

THE BATTLE OF CAMBRAI



REPORTS / MAPS / PICTURES

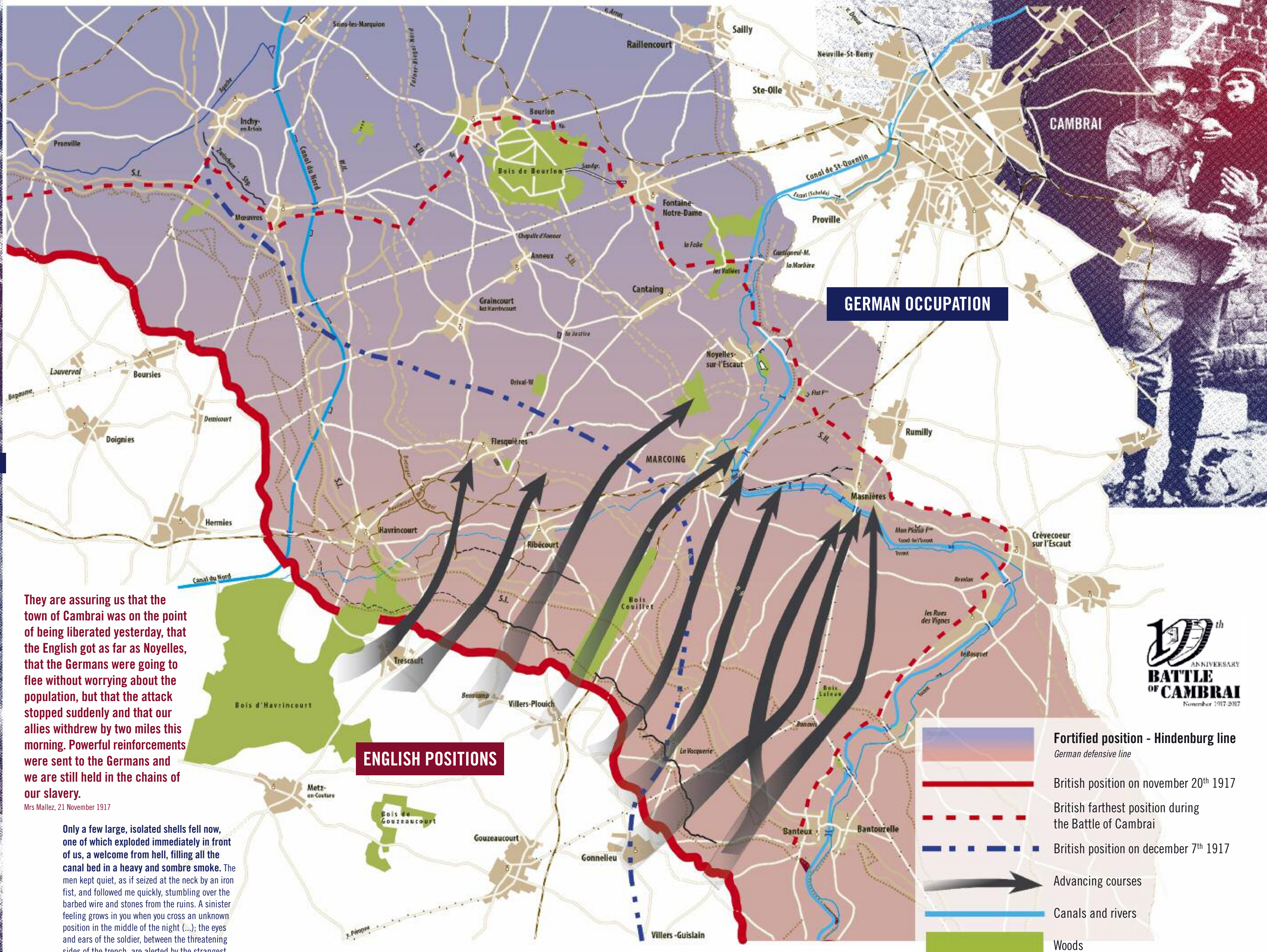
THE BATTLE OF CAMBRAI

Although its noise and fury could be heard from the town itself, in reality the Battle of Cambrai took place across the south of the Cambrésis. The confrontations which happened between November 20th and December 7th, 1917, setting 476 British armoured vehicles against the German Army, protected by the Hindenburg line, were imprinted on the spirits of those who lived there, and destroyed whole villages.

