

START: SINT-JULIAAN (ST. JULIAN)

1 Leave the car park at OC De Hazebrug and walk into Hazeweidestraat.

At the beginning of April 1915, the Canadians were deployed at Ypres for the first time. Soldiers from three continents defended the town. It was at this crossroads of different languages and cultures that the Germans launched a deadly offensive. In the first few days of the Second Battle of Ypres, St Julien found itself at the eye of the storm. In 1915 the small village became the scene of terrible fighting.

2 Stop at house number 22 and look towards the housing estate.

Private **Frederick Wickens** was killed on 22 April 1915. Like many of the early volunteers, the 25-year-old was British by origin. Frederick was buried with four other Canadians where the housing estate stands today.



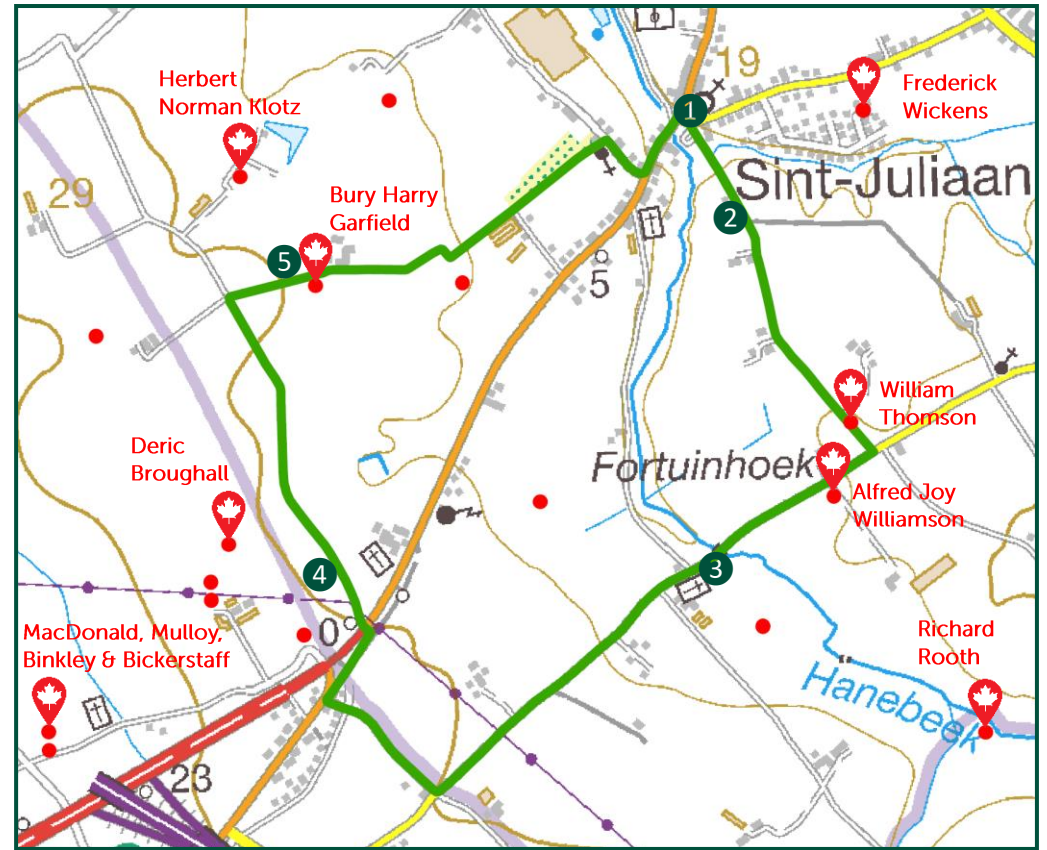
Frederick Wickens

The day Frederick Wickens died in the Second Battle of Ypres, the Germans launched the first ever chlorine gas attack. A yellow-green cloud slowly rolled towards the Allied trenches, whereupon totally surprised French and Algerian troops fled in panic, leaving a gap in the front of more than six kilometres.

