Trench – was dug onsite and named after the home region of the British 49th Division that had manned this sector in the second half of 1915. In addition, the trench also provided access to underground headquarters for the 13th and the 16th Battalion Royal Welsh Fusiliers, but was abandoned after the first phase of the major British offensive.

"To fully understand the story of the First World War in this region, you have to go out into the landscape in search of its witnesses. You can find them in the cemeteries and monuments, but also in crater pits or trenches. Yorkshire Trench is the only British trench in the Ypres Salient still preserved on its original alignment. The importance of this site cannot overstated, as it offers a historical window into the war."

– Stephen Lodewyck, Director of the In Flanders Fields Museum

"The renovated site provides both a better understanding of the Yorkshire Trench and Dugout and improves accessibility for thousands of domestic and foreign visitors."

– Dimitry Soenen, President of AGB Museums, Ypres

Yorkshire Trench & Dugout was accidentally discovered by a farmer in 1992 and partially excavated by The Diggers, a group of amateur archaeologists led by Patrick Van Wanseele. Just before the expansion of the industrial estate in 1998, further excavations took place. Over 200 bodies were recovered in this area. Many unique artefacts found their way into the collection of the In Flanders Fields Museum (IFFM). In August 2002, the Diggers restored about 70 metres of the trench and both dugout entrances. Today the site, sits in the midst of Ypres' industrial area and is owned by the City of Ypres.

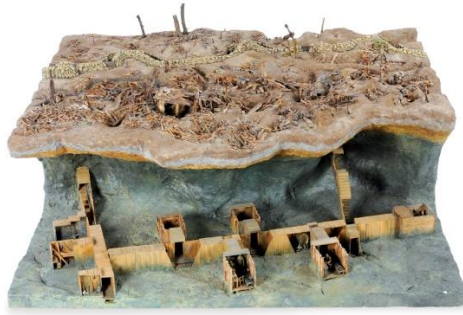


Photo 2 - A model of Yorkshire Trench and Dugout is on display at the In Flanders Fields Museum. In the museum's permanent display, you will find numerous archaeological objects, such as the complete tool kit of a weapons repairman, as well as a film depicting the work of the diggers. © Collection In Flanders Fields Museum



Photo 3 & 4 - The archaeological excavations of Yorkshire Trench & Dugout © Patrick Van Wanzeele



Photo 5 - The initial set-up of the site by The Diggers in 2002. © Patrick Van Wanzeele

Financial support from Ypres and Yorkshire

Earlier this year, one of the entrances to the dugout collapsed due to changing water levels. This caused limited accessibility to the site.

John Morrison, a reservist with the Yorkshire Officers' Training Regiment and a native of Yorkshire, launched a crowdfunding campaign to raise money to restore the site, organising several events, such as the Yorkshire Trench 110-mile run and a sponsored walk from Boulogne to Ypres. Together with his son, he also hosted several lectures. Their efforts did not go unnoticed: the BBC and *The Yorkshire Post*, among others, promoted his crowdfunding efforts and John raised more than €17,000 - for the renovation works.

The In Flanders Fields Museum, together with the Friends of the Flanders Fields Museum (VIFF) also organised a crowdfunding initiative with support of the Landschapsfonds of Regionaal Landschap Westhoek and raised €10,000 in less than two months for much-needed repair works.

In addition, grants from Westtoer and Visit Flanders totalling €30,000 provided a large enough budget to get started.

"When I mention the First World War and the restoration of the trench, the first thing most people say is: 'my uncle, my grandad, my great grandad was wounded, or killed, or an unknown in Ypres.' It's a place in our collective memory. For those people, donating gave them a forum to remember a family member lost to the war. For me, it's a reminder of the price that freedom costs.

After listening to people and their stories and reading so many individual accounts and diaries, I realised that there was only one salient where so much misery, murder and mud was compressed into so small a place – and that was Ypres."

– John Morrison, Leader of the UK Crowdfunding Campaign, Yorkshire.