Today the apocalyptic landscape created by the battle has given way to cultivated fields and rebuilt villages, but the deeply moving memories remain: photographs, personal diaries, blockhouses, cemeteries...

The 'Cambrai : Town of Art and History' service and the Cambresis Tourist Office invite you to discover this land, so physically marked by the terrible conflicts of the last century, many remnants of which are housed at the Cambrai Tank 1917 museum.

Cambresis Tourist Office
 48 rue de Noyon - 59400 Cambrai
 Place du Général de Gaulle - 59540 Caudry
 Place du Général de Gaulle - 59360 Le Cateau-Cambrésis
 03 27 78 36 15 • contact@tourisme-cambresis.fr
www.tourisme-cambresis.fr



They are assuring us that the town of Cambrai was on the point of being liberated yesterday, that the English got as far as Noyelles, that the Germans were going to flee without worrying about the population, but that the attack stopped suddenly and that our allies withdrew by two miles this morning. Powerful reinforcements were sent to the Germans and we are still held in the chains of our slavery.

Mrs Mallez, 21 November 1917

Only a few large, isolated shells fell now, one of which exploded immediately in front of us, a welcome from hell, filling all the canal bed in a heavy and sombre smoke. The men kept quiet, as if seized at the neck by an iron fist, and followed me quickly, stumbling over the barbed wire and stones from the ruins. A sinister feeling grows in you when you cross an unknown position in the middle of the night (...); the eyes and ears of the soldier, between the threatening illusions, are alerted by the strangest illusions; all is cold and disconcerting, in a damned world.

Ernst Jünger, 1 December 1917

This morning, at 6:10am, the rolling fire of an intense cannonade began suddenly, which did not stop until the evening. Its shots were continuous, very loud; doors, glass, windows, everything was dancing. Chanoine Delval, 20 November 1917



CAMBRAI TANK 1917

Rue du Calvaire - 59267 Flesquières
 Information : 03 27 78 36 15 / contact@tourisme-cambresis.fr
 GPS : N50.1247558 - E3.12287916666667

The Battle of Cambrai Interpretation Centre, known as "Cambrai Tank 1917", tells the story of these combats, remarkable for the first heavy use of tanks, and the impact of these events on the Cambresis and its inhabitants. It houses exceptional records of the Great War, left by the combatants, including the famous Deborah tank, one of the 476 British armoured vehicles used in this battle.



Opening times : from 1:30pm until 5:30pm
 Every day from 15 June until 15 September.
 Wednesdays and Sundays, from 15 March until 14 June,
 and from 16 September until 30 November.
 Closed from 1 December to 14 March.

Full price : 6 € - Reduced price : 4 € (CAC residents, unemployed, students,
 under 18 years, on presentation of proof)
 Family ticket : 20 €



However, they must have lost a lot of men, we're talking about 70,000 out of combat. Wagons loaded with coffins go past continuously, there are 70 buried at Fontaine, 200, so they say, at Cattenières.

Maurice Delmotte, 3 December 1917

Places to visit

Information panels « Corps, Armes et Paix »

Bunkers and shelters

In 2015, circuits called "The first and the last 1914 -1918 Man, Arms and Peace from Mons to Cambrai" were created to make residents and tourists from the Mons region and Cambresis more aware of their duty of remembrance. Created as part of the Interreg IV programme 'The Great War : man and arms of peace', these circuits can be followed on a mobile app and by looking at explanatory markers. Punctuating the areas affected by the Battle of Cambrai, totem poles have been placed near combat sites, explaining the circumstances of the inhabitants in 1917 and the impact these events had on their lives.

We suggest taking the route which follows this circuit, where you can find information about the Battle of Cambrai whilst discovering what remains of it: blockhouses, cemeteries, monuments...

The quotes printed in this leaflet are from witnesses who lived during the Battle of Cambrai. Inhabitants of Cambresis and soldiers recorded these precious memories, giving a human and emotional dimension to these destructive events.

Discover their stories at :
www.villedecambrai.com/decouvrir-cambrai/portrait-de-ville/la-bataille-de-cambrai

We drove, squashed like sardines, very near to Barelle, where we waited for hours for orders, in a ditch at the side of the road.

Ernst Jünger, 30 November 1917



Louveral Memorial



Flesquières Hill British cemetery

Cambrai Tank 1917

May the bombardment crush our houses, may the town be destroyed, only to be conquered again !...
 What good does it do ?

Our belongings are not more precious than the lives of our children. I ask God to save the life of my husband and Yvonne and ask the English to advance, no matter what the cost !

Mrs Mallez, 20 November 1917



The bombardment has not started again, and the cannonade is intermittent and getting further away... with our dearest hopes.
 Chanoine Delval,
 4 December 1917

The fight in the Bourlon wood was one of the most savage and most deadly. The Germans had the audacity to use suffocating gasses to drive out the English struggling with their own soldiers, thereby sacrificing both together.
 Gaston Prache, 7 December 1917



German military cemetery and East Military Cemetery

Back at home, the shells rain down with renewed vigour, my husband and Yvonne are still outside. I'm dying of anxiety !
 Mrs Mallez, 24 November 1917

We were woken up this morning by violent, frequent detonations, with a continuous rolling a bit further off (...). The civilian prisoners occupied at Rumilly were sent back home: the projectiles fell so much that it seems they had to leave the village on all fours.
 Mrs Mallez, 20 November 1917

WILFRED OWEN FORESTER'S HOUSE

D 959 crossing Bois-Lévêque - 59360 Ors
 Information : 03 27 84 10 94 / lecateau@tourisme-cambresis.fr
 GPS : N 50.1152534 - E3.62316012

After having spent his final night in the cellar of the forester's house in Ors, Wilfred Owen, soldier and famous British poet, was killed on 4 November 1918 on the Sambre-Oise canal. In 2011, the forester's house was been converted by the English plastic artist Simon Patterson and the Parisian architect Jean-Christophe Denise, becoming both a visual and aural work in homage to the poet who denounced the 'absurd barbarity' of the Great War.

Opening times : Wednesdays to Fridays, from 2pm until 6pm
 Saturdays from 10am until 1pm and from 2pm until 6pm
 The first Sunday of the month from 3pm until 6pm
 Closed from 15 November to 15 April - Free entry for individuals.

The dance continues, the guns turned this night into a horribly hullabaloo.

Maurice Delmotte, 24 November 1917

In any case, the inhabitants of Fontaine were evacuated and arrived at Cambrai: we housed some in the buildings where we gave classes, in rue Belmas...

Chanoine Delval, 22 November 1917

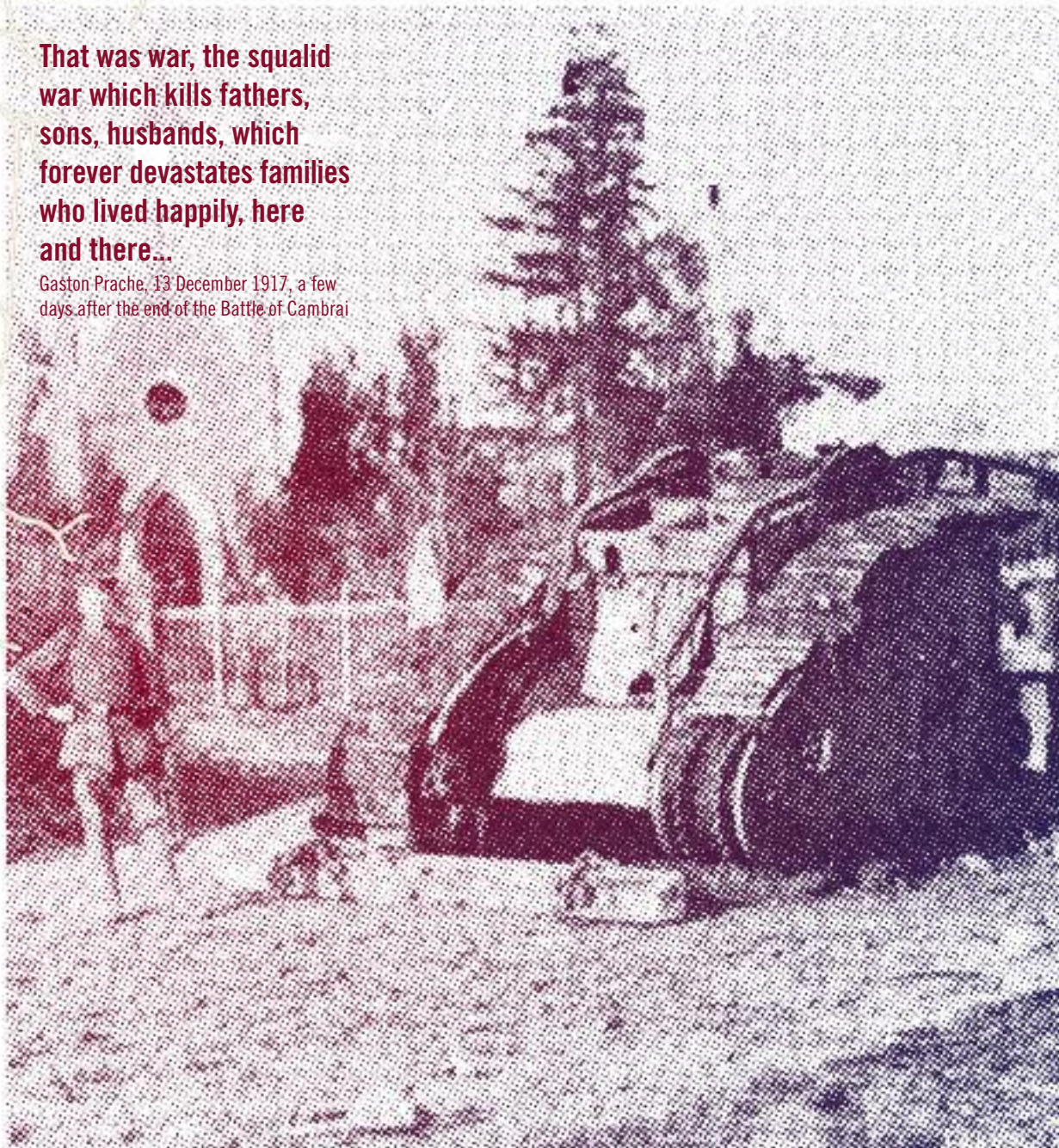
That was war, the squalid war which kills fathers, sons, husbands, which forever devastates families who lived happily, here and there...

Gaston Prache, 33 December 1917, a few days after the end of the Battle of Cambrai

I cross a good part of the town : I have never seen it so bleak. (...)
 It's the absolute solitude, it's the silence of the ordinary noises of a town which lives, replaced by the immense clamour of the artillery which waits over there...
 Chanoine Delval, Cambrai,
 29 November 1917

The damage is considerable, some everywhere (...). The explosion still has repercussions on the walls of the neighbouring houses, on the roofs, and above all, over a large radius, on the windows: go down any road, when the sun is shining, and you are blinded by the shards of glass carpeting the ground. Chanoine Delval, 3 December 1917

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