To the right of the French were the Canadians. With the remnants of the French colonial forces, they organized a defence in St Julien, facing the Germans to the north. The hastily constructed defence held, despite heavy losses.

As ordered, the Germans dug in at nightfall. There were not enough reserves for them to advance any further. Hoping to capitalize on their success, they brought in reinforcements over the days that followed.

3 Walk further on and turn right into Roeselarestraat. Walk to Bridge House Cemetery. On the way you pass the original burial places of **William Thomson** and **Alfred Williamson**, Canadians of Scottish and American origin respectively.



Discover on this walk the story of the Canadian troops during the Second Battle of Ypres. Along the way you will meet some of the many Canadian lads who lost their lives along every street, on every corner.

In 1914, Canada, a British Dominion, was dragged like it or not into an unprecedented global conflagration. As the war progressed, the Canadians proved time and again to be tough, resilient troops. In Flanders they fought in 1915, 1916 and 1917 in some of the biggest battles our region has ever known.

Canada's dead in Flanders amounted to around 14,000. The names of almost half of them are engraved on the Menin Gate. They have no known grave; their bodies were not recovered or could not be positively identified. With Names in the Landscape, the Passchendaele Museum has been able to trace the initial burial place of one in five of these 'missing' Canadians.

This walk is not signposted. Use the route description to find your way.




The First German Gas Attack at Ypres, William Roberts. © National Gallery of Canada.

In the early hours of 24 April, a cloud of gas opened a breach in the Canadian lines east of the centre of the village. The troops could protect

themselves only by tying wet cloths over their mouths and noses, and handkerchiefs are no use against concentrated poison gas. Only a few managed to get themselves to safety. German troops advanced on St Julien.

The Canadian positions became untenable. There was too little artillery support. Virtually all the lines of communication were down and to make matters worse, the Canadian Ross rifles failed when rapid and frequent firing was attempted.

A retreat was inevitable, but German machine guns covered every square metre. The losses were heavy, yet the line was closed with the help of British reinforcements.


 **Richard Rooth** witnessed the gas attack from the right flank. His unit rushed to the rescue and was sent into the yellow-green gas cloud. Richard was hit by a bullet and buried

on the banks of the Hanebeek. You can see the valley where he died from the CWGC Bridge House Cemetery, which contains 45 graves from World War I, four of them unidentified. All but five of the graves are of soldiers of the British 59th (North Midland) Division, and all but one date from late September or early October 1917.



Hastily Formed Canadian Front Line, 1915. © BAC LAC M-488 J

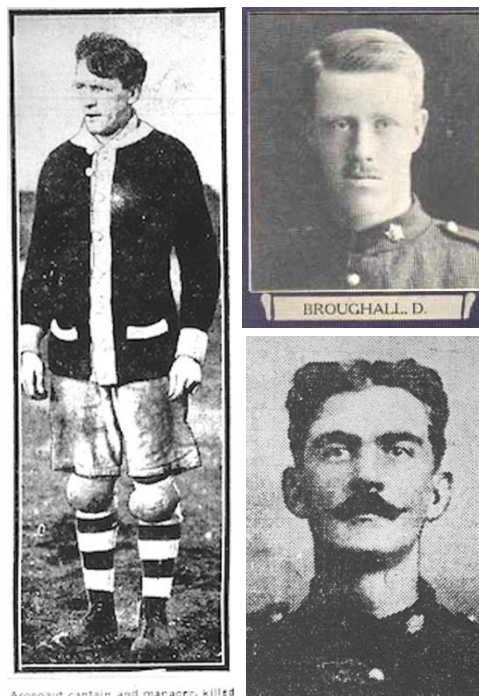
4 Stay on Roeselarestraat until the crossroads with Tentestraat. Turn right here. At the end of Tentestraat, avoid the busy Brugseweg by following the cycle path through the trees. After 200 metres, cross the Brugseweg and enter Wijngaardstraat. The farm on your left is Mouse Trap Farm.