"The Friends of the In Flanders Fields Museum (VIFF) consider it particularly important to guarantee the survival and accessibility of this historical, educational and landscape-integrated, green site. A great deal of knowledge related to this field has been collected, unlocked and deployed in the museum's public activities over the years. Thank you to our many members who supported the crowdfunding."

– Gilbert Ossieur, Chairman of the VIFF

"This project received further financial support for the careful preservation of authentic World War One relics in the Westhoek to ensure the region continues to tell a unique and historically accurate story to the visitor – specifically to the many schoolchildren who visit this site. Thanks to Dave Chisholm's approachable landscape drawings, this will become an attractive and educationally valuable site."

– Sabien Lahaye-Battheu, Delegate for Westtoer

The repairs carried out

With the help of a number of partners, the In Flanders Fields Museum completed a thorough renovation of the site earlier this year. The stairwells were renewed, the information panels replaced, the route of the 1915 trench restored and the route clearly marked for the public. The renovation ensures that visitors can enter and understand the site properly again. A green management plan has also been agreed with the city's landscape department and De Groene Kans. The technical department of the City of Ypres will also provide support.



Photo 6 & 7 - The wooden stairwells, which give access to the dugout, have been renewed and the concrete nets have been replaced with black bars to allow visitors to safely glance into the dugout. Better lighting has also been installed. © Birger Stichelbaut



Photo 8- Gravel paths depict the underground passages and chambers of the dugout to give visitors get an impression of what lies ten metres underground. The rooms are named above ground. © Birger Stichelbaut



Photo 9 - The alignment of the 1915 trench is clearly shown in the landscape as a shallow ditch. © Birger Stichelbaut



Photo 10 - Seven information panels accompany the visit to Yorkshire Trench & Dugout. QR codes guide visitors to translations in German and French. © Birger Stichelbaut

Teaching new generations to never forget

Yorkshire Trench & Dugout bore witness to major episodes of the First World War. The shallow trench recalls the fighting after the first gas attack in April 1915, while the 1917 trench and dugout offer a window into the Third Battle of Ypres.

It is the ideal place for schoolchildren to ground the reality of First World War in the landscape. The In Flanders Fields Museum has therefore developed an educational programme called 'The Salient Illustrated' that brings historical characters of the war to life and visits the large drawing of the northern Ypres Salient battlefield by Dave Chisholm, British cartoonist for *The Sunday Times* and *The Daily Telegraph*. The drawing helps students better understand how the Yorkshire Trench fits into the larger trench system and what wartime life was like.

"I worked very hard with the Learning Team at In Flanders Fields Museum to get every historical detail in the drawing right to help future generations better understand what happened here during the First World War."

Dave Chisholm – Britse tekenaar

Teachers can find more information about the educational programmes on the [In Flanders Fields Museum website](#).



Photo 11 - A detail from Dave Chisholm's panoramic drawing. © Birger Stichelbaut

Continued support remains necessary

Unfortunately, there were not enough funds to fully restore the 1917 trench – crumbling sandbags limit the trench's accessibility – so continued fundraising remains necessary. The renovation works require a budget of around €100,000. The Friends of the Flanders Fields Museum (VIFF) are therefore launching a new long-term crowdfunding campaign in collaboration with the King Baudouin Foundation and Streekfonds West-Vlaanderen.

The IFFM and the VIFF, together with John Morrison, continue their efforts to ensure the site's experiential appeal and survival.

Want to make your own contribution? Click [here](#) to support the restoration and maintenance of Yorkshire Trench & Dugout.



Photo 12 - Continued action remains necessary. Crumbling sandbags limit access to the trench.

Visiting Yorkshire Trench and Dugout yourself?

- Free access
- Bargie Street, right opposite the IVVO green park
- Want more info? Then be sure to visit 'entry point north', a free visitor centre at Hoeve Klein Zwaanahof within walking distance of the site. You will find an introductory film and plenty of archaeological objects.