 The 3rd Battalion (Toronto Regiment) was sent forward on 22nd April. Around midnight the men dug in at Mouse Trap Farm, which functioned as a dressing station and headquarters. Suddenly a grenade exploded and five men were killed: Lieutenant **Mado MacDonald**, Sergeant **Edwin Mulloy**, Lance Corporal **James Ross Binkley**, Private **Deric Broughall** and Private **Everard Bickerstaff**.

All five served with the machine gun section of the battalion. Mado MacDonald was their commanding officer. James Ross Binkley was their close friend. The news of their deaths was widely reported in the Canadian media, since Ross Binkley, the captain of the Toronto Argonauts of the Canadian Football League, was a celebrity.

When the heavy shell exploded, Binkley and MacDonald were killed instantly. They were buried along with a third fatality, Sergeant Edwin Harold

Mulloy, a 26-year-old bank clerk from Aurora, Ontario. Deric Broughall, the fifth casualty, died at the dressing station at Mouse Trap Farm.



Argonaut captain and manager, killed

Lieutenant Mado MacDondald, Edwin Mulloy, James Ross Binkley, Deric Broughall and Everard Bickerstaff.

5 Walk on along Wijngaardstraat. A little further on you will see a monument to the 3rd Battalion. After a short distance, turn right into the first cul-

*de-sac. Stop in front of the farm on the spot where 24-year-old sailor **Bury Harry Garfield** was buried on 24 April 1915.*

To win time, the Allies counterattacked. For the Canadians this was to be the first major operation of the war.


Kitchener's Wood, an oak wood which once lay to the north of this road, roughly where only tall poplars stand now, had to be retaken at all costs. Otherwise the Germans could direct their artillery fire on the Allied positions from here.

Just before midnight, a motley collection of Canadians and French colonials advanced. Just before the forest, a hedge with barbed wire fencing caused a delay. Their equipment rattling, the front ranks clambered through the hedge.

Their nervous rustling alarmed the German sentries. A little later the machine guns began firing and for the Canadians the only way was forward. After a fierce and chaotic battle, Kitchener's Wood was recaptured, at the cost of heavy losses.



Hastily dug Canadian trenches during the Second Battle of Ypres, 1915. © CWM 19940001-887_1

 The 2nd Battalion (Eastern Ontario Regiment) was sent out as reinforcement on 23 April 1915. When the 2nd departed, day was already breaking.

Suddenly the men were in full view of German machine guns and a few moments later, the damage was done. Lieutenant **Herbert Klotz**, a 28-year-old Canadian chemist of German origin, was among the many killed.



Two weeks before the attack, Herbert wrote to a friend, 'We haven't had very many losses yet and hope it will continue that way. I guess it can't last very long though.'

Lieutenant Herbert Norman Klotz.

Beyond the farm, you pass four German bunkers of 'Canopus Trench', built after 1915. Take the footpath to the right of the bunkers. After 700 meters you reach the little chapel in the Peperstraat. Turn right here. A little further on you come to the Brugseweg. Turn left to return to your starting point.

After the tragedy of 24 April, the Canadians saw a great deal of action. The troops were at it for over 85 hours all told and they were dead tired, dirty and hungry. Many were wounded. Their relief on 25 April came not a moment too soon.

The German offensive continued to push the Allies back, but a major breakthrough remained out of reach to them. The Canadians played a large part in stopping the German offensive. The price was high, with over 7,000 casualties. 1,800 Canadians were killed here in 1915.



The St Julien Canadian Memorial commemorates Canadian losses during the Second Battle of Ypres. Take a short diversion to this monument, which is situated one kilometre north of your starting point along the Brugseweg.

Consult Names in the Landscape and this walk online